UGANDA VETERINARY ASSOCIATION (UVA)
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Hon Frank Tumwebaze Kagigi,

Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries,

Dear Our Guest of Honor,

The Uganda Veterinary Association (UVA) wishes to welcome you to this esteemed Annual Veterinary Scientific Conference 2021.

Hon Minister, over the years, UVA has had the privilege of partnering with MAAIF and other stakeholders in holding Annual Symposiums under various themes that are deemed important for the development of the livestock industry in particular and the country at large. As the country is preparing for final opening of the economy that has been ravaged by the COVID 19 pandemic, it is very important that the animal health players reposition themselves better in relation to the National Development Plan 111 whose theme is "sustainable industrialization for inclusive growth, employment and wealth creation".

The theme for this year's symposium "strategic positioning of the animal health sector players for agro industrialisation and social transformation in Uganda" is quite timely given the government's effort to revamp the economy through various models like the Parish Development Model that emphasizes agroindustrialisation under Pillar 1 of value chain development.

The importance of agro industrialization featuring value addition to the entire range of our agricultural products cannot be over emphasized as it is the realistic trend to take to cope up with the global economic pressures that have been worsened by the devastating effects of COVID 19 pandemic. Penetration of the ever emerging market barriers that leave the country in extreme trade imbalances can effectively be circumvented by embracing agro industrialization. Recent experiences during the pandemic that left many of our farmers stranded with the highly valuable sources of essential nutrients of livestock origin including eggs and milk spoke volumes of why the veterinarian should take interest in repositioning his efforts to be in the line with agro industrialization.

This symposium therefore offers a big opportunity for reflection on our current situation as animal health players in regard to the ongoing agro industrialization and social transformation agenda and together forge amicable ways forward with other stakeholders for a better animal industry that will contribute to the ultimate wellbeing of the animal and humankind. Given the fact that information is dynamic, there is continuous need for routine updating and polishing of old and new innovations and ideas that are key for the much needed socio-transformation.

The component of animal health is key for the realization of agroindustrialisation as it directly affects the production and productivity of the livestock. The economies of scale favor a situation where the animals are health and therefore produce more for bulking and later value addition.

The Uganda Veterinary Association after thorough consultations from its members who form the bulk of the front-line soldiers in the fight for animal health identified the following challenges:

- **Insufficient funding for Animal Industry and Veterinary Affairs right from ministry to local governments level this is evidenced by the fact that** all vaccines against priority animal and zoonotic diseases are imported, there are no regional vaccine banks , quality assurance and standardization facilities, inadequate district level vaccine storage facilities and field based cold chain equipment, dilapidated veterinary offices across districts .
- **Low empowerment of the veterinarian in the regulation of veterinary drugs** which are the biggest weapons in the fight for better animal health.
- **Lack of a streamlined operational system for the livestock health workers.**
- **Lack of Commensurate Pay to Veterinarians:** Hon Minister, the pay increment for scientists in other fields excluding Veterinarians has led to the discomfort of Veterinarians and is resulting in the extensive migration of more competent veterinarians, His Excellency the President has always pronounced increment of pay to Medical workers without any consideration for veterinary counterparts who are carrying heavier load than any other ordinary scientists. Whereas today, the country may not immediately feel the impact of this, within a period of 3-5 years, the result will be reflected in the performance of Animal Industry.

Our prayer to Government in view of the above is as follows:

- The Government should fast track the implementation of Presidential directive for MAAIF to take charge of veterinary drugs regulation and control (2019).
- Re centralization of veterinary services so that there is one chain of command from the CVO (Chief veterinary Officer).
- Increase the sector's budget to reflect the 10% Malabo declaration,
- Enhance the salaries of Animal health professionals to be commensurate with that of the other scientists in the same bracket.
- Expand and support private sector provision
- Develop, amend or update key policies and fast track their implementation
- Improve staffing at national and local levels
- Rehabilitation of veterinary offices so that asbestos sheets are removed (Even our veterinary offices in Wandegeya need urgent rehabilitation).
- Come up with a vaccination calendar addressing all major epidemics. This will promote block treatments.
- Choose other days to be observed that will boost considerations of our other enigmas like FMD.
- Allocate more funds into research of a thermal stable vaccine (Comparison with the New castle Disease Kuku star vaccine by Brentec).
- Vaccination funds to come independently to Local Governments as conditional grants

- MAAIF should develop and implement a national herd health program with meaningful funding for major epidemics vaccination calendar, Develop and disseminate SOPs for the major epidemics (FMD, African Swine Fever(ASF), New Castle Disease(NCD) and Lumpy Skin Disease(LSD).
- Re instating of the Veterinary scouts an equivalent of the VHTs.
- Fasten the gap filling of critical positions in the animal sector from Local Government to the Ministry.
- Commit meaningful resources to manufacture of priority vaccines (FMD, NCD, Rabies) Inadequate storage facilities as the vaccine once released from the central stores needs to always be kept under stipulated temperature ranges up to the time of its use.
- Review the policy on delivery of veterinary services to define public, private and both public and private diseases.

Dr Kasibule Daniel
President UVA.