

Draