
Report of the WOAH 7th Animal Welfare Global Forum: ‘Regional Animal Welfare Strategies and Platforms (RAWS&P); A key tool for the implementation of WOAH animal welfare standards’

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Paris, France



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The WOA Animal Welfare Global Forum is a key activity in WOA's Global Animal Welfare Strategy, which provides members of the WOA animal welfare community the opportunity to discuss a specific animal welfare topic or theme. The theme for the 2025 Forum was 'Regional Animal Welfare Strategies and Platforms (RAWS&P); A key tool for the implementation of WOA animal welfare standards'. The Forum took place between 13 – 14 November 2025 at WOA's headquarters in Paris, France.

The programme of the Forum is presented in [Annex 1](#).

Welcome

The Forum opened with an address from Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, WOA Director General. Dr Soubeyran provided an overview of the history and importance of RAWS&P in making significant improvements to animal welfare globally, their ability to act as a key mechanism to coordinate activities, facilitate the implementation of standards and address emerging welfare issues through a regional lens.

Dr Soubeyran noted that despite RAWS&P's potential in furthering the implementation of WOA's animal welfare standards by Members, many are underdeveloped or underutilised; the 2025 Forum was designed as a first step to revitalise dormant RAWS&P by providing attendees with an opportunity to share experiences and key components of successful strategies, challenges and solutions, as well as important regional considerations.

Why Regional Animal Welfare Strategies and Platforms matter

Dr Leopoldo Stuardo, WOA Scientific Coordinator on animal welfare, highlighted the global challenge of animal welfare, which is made more complex by the diversity across regions, countries and subregions in how animals are reared, treated and transported. This diversity directly influences the success of the different RAWS&P and ultimately, the implementation of WOA's animal welfare standards.

Dr Stuardo shared the status of the various RAWS&P and their common components, such as the definition of priorities, scope of activities, governance structures and the development of partnerships; factors which need to be implemented or strengthened include strengthening ownership, establishing realistic action plans, securing sustainable funding and identifying a regional "champion" who could encourage other Members in the region to advance activities.

Incorporating M&E in the Asia and Pacific strategy

Dr Carolyn Guy, Director of Animal Health and Welfare for New Zealand's Veterinary Services, provided an overview of the Asia and Pacific region's RAWS&P, which was first developed in 2008 and updated in 2013 and 2025. The strategy is supported by an action plan, which has four objectives 1) Promotion and achievement of a high level of understanding and awareness of animal welfare in the region through effective coordination, communication, education and training 2) A coordinated regional approach to the implementation of WOA standards for animal welfare 3) Sustainable improvements in animal welfare, based on regional and international research and development 4) Sustainable mechanisms to coordinate and promote animal welfare programmes and priorities. Each goal has several key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the effective implementation of the strategy.

The KPIs incorporated into the workplan include post-event feedback mechanisms, the number of webinars delivered annually and the number of trainings conducted for WOA National Focal Points for Animal Welfare. Dr Guy shared that whilst the inclusion of KPS has helped to ensure regional Members's needs are prioritised and improves coordinated efforts, some of this data can be difficult to analyse, particularly the key themes. Dr Guy shared that the learnings from this Forum would be used to move the strategy from more of a 'sharing experience' to a fully operationalised strategy.

Identifying regional priorities in a diverse environment

Dr Anjad Al-Sheikh, WOA Animal Welfare Focal Point for Jordan, provided an overview of the Middle East regional strategy (2022) and the range of regional animal welfare priorities found in the Middle East region. Dr Al Sheikh noted that across the Middle East, animal welfare is increasingly recognised as being integral to public health, environmental sustainability and cultural responsibility. Priorities for the Middle East include humane treatment, wildlife conservation, companion animal care, and habitat preservation. However, varying levels of enforcement, limited resources and traditional practices continue to challenge progress. Regional cooperation under frameworks like One Health and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide opportunities to strengthen welfare systems.

A systematic analysis of the cultural, economic and religious factors across the Middle East was used to understand their impact on animal welfare approaches and to inform the Middle East's regional strategy and its activities. Dr Al-Sheikh explained that cultural factors include traditional practices which can influence animal treatment and animal welfare standards, economic factors such as a dependency on livestock for livelihoods (particularly in rural communities) and economic pressures on small scale farmers, which can influence welfare. These competing factors can make designing and implementing a regional animal welfare strategy difficult.

Dr Al-Sheikh shared a number of actions which have been undertaken to mitigate regional differences to create a regional strategy, including culturally appropriate welfare standards which respect traditions whilst improving welfare practices, the development of cost effective solutions which balance economic realities with welfare improvements and building a foundation for promoting welfare based on religious values and teachings. To further manage the varying perspectives, a collaborative approach has been adopted in the region, with multi-stakeholder consultations with diverse representatives, transparent decision-making processes and building consensus on practical, implementable standards. The region has successfully introduced animal welfare regulations in 2022 and long-term hope to see the further integration of animal welfare into national development with regional leadership in balanced welfare approaches.

Managing expectations of regional coordination/advisory groups when developing RAWs&P

Dr Lucia Escati, Technical and Communication Regional Officer of the Americas, outlined the approach being taken by the Americas region to manage expectations of regional coordination/advisory groups when developing a RAWs&P. This comes as the region refreshes its strategy which was initially launched in 2012.

Dr Escati explained that the 2012 strategy has had limited implementation; out of the 28 activities which were outlined, 2 were implemented, 10 were partially implemented and 16 were not implemented. This was partly due to a lack of a coordination structure or an action plan and budget limitations. To inform the refresh of the strategy, the region decided to establish a coordination group – to manage expectations within the group, members will be from diverse backgrounds, which will include the public and private sectors, experts, civil society, financial partners and a secretariat, provided by WOA. Public sector representation was achieved using an open call which required a gender balance, geographical distributions, experience in welfare and technical understanding. Other sector representation was secured by targeted calls to organisations representing relevant sectors with cooperation agreements with WOA, either located within or with knowledge of the region.

The group will use a 'bottom-up approach' to share and identify the needs of animal welfare besides trade and markets, which was the focus of the previous strategy, due to the significant export of live animals in the region. However, there is now an increase in consumer concern related to welfare and the strategy should reflect wider welfare issues.

To initiate the renewal process of the regional strategy, a collaborative workshop is taking place between 24 – 26 November 2025, in Montevideo, Mexico. The workshop will be used to review roles and responsibilities of focal points and the coordination group, identify and evaluate regional priorities, needs and emerging trends in animal welfare to feed into the update of the regional animal welfare strategy.

Managing diversity within Europe

Dr Tomasz Grudnik (WOAH Scientific Officer from the WOA Sub Regional Representation in Brussels provided an overview of Europe's Animal Welfare Platform, which was launched in 2013, to improve animal welfare throughout Europe and empower vet services to take action, in compliance with WOA's animal welfare standards. The 53 countries within Europe offer significant diversity, including different political and trade frameworks, languages, economic variabilities and EU and non-EU members.

The Platform uses the below four tools to manage this diversity across its five priority topics of animal welfare during slaughter, transport of animals, dog population management, animal welfare in natural disasters and welfare of working equids:

Governance: including a concept note outlining the role of the Platform, TORs, outlining how the Platform operates and action plans which help to break down the strategy into activities. A regional core group and steering group of the Platform also help.

Stakeholders and partners: Stakeholders and partners across the region are actively involved in activities and engaged through annual coordination meetings with the Platform.

Communication: a communication strategy is being developed to effectively communicate with stakeholders, considering the diverse range of needs in the region. Activities are communicated via the regional website and annual newsletters with translations available in Russian.

Monitoring and evaluation: the impact of the Platform's activities is evaluated with specific tools for each workstream, overall indicators and external consultant reviews, which have consistently found that the Platform is highly relevant to Members and stakeholders.

