

Dear colleagues, friends, and Buffalo's family from all over the world,

The rising world population, hyper-urbanization, the unpredictable and changing climate, the global pressures on water and land use, as well as the growing concern about the environmental impact of farming animals, linked to the general question of how to eradicate hunger in the world, converge as a tremendous global social challenge (FAO, 2018). Total world demand for food will increase between 35% and 56% between 2010 and 2050, bringing a global challenge to answer the question of how to produce and supply enough safe, nutritious, and sustainable food to a population expected to increase to 9 billion by 2050 (FAO, 2018). The water buffalo, an emerging species in the rest of the world apart from India, could contribute to long-term global strategy towards more sustainable food production from ruminants, where human requirements for high nutritional protein quality products such as dairy and meat products are needed.

Buffalo farming continues to grow worldwide at a rate higher than other production species (Buffaloes: 16%; Cattle: 12.8%; Sheep: 9.7%; Goats: 2.6%; Pigs: 12.4%) in the same period (FAO, 2015). The current global buffalo population is approximately 204 million heads, accounting for more than 98 percent located in Asia; 0.8 percent in Africa, particularly Egypt; 0.9 percent in South America; and 0.2 percent in Europe (Minervino et al., 2020; FAO, 2019). The growth rate of buffalo milk (4.1%) exceeded the growth rate of cow's milk (2.1%), indicating a growing interest in buffalo milk, which now contributes 15.2% of total milk production in the world compared to 12.8% obtained in 2010 (The World Dairy Situation, 2021).

As the buffalo population continues to expand in the world and Latin America, in Venezuela in particular, it is growing at an estimated rate of 15-17% per year (CRIABUFALOS, 2022); despite the national economy, with various challenges over time, allowing the migration of livestock systems towards Buffalo due to better tolerance, ability to face setbacks and better adaptability and performance of this species compared to cattle under adverse conditions, after the vulnerability of the Venezuelan economy in recent years, is the right moment where the nation is in an economic metamorphosis that forces us to demonstrate sustained and sustainable growth in buffalo farming.

The current buffalo population in Venezuela is approaching 2.500.000 heads, representing an essential source of animal protein by contributing to nearly 40% of the milk and dairy products and 20% of the meat consumed in the country (CRIABUFALOS, 2022). During the VI World Buffalo Congress held in Venezuela in 2001, the potential that the Venezuelan buffalo family had had before was evident, and the enthusiasm to promote and develop this species has never stopped allowing us to achieve such an increase in the herd population. We expect the



participation of FAO in this event to exchange information on world inventories, update it and highlight the importance that the Buffalo represents within our territory.

We have joined efforts from the Venezuelan Buffalo's Breeders Association (CRIABUFALOS), the University of Zulia (LUZ, La Universidad del Zulia), the Ministry of Agriculture and Land, and the Venezuelan Institutes of the Milk (INVELACAR) and Meat (CONVECAR), besides established companies in both the meat and dairy industry, with more than 200 associate members and with the direct participation of the 17 member countries of the American Federation of Buffalo Breeders. This magnificent event will be held in the capital and heart of the country, Caracas, a modern and thriving metropolis with 3.5 million inhabitants and Venezuela's largest conventions and five-star hotel accommodations city, enriched with many restaurants to satisfy all gastronomy tastes, which also concentrates the most significant consumption of products derived from Buffalo farming.

Therefore, we are delighted to invite you to attend the 13th World Buffalo Congress, 2023, to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, during 22-24 November 2023, to contribute and receive all scientific knowledge achieved around the water buffalo with the advances it implies to continue contributing to the world what this beautiful species has given to our country and simultaneously witness buffalos' farming activities in one of America's most engaged countries with water buffalo production and development. We also encourage you to visit our tropical paradisiac Caribbean and South American land to meet our people and exchange and learn about our culture. We want to host all our guests as they deserve, just as we have been hosted at each congress and symposium on our tour worldwide.

Venezuela and the Americas gathered are eager to receive, exchange, and promote knowledge, ideas, advances, and new technologies about water buffalo management, development, production, and industry, implying an incredible milestone for the growth, buildup, and water buffalo impact on our society. The agenda includes two introductory pre-conference workshops, one on Reproduction and Biotechnology and the other on Buffalo's products and Industry (November 20-21, 2023), the central congress meeting (November 22-24, 2023), simultaneously with scientific poster presentations, areas for commercial stands, and animal exhibitions with the participation of more than 100 elites specimens of high genetic value coming from the leading buffalo farms in the country, followed by the usual Buffalo's Tour (November 25-27, 2023) to those interested in knowing our buffalo production's systems.

Our scientific program encloses a complete plan combining academia, scientific exchange, business and industry arena, and the organization of a Buffalo show, encompassing an entire program combining academia, scientific discussion, business industry arena, and animal exhibition in one place to discuss management and animal welfare, feed and nutrition, one



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FOOTPRINT LIVESTOCK



health, genetic, reproduction and biotechnology, Buffalo's products, industry and marketing, digitization and precision technologies, sustainability, and socioeconomics.

Finally, with the growing demand for food to meet the needs of the population coupled with the increasing limitations for agriculture in the future, as mentioned above, it is imperative, as well as our commitment to the world, to offer alternatives for sustainable agriculture, which must go hand in hand with a significant increase in production efficiency. Indeed this event will mark a before and after in the history of buffaloes in Venezuela and turn the world's eyes towards this incredible species as an alternative **For a Carbon-Neutral Footprint Livestock.**

Sincerely yours,

BBA. Nicola Fabbozzo
President of the IBF
Chair local organizing committee 13th WBC

Prof. Dr. Juan Carlos Gutiérrez
University of Zulia
Chair of the scientific committee 13th WBC