

□ The citation for the Medal of Excellence Award states:

*"The crisis of mad cow disease was used to create consumer confidence in Europe."*

□ As the first Commissioner for Health, Consumer Protection and Food Safety this was my challenge.

□ Crisis stimulates reform globally.

### EU ten years ago – same story:

"Mad cow disease,"  
"Dioxin contamination in beef and dairy products."

People became very scared:

- Beef consumption tanks
- Milk, even chocolate bars, gone
- Supermarket shelves empty.



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### Food safety had become political!

- Government in Belgium fell.
- In Germany two government ministers sacked.
- In France, Spain and Italy ministers lucky to hold jobs.

➢ A plan – science based.

➢ White Paper on food safety in 6 months.

➢ Law amended – General Food Law in 18 months.

➢ Targeted laws :

- ✓ 84 laws promised
- ✓ 71 delivered
- ✓ 13 in pipeline
- ✓ All in 5 years

➢ EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) Independent and science based.

➢ Traceability and labelling.

➢ Rapid alert system.

➢ Mandatory recall.

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➢ This core value requires the tracking of food and feed at all stages of production distribution and sale.

➢ In a crisis – action within 24 hours.

➢ Unsafe food ordered from the market place.

➢ This is also the Obama ambition.

➢ Traceability!

➢ Not just food – and feed.

➢ Also animal identification.

➢ Infectious diseases notified within 24 hours.

➢ Ambition of Sec. Vilasck with NAIS proposal.

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### Antibiotics

Of the 71 targeted laws banning antibiotics in feed as a growth promoter the most important for animal and human health.



▪ **Germany:**

➢ Scientists said BSE present.

➢ Government said "No".

➢ 5 cases found within days.

➢ Market in beef collapsed.

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## • Crisis of pandemics

- 2002 – F.M.D.
- 2003 – SARS
- 2004 – Avian Influenza – bird flu
- Zoonoses – diseases skipping the species barrier
- All global diseases.
- Speed of spread.
- Huge panics – threat of airports closing.

### ➢ Less deadly

- Human to human transmission - more than SARS.
- Infectious prior to symptoms!
- This strain never seen in pigs or humans before.
- Contains elements of bird flu !!!
- Could this be the beginning of mutation?

### Once again:

- Crises of SARS and bird flu produce change.
- ECDC (European Centre for Disease Control) in Sweden.
- Special Envoy WHO - International Health Regulations 2005.
- This provides transparency and is working.

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## • The "A" TRIPLE THREAT

- AMR → MRSA
- Animal disease → ZOOZOSES
- Animal feed contamination → AFLATOXINS

### • These are the three areas of risk to:

- Animal health
- Human health

## □ AMR (Antimicrobial resistance)

- Many diseases becoming resistant to antibiotics
- Superbugs have developed immunities
- Pneumonia, meningitis, septicaemia: → MRSA
- One cause - routine non-medical application of antibiotics
- EU banned antibiotics as growth promoters in animal feed in 1997 and completely on 1 Jan 2006.
- Resistance of some diseases fell sharply
- And without any increase in cattle diseases
- But MRSA still a problem and increasing.

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- A healthy animal does not pass diseases to humans in meat, milk or eggs.
- Sec. Vilsack says NAIS necessary.
- Disease surveillance networks critical to early detection of animal diseases - exists in EU.
- Rapid response stops pathogens.

- The Ten Plagues of Egypt
- Aflatoxins may have killed the first-born children!
- Whatever about legend – scientific fact:  
Low-level exposure to aflatoxin e.g. in milk causes cancer.
- New scientific developments reduce risk.
- New EU regulation to recognise this – May 12, 2009

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## Sustainability

- Let me finish on the theme of the Symposium.
- Sustainability defined by a UN commission as:

*"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*



Author and entrepreneur Paul Hawken summed up the past 12 months:

*"We have an economy where we steal the future, sell it to the present and call it GDP."*

Let us in the food industry  
... not steal from our children  
... nor make them sick.

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