Working together to foster animal welfare in Africa

Dr Elynn Njeri, Animal Welfare Expert from AUIBAR (African Union International Bureau for Animal Resources) provided an overview of the regional animal welfare strategy for Africa and how AUIBAR works with WOAAH to implement this strategy.

The strategy (adopted in 2017) was created and is managed AUIBAR, which has a longstanding collaboration with WOAAH. The strategy was designed to align with WOAAH's Global Animal Welfare Strategy; it has 3 objectives based on behaviour change, strengthening action on animal welfare and mainstream animal welfare policies. Key successes from the collaboration with WOAAH have included capacity strengthening, providing platforms for Member States to discuss welfare issues (such as the training of IBAR/WOAH focal points for animal welfare), standards meetings with the Pan African CVO and WOAAH delegates and animal welfare dialogues and forums.

To continue to foster animal welfare in Africa, Dr Njeri explained that further collaboration will be required across sectors and disciplines to address welfare gaps, with transparency and innovation using the below approaches:

- Strengthening coordination by expanding technical training and capacity development
- Unifying reporting systems by strengthening understanding of animal welfare initiatives in Africa including repository, mapping and data sharing)
- Improving the contribution and alignment of African Member states to standard setting
- Developing regional guidelines and enhance cooperation with regional economic communities and national veterinary services.
- Fostering collaboration through effective leadership to enhance the regional animal welfare strategy for Africa.

Members' Experience: Improving participation in regional strategies – Asia and Pacific

Dr Kasumi Sudo from Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, provided an insight into Japan's engagement with the regional animal welfare strategy for the Asia and Pacific region.

Dr Sudo explained that Japan joined the regional strategy in 2024, its motivation to join came from being a long-time member of WOAAH and publishing guidelines based on WOAAH standards in 2023.

Dr Sudo shared the importance of RAWS&P in the Asia and Pacific region for capacity building through knowledge and technique sharing, a coordinated response to common welfare challenges and enhanced regional influence in global discussions. As a Member, Dr Sudo explained that Japan's role in the promotion of the regional activities includes encouraging the implementation of animal welfare standards at the national level, supporting the development of WOAAH standards and sharing information on animal welfare at the regional level.

Although Member countries are within the same region, problems can vary greatly which can make discussions and working together on welfare issues difficult, with few opportunities to exchange information or opinions. Dr Sudo suggested that specific challenges which transcend borders should be focused on, particularly when countries face the same challenges at the same time, alongside increasing the opportunities to discuss specific issues at the sub-regional level and utilise functions such as WOAH's General Session to exchange information on important welfare issues. For Member support to RAWs&P, Dr Sudo suggested Members should recognise the importance of RAWs&P and coordinate activities at the national level, considering the WOAH standards, share scientific data, knowledge and coordinate opinions within the region on welfare issues.

Members' Experience: Improving Member participation in regional strategies – The Americas

Dr Valeria Homen from Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, shared the results of a survey conducted among 31 Animal Welfare Focal Points in the Americas region, with responses received from ten countries: Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The survey sought to understand Member perspectives on RAWs&P, their role in promoting regional AW activities and how participation and support could be strengthened.

Respondents consistently emphasised that RAWs&P must reflect the realities of the continent, including its diverse production systems, economic conditions and varying technical capacities. Several noted that the 2012 RAWs is not widely known and requires greater visibility and practical guidance to support implementation. Key needs identified included expanded training, strengthening technical criteria for species and processes such as transport and slaughter and more robust opportunities for regional exchange of experiences.

To improve Member participation, respondents suggested enhanced communication channels, capacity-building initiatives, thematic working groups, bilingual accessibility, and more frequent interaction through virtual or in-person meetings. Participants stressed the value of clear guidance, structured agendas with defined responsibilities and increased visibility of RAWs&P outcomes.

Respondents felt that Members can best support RAWs&P by sharing national experiences, contributing technical expertise, actively participating in consultations and regional initiatives and ensuring institutional commitment, including adequate human and financial resources. Engagement of diverse stakeholders, such as veterinary services, academia, industry and NGOs, was noted as essential to strengthening regional animal welfare efforts.

