

Expanding animal health knowledge and skills in sub-Saharan Africa

Animal health makes a significant contribution to sustainable economic development goals and business opportunities in Africa.

Farming and animal agriculture are crucial to many people's livelihoods, so improving access to critical veterinary products and services, and building the infrastructure required for quality animal healthcare, makes a positive and sustainable long-term impact.

With sub-Saharan Africa home to some of the largest livestock populations in the world – and the highest density of impoverished livestock farmers – livestock is an essential asset in rural communities. Improving health and productivity is critical to achieving food security in areas of exceptionally high animal and human disease incidence.

A helping hand

Africa is believed to have 20% – 270 million – of the world's cattle, but currently has a meat production rate of only 8% of the world total. In sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia has the largest stocks with about 50 million cattle, closely followed by Sudan (41 million) and Tanzania (19 million).

The Zoetis African Livestock Productivity and Health Advancement (A.L.P.H.A.) initiative – funded by a \$14 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – aims to improve livestock health and positively impact farmers' livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa, through increased access to animal health education and infrastructure.

The initiative will now run until



2022, a two-year extension, following its success in Uganda, Nigeria and Ethiopia. It has also been expanded geographically to include Tanzania. Many farmers and animal keepers in Tanzania operate in a very traditional manner and this is reflected in veterinary care.

The initiative offers a way to help develop this sector and reap the benefits of a more modern approach.

Increasing equality

An important aspect of the project is its special emphasis on providing equal access for women; bringing a variety of socio-economic benefits as women play a key role in the sub-Saharan Africa's small farms.

Women are often responsible for daily animal care, including feeding and cleaning, so training and educating them about animal nutrition, disease detection and other animal health issues can improve farm productivity, livelihoods, and ultimately the wider economy.

Over 1,000 farmers, 610 farmer trainers, and 300 veterinarians and

feed millers have received specialised training. In Uganda, over half of the training participants were female. An estimated 97,500 small-holder farmers have benefited from training thanks to the train-the-trainer approach being delivered.

Vital infrastructure

The A.L.P.H.A. initiative offers more than just training. It also helps develop the necessary physical animal health infrastructure. Successful collaboration with suitable laboratory business partners has allowed sustainable diagnostics laboratories to be set up in A.L.P.H.A. countries.

For example, in March 2019, Zoetis announced the official opening of new diagnostic laboratories in Butalangu, Nakaseke District, and Nabitanga, Sembabule District, Uganda, in cooperation with the Uganda Meat Producers Co-operative Union (UMPCU).

The laboratories provide diagnostic services, including pre-movement tests, microscopy for internal blood parasites (Trypanosomiasis, East Coast Fever, Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis, Helminthiasis), screening and confirmation of Brucellosis and Bovine Tuberculosis, and the use of ultrasound to detect pregnancy.

These laboratories are available to over 2,600 beef livestock farmers who are focused on producing high-quality meat for local and international markets.

A.L.P.H.A. provides vital support in the form of high-quality training, laboratory equipment, personnel, and access to international support and knowledge.

Improved products and knowledge

As part of the initiative, Zoetis has also submitted registrations for about 60 animal health products, diagnostics and vaccines in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Nigeria.

Once approved, they will offer a large range of solutions for disease prevention in livestock and poultry.

Empowerment of the veterinary industry is a critical element of A.L.P.H.A., as the value of veterinary professionals is often underestimated by farmers who have poor access to their services.

Zoetis facilitated the publication of quarterly veterinary newsletters supporting Nigeria and Uganda's National Associations of Veterinarians and will be doing the same in Ethiopia and Tanzania.

The publications provide a platform on which to share best practices and identify the needs of the country's thousands of association members.

In Uganda, the veterinary newsletters are unprecedented and were launched by the Minister of Agriculture.

Zoetis also facilitated an educational learning platform called Learn & Grow for various stakeholder groups which includes business training courses through VetVance and a reference library for veterinarians and veterinary students, called Vetlexicon Bovis.

Additionally, the company's veterinary experts held several technical trainings for local veterinary service providers and distributors to help continued professional development.

Unlocking potential

There is great potential in farming and animal agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa and the provisions made through the A.L.P.H.A. initiative will help unlock that and improve animal health at the same time, starting with education and training.



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