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## ANIMAL HEALTH IS KEY TO ANIMAL WEALTH

**A**n industry which provides for year round income, gainful employment and acts as a source of protein for its producers who are mostly concentrated in rural areas must be guarded with utmost care. Animal husbandry is one sector which has been particularly steady in its outcome and performance. It is the succour for the marginalized and weak segments of the society. Significantly, animal wealth is closely related to animal health.

Animals must be safeguarded, fostered and provided with all essential nutrients and health care facilities if we intend to depend on them economically. Besides, the all-encompassing 'One Health' concept is being applied invariably across countries. It thus becomes binding on us to adhere to this unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent.

When it comes to animal health, we are fortunate to experience the fruits of cutting edge technologies in the sector. Biotechnological innovations have percolated the animal health sector. We have access to next-generation vaccines to prevent diseases. It is also reassuring to find that antibiotic alternatives are being developed to combat antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance is on the rise, posing a global threat to humans, animals, and the environment. Alternative products including vaccines, probiotics and immune modulators are offering veterinarians and farmers more options for reducing antibiotic use.

Nutrition and feed quantity and quality are also a priority in animal rearing. Microbial enhancements to soil, methods to prevent spoilage, the use of micro-organisms to increase animal digestion abilities, novel mineral and enzyme supplements, and the use of gene editing technologies to boost nutrient levels in plants enhance animal nutrition. New markets for innovative protein sources, ranging from cricket-based baking flour to the manufacture of animal protein from cell-based cultures are also emerging.

This is the most opportune time for raising awareness and spreading the knowledge of advanced technologies in animal health among stakeholders. Animal health is an important segment that needs the undivided attention of the government. India Animal Health Summit 2022 organised jointly by Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) and Agriculture Today Group on July 6-7 plans to raise this issue at the national level. I am sure the deliberations and discussions shall provide a road map for redefining India's animal health care strategies. India boasts of abundant animal wealth. To sustain our richness, we must invest in animal health.