Collaborating Centre Perspective: How the Global Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre Network can support regional strategies

Dr Luigi Iannetti, Chair of WOAH's Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre (CC) Network, outlined how the network can strengthen RAWs&P. Established in 2025, the network is guided by three strategic objectives: supporting the development of science-based welfare standards, promoting capacity building and education among WOAH Members and advancing the One Health/One Welfare approach.

The network brings together four Collaborating Centres across Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Americas and North America, representing a comprehensive combination of expertise. This ranges from science and ethics to legislation, livestock production systems, sustainability and laboratory animal welfare. Observers from Tunisia and South Africa further provide additional regional expertise in dog population management, rabies control, small-scale farming and community engagement.

Dr Iannetti emphasised that the network can directly support RAWs&P by providing coordinated expert input to update WOAH standards, assisting Members in aligning national policies and developing guidance documents to integrate standards into regional frameworks. Capacity building is enhanced through training courses, workshops and expert exchanges, while networking is fostered via regular meetings, collaboration with other WOAH CC networks and joint publications. Communication and awareness are strengthened through peer-reviewed articles and dissemination of guidelines, ensuring that knowledge is shared widely and effectively.

Ultimately, the Animal Welfare CC Network acts as a global platform, which can allow regional strategies to benefit from harmonised approaches, shared expertise and collaborative solutions. By leveraging the diverse competencies of its centres, the network can improve animal welfare worldwide in a coordinated and sustainable way.

International Coalition for Animal Welfare (ICFAW) - An oversight of successful regional activities

Julia Havenstein, Chair of ICFAW, shared the successful regional workings of the organisation. ICFAW's regional success depends on structured collaboration, shared goals and strong alignment with WOA's regional strategies. ICFAW's model is built on regional working groups, based on WOA's five regions - Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. The organisation, which is a WOA partner, focuses on coordinating advocacy, capacity building and technical support to increase the implementation of WOA standards.

The regional strategies include regionally relevant objectives, measurable action plans and broad multi-sector stakeholder engagement, including governments, veterinarians, academia and NGOs. Respect for cultural and socio-economic diversity, clear governance mechanisms and regular monitoring and adaptation further support long-term sustainability. Examples of successful regional activities were provided for each of the regions:

Africa: the Pan-African Donkey Conference and repeated cycles of focal-point training which demonstrate how coordinated technical support and political commitment can drive progress, culminating in renewed dedication to protecting donkeys across the continent.

Asia and the Pacific: joint training programmes on humane pig handling have shown how collaboration with universities and international experts can improve the implementation of WOA's welfare standards at national level.

Americas: multi-stakeholder events in Chile have fostered practical, solutions-oriented discussions on pig welfare

Europe: Initiatives have strengthened dog population management, equid welfare and transport practices through workshops and subregional coordination

Middle East: sustained webinar cycles, including on camel welfare, have helped to boost regional knowledge and implementation capacity.

The importance of ownership resting with countries was emphasised, supported by stable institutional structures, strong NGO involvement and sustained capacity building. Visible progress and integration with broader regional agendas, such as trade, One Health and sustainability can enhance funding opportunities and long-term impact but key challenges still lie in a lack of political commitment on welfare, frequent changes in welfare focal points, limited resources and weak monitoring and evaluation.

Partner Perspective: International Meat secretariat - Partner Perspective: Food industry regional animal welfare priorities

Dr Phil Hadley represented the International Meat Secretariat (IMS); IMS unites the global meat and livestock sectors, representing over 70% of commercial meat production. The organisation operates through regional and commodity committees across countries including Argentina, Uruguay, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Kenya, South Africa and the United States. IMS' regional organisations ensure that local realities feed into its global strategies, shown in the "Split Gas" project, where over 30 signatories, from Latin America to Oceania, explored emissions reporting by gas type rather than total footprint, reflecting diverse production systems and regional priorities.

