WHO warns of ‘post-antibiotic era’

T he World Health Organization (WHO) recently released its first ever antimicrobial resistance report, titled “Antimicrobial Resistance: Global Report on Surveillance.” To accomplish this, WHO attempted to obtain information on resistance from 129 member states for nine bacteria, antibiotic classes, and resistance combinations the agency selected. Unfortunately, only 114 countries provided any data, and only 22 countries had data for all nine combinations.

In addition to the nine bacteria of concern in regard to antibiotic resistance, the report also focuses on other antimicrobial resistance that is increasing in multi-drug-resistant TB, malaria, influenza and HIV.

While the U.S. does not really have a problem with multi-drug-resistant TB because of an excellent surveillance system and the availability of a treatment regimen at no cost, the fact that other countries do not have such a public health system in place to assure adequate dosing and compliance might pose a threat here as international travel continues to increase.

“Dr. Richard Raymond is a former U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for food safety.”

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Climate report warrants fact-based discussion

H OW true goes the Bob Dylan lyric, “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows”? A government-sponsored climate change report was just published that claims that we are in big trouble: The global temperature is rising, and the results will be catastrophic.

It struck me that we, as a nation, should start a serious and fact-driven discussion. No politics, please, just the hard, cold (or hot, in this case) facts.

The largest-ever report on climate change suggests that serious issues for the U.S. are occurring, predicting severe storms and rising sea levels that will threaten coastal communities and places like Florida. Upon hearing of the research, Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) declared simply that President Barack Obama “is not a meteorologist.”

Hey, Rubio, we know he isn’t, but your response is remarkably simplistic and, especially, for a man who has illusions of running for higher office.

Chief did not write the report. It was the work of hundreds of well-respected climatologists. It was a serious study that merits serious and thoughtful discussion, not thoughtlessly dismissive comments...

Weather Channel founder John Coleman was also dismissive of the report, calling it a “600-page litany of doom” and a “total distortion of the data and agenda-driven, destructive, self-interested account of bad science gone berserk.”

Coleman, who started speaking out against the concept of global warming in 2007, said it’s a politically funded hoax driven by scientists who have built their careers on it and live high on the hog on $2.6 billion of federal grants.

Jolley, however, believes there is a conspiracy to change current weather patterns back up, it’s time for a serious and rational approach. Let’s count the ways we need our environmental lobby to rise against food prices.

He also declared the scam “a threat to our economy and our civilization.”

Coleman sincerely, if passionately, begs others to trust thousands of scientists and politicians who have joined hands and are complicit in fraudulent activity based on incomplete science and are politically motivated to help achieve a world government.

Hey, Coleman, your assumption of a carefully hidden and dispersed conspiracy doesn’t contribute to rational discussion, either. Even if that were possible, convincing a generally independent Mother Nature to join the conspirators in carrying out this devious plot is not. Call Rubio and see if you can help each other a soft landing on this issue.

With 75% of the climatologists around the world agree that we have a problem and current weather patterns back up, it’s time for a serious and rational approach.

Let’s count the ways we need our environmental lobby to assay the gravity of the situation: Is America’s great Southwest enduring a long-term drought that’s forcing a 60-year reduction in the cattle herd size as well as a gradual migration northward? Check. Is polar ice thawing on a scale not seen in recorded times? Check. Are violent storms and record heat waves in the Southern Hemisphere while arctic blasts of cold reach deeper into the American South? Check. Just how bad is that drought, you ask? In Texas, it began in 2010 and peaked in 2011, which was the hottest, driest year ever recorded in the cattle state’s history. Weather-related dereliction of duty by state agencies has been a no-show.

For argument’s sake, let’s go with the preponderance of research and say global warming has a 97% chance of being real. If you’re a doubter, that leaves you with a 3% chance of being right. Does that translate into the kind of odds you’re willing to accept? You are betting on the lives and livelihoods of your children and grandchildren and the future of civilization.

So, let’s take politics out of the debate and just talk about the facts. Whether it’s manmade or just the natural cycle of the world’s climate is beside the point. Potential changes of this magnitude require a serious and well-considered response based on facts, not wishes and suppositions. Climate change is neither a conservative nor a liberal issue; it is a survival issue.”

*Chuck Jolley is president of Jolley & Associates, a marketing and public relations firm that concentrates on the food industry.

**Dr. Richard Raymond is a former U.S. Department of Agriculture undersecretary for food safety.”

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The WHO report is 232 pages long, with seven pages devoted to TB and another seven pages to gonorrhea. In contrast, antibiotic resistance related to food-producing animals got a total of four pages, and most were focused on a lack of data.

The report states that only Canada, the U.S. and a few European Union countries have a national antibiotic resistance monitoring system for humans, animals and food that is robust enough to allow at least a partial comparison of data.

The first paragraph in the “Antibacterial Resistance in Food-Producing Animals & the Food Chain” section does state that resistance in humans and animal health is “influenced by both human and non-human usage of antibiotics.”

Then, it adds that “the magnitude of such transmission from animal reservoirs to humans remains unknown” and says “more data are needed ... to identify priority areas for intervention.”

The WHO report notes that the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) has developed a list of 15 resistant bacteria that recommends restricting usage in food-producing animals of antimicrobials that are critically important for both human and animal health.

It concludes third- and fourth-generation cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones on that list.

In the U.S., the Food & Drug Administration has already placed major limitations on these two classes for animal use.

Combined, cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones comprise less than 0.3% of all antibiotics prescribed by veterinarians in the U.S.

Thank you, FDA, for doing your job and protecting my health.

Still, many countries have no limitations, and WHO is calling for action to prevent a “post-antibiotic era” in which people no longer have access to effective treatments.

The seven most common bacteria listed and discussed in the report are: Escherichia coli, Klebsiella (11 pages), streptococcus (10 pages), gonorrhea (seven pages), staphylococcus (seven pages), salmonella (seven pages) and shigella (six pages).

Salmonella and shigella, of course, can be related to consumption of foods — both animal and plant foods. Consumption of foods — both animal and plant foods, can contribute to multi-drug-resistant TB, gonorrhea or most of the other pathogens discussed.

Any further changes to how antibiotics for humans and animals are used in the U.S. must look at the bigger global picture and possible worldwide impact.

If other countries do nothing to limit the use of antibiotics in animals and people, much less track resistance patterns, any changes we make are just a drop in the proverbial bucket that may have adverse consequences globally as opposed to positive ones.

Any discussion of further restrictions on antibiotic use in animals really needs to be based on biological science, not political science.