One health

Keynote lecture

One health approach to food safety in pork production chain

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With the increase in worldwide demand for meat, fast-growing species with efficient feed conversion rates – such as pigs – are likely to account for a major share in the growth in the livestock subsector. Commercial pig production has intensified significantly in recent decades. In developing countries, half of the current pig population is still kept in traditional small-scale subsistence-driven production systems in which pigs provide much more than meat playing a role as a financial safety net, providing additional cash for school fees, medical treatment or small investments beside being part of cultural traditions.

In the last 30 years, several new diseases of swine have been described. Some of these infections are zoonotic and besides affecting humans and animals, environmental contamination is of concern. Furthermore, antimicrobial resistance threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi, posing a serious threat to global public health. Pig production and pork consumption can have a direct impact on human health and a holistic approach under what is known as the “One Health” approach is needed to maximize the benefits of the sector and minimize potential threats to health and wellbeing of humans, animals and the environment. This requires not only the close collaboration between different sectors such as physicians, veterinarians and environmental scientists but also the involvement of a range of other disciplines including (risk) communication, social sciences, public policy, cultural-anthropology as well as making use of new technologies. The application of One Health is more and more being applied in addressing food safety and complex health threats and could play an increasing role also in the pork production chain, contributing to improved food security in an ever globalizing world.