IMS' regional working is structured around eight committees (Beef, Pork, Sheep meat, Animal Care, Economics/Trade, Human Nutrition, Marketing and Sustainability). These committees enable members to collectively respond to challenges, such as China's beef safeguard investigation or the EU deforestation regulation, while tailoring responses to regional contexts.

Dr Hadley explained that IMS' members are supportive of and value the organisation's partnership with WOA and has representatives in WOA's Americas' regional group, working on the development of a new RAWS&P. IMS members are willing to provide input into discussions to share the industry's perspective to further WOA's RAWS&P, whilst also promoting training uptake, particularly in lower-middle income countries for incremental welfare improvement and realistic transition timelines that consider cost, labour and production output.

Partner Perspective: European Commission - Funding regional and extra-regional animal welfare activities

Dr Andrea Gavinelli of the European Commission provided an overview of how the Commission helps to support the work of WOAAH's RAWS&P through funding activities related to the Commission's key priority areas - animal transport on long journeys, slaughter of animals, dog population management (e.g. zoonoses), research etc. The Commission has been a key donor of WOAAH's animal welfare work since it became a priority area for WOAAH in 2002, whilst also coordinating the European Union's (EU) position on WOAAH's animal welfare chapters.

The Commission has several funding mechanisms, including:

- The Commission EU Single Market Programme (SMP) programme, aimed to support improvement of animal welfare
- EU Multiannual Grant Decisions for 3-year periods
- Technical meetings between WOAAH HQ, regional and sub-regional representations for Europe and the Commission to assess the outcomes of past activities and to plan future activities on animal welfare.

Dr Gavinelli explained that the Commission can only fund activities for which legislation at EU level exists and can encourage EU Member States and third countries to contribute on specific animal welfare activities; possible cooperation between the Commissions four reference centres and WOAAH's animal welfare collaboration centres should be explored in the future to maximise implementation of RAWS&P. Dr Gavinelli explained that the WOAAH Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe can be used as an example for other regions in using funding from the Commission to further its strategy – the Commission provides technical and financial support through tailor made activities such as the whole journey workshops on animal transport, WOAAH Regional Workshops of National Focal Points on animal welfare Europe and participation in the Platform's steering group. The Commission has been the Platform's main donor since 2013.

Breakout Groups:

Participants were divided into four breakout groups, which included representation across WOAAH HQ and regional staff, Focal Points, NGOs, Quadripartite and industry organisations. Groups were asked to brainstorm using the below prompts:

- Key elements of an effective RAWS&P
- Challenges in creating and implementing a RAWS&P
- Finding solutions to challenges
- How to successfully implement a RAWS&P

Key themes reported back across the four groups included:

Key elements of an effective RAWS&P

- Vision and direction
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Designed to be regionally relevant
- Stakeholder engagement (create a safe space for stakeholders)
- Clear communications plan
- Governance structure
- Ownership
- Developed using theory of change, using local knowledge

Challenges in creating and implementing a RAWS&P

- Funding (both insufficient funding and countries not requesting funding)
- Not including those who work on the ground
- Weak ownership and commitment
- Cultural, social and religious differences
- Lacking representation of sectors/species
- Data limitations and transparency issues
- Language and communication barriers

Finding solutions to challenges

- RAWs&P champions with supportive networks
- Include people on the ground – workshops, field visits etc
- Address data gaps by getting data from services and industry, proxy data and promote data sharing. Data on AW economics.
- Align RAWs&P around shared values to overcome cultural, economic and religious differences
- Targeted training
- Invest in behaviour change initiatives
- Strong regulatory frameworks
- Clear comms plans, targeted to specific stakeholders

How to successfully implement a RAWs&P

- Prioritisation of welfare standards
- Use of national action plans to assist with RAWs&P
- A unified, global approach with a clear mandate e.g. Quadripartite organisations
- Adaption of WOA's Global Animal Welfare Strategy (GAWS) to own regional priorities or national action plans for countries based on GAWS
- Use of both regulatory and non-regulatory tools
- Alignment of strategy with commercial demand and market incentives
- Proof of why animal welfare matters – link to economics etc.
- Monitor, evaluate and learn
- Political commitment

Closing remarks:

Dr Montserrat Arroyo (WOAH Deputy Director General) closed the 2025 Global Animal Welfare Forum and thanked the attendees for joining the event and for sharing their experiences of WOA's RAWs&Ps.

