

Speech by Commissioner Phil Hogan at the Launch Celebration of the International Research Consortium on Animal Health

27th January 2016, Brussels

- Check Against Delivery –

- Chère Doctor Eloit, Dear Professor Boyd, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to this event today.
- We are here to celebrate the launch of the **international consortium for research on animal health**. This is one of the most promising and ambitious initiatives at the global level in the field of animal science.
- It has the potential to make a massive difference for the farming economy, and for the public good.

- We know very well how serious the impact of animal diseases can be. Diseases can reduce production and have a real negative impact on the farming economy.
- But it goes beyond this. Animal diseases weaken the whole food chain, and damage food security and consumers' trust in animal products.
- Recent history has shown that animal diseases can have devastating effects, leading to trade disruptions and to consumer concerns.
- In a number of cases, animal diseases are transmitted between animals and humans with serious consequences for public health.
- In other cases it is the cure that may create problems: antimicrobial resistance is considered a major issue both for animal and for human health.
- And we must also remember that diseases do not stop at borders. Therefore our fight against them must be equally coordinated: we need global cooperation to address these issues more efficiently.

- At the European Commission, we felt it was our responsibility to propose a concrete way forward. **This is why we proposed such an initiative to the animal health research community.**
- It is the first initiative of its kind outside human health. Several such International Research Consortia exist in human health, and we proposed to follow this model with the animal health research community, which we think is ready to embark on an ambitious global cooperation.
- This international research consortium fits very well with the strategic approach to EU agriculture research and innovation, which will be discussed in the conference I will open in a few minutes.
- This IRC initiative has a history. This will be presented in greater detail by Dr Boyd, but in a nutshell, I think it is fair to say that it started with a European network of public research funders within the EU Standing Committee on Agriculture Research.
- It led to 2 successive and successful European Research Area networks (so called 'ERA-NETs') supported by the EU Research Framework Programme.

- A global network of research funding organisations, STAR-IDA, was then launched with the support once again of the EU framework programme. The UK ministry of agriculture, in the person of Alexander Morrow, is playing an important coordination role.
- **What we celebrate today is therefore the launch of a new initiative and also the successful outcome of years of collaboration.**
- **The International Research Consortium is emerging from STAR-IDA as a distinct structure.** It is ready to go to the next phase, which means concrete coordinated research activities for reaching commonly agreed and scientifically based objectives, sharing tools and results as much as necessary and possible.
- This will allow the leveraging of increasingly scarce resources, it will reduce overlaps and duplication and it will certainly achieve results that would otherwise be beyond reach.
- We put a lot of trust and hope in this initiative and we are keen to support it.

- We also organised a workshop in October last year to finalise the governance documents of this emerging structure.
- **I am amazed and delighted by the uptake of the IRC initiative since October 2015. 14 entities from 11 countries have so far signed up** through the signature of a Letter of Intent, and this may well increase in the coming months.
- **The current cumulative financial commitment in these letters of intent is around 1 billion dollars for the coming 5 years.**
- In addition, two associations from the industry expressed their commitment as observers: HealthForAnimals (the Global animal medicines association) and the European Manufacturers of Veterinary Diagnostics. This is a very useful and positive development.
- I am glad that representatives of a number of these signatories are here today.

- I am pleased to announce that DG AGRI is also intending to become a full member of this IRC and to **commit a substantial amount of money over the next 5 years**, through research topics that we have included and will keep including in our Horizon 2020 calls. These will contribute to delivering on the objectives of the IRC.
- I am confident that, together, we will make animals healthier around the world and protect human health as a result.
- My sincere thanks to everyone who has made this happen. I congratulate you on the work done, and wish you the best of luck in the work yet to come.
- With this I would like to give the floor to Monique Eloit, who travelled to join us here today on behalf of the World organisation for animal health.
- Thank you.