Dr Arroyo emphasised the importance of the learnings and recommendations from this Forum in ensuring that tangible action is taken following the event so that RAWs&Ps are as effective as possible. Dr Arroyo specifically referred to the importance of regional working and the role that WOA's regional stakeholders play in the global implementation of WOA's animal welfare standards and ensuring that they are representative of the diversity across the regions.

Conclusion:

This Forum helped to highlight both the impact that RAWs&P can have on the implementation of WOA's animal welfare standards but also the vast differences across WOA's region in the design and implementation of RAWs&P themselves.

The experiences shared will help to guide WOA in identifying where regions needs additional support and how to use a more coordinated approach across the regions to encourage the implementation of standards and advancements in welfare, initially by supporting the improvement or redevelopment of their RAWs&P, with particular efforts to align the RAWs&P with WOA's Global Animal Welfare Strategy in the future.

7th WOAHA Animal Welfare Global Forum

Programme

7 th WOAHA Animal Welfare Global Forum ‘Regional Animal Welfare Strategies and Platforms (RAWS&P); A key tool for the implementation of WOAHA animal welfare standards’ WOAHA Headquarters, Paris, France, 13-14 November 2025	
Day 1: 13 November 2025	
Time	Theme/speaker
09:00	Registration and tea/coffee
09:30	Welcome and objectives of the Forum Emmanuelle Soubeyran, Director General, WOAHA
09:45	Why Regional Animal Welfare Strategies and Platforms matter? Leopoldo Stuardo, Scientific Coordinator – Animal Welfare, WOAHA
10:00	Break Tea/Coffee
Session 1	
10:30	Incorporating M&E in the Asia and the Pacific strategy Asia and the Pacific Carolyn Guy (Animal Welfare Collaborating Centre) Jacqueline Lusat (Regional Representation)
10:50	Identifying regional priorities in a diverse environment The Middle East Anjad Al-Sheikh, Animal Welfare Focal Point, Jordan
11:10	Managing expectations of regional coordination/advisory groups when developing RAWS&P The Americas Lucia Escati (Regional Representation)
11:30	Managing diversity within Europe Animal Welfare Platform for Europe Tomasz Grudnik (Sub-regional Representation)
11:50	Working together to foster animal welfare in Africa WOAHA and AU-IBAR Patrick Bastiaensen (Sub-region Representation) and Elynn Njeri (AU-IBAR)
12:10	Panel discussion
12:30	Lunch

Session 2	
14:00	Members' Experience: Improving Member participation in regional strategies Asia and Pacific Kasumi Sudo, Livestock Production Technology Office, MAFF, Japan
14:15	Members' Experience: Improving Member participation in regional strategies The Americas Valéria Homem, Animal Welfare Focal Point, Brazil
14:45	International Coalition for Animal Welfare (ICFAW) - An oversight of successful regional activities Julia Havenstein, Chair, international Coalition for Animal Welfare
15:00	Partner Perspective: Food industry regional animal welfare priorities Phil Hadley, Secretary General, International Meat Secretariat
15:15	Partner Perspective: European Commission - Funding regional and extra-regional animal welfare activities Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
15:30	Panel discussion
15:45	Break Tea/Coffee
Session 3 – Breakout groups and topics for discussion	
16:00–18:00	Topics for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key elements of an effective RAWS&P • Challenges in creating and implementing a RAWS&P • Finding solutions to challenges • How to successfully implement a RAWS&P
18:00	Welcome cocktail
Day 2: 14 November 2025	
Session 4 – Breakout groups presentations and conclusions	
09:00	Breakout groups presentations (20 min each)
10:20	Break Tea/Coffee
11:00	Plenary discussion
12:30	Next steps
13:00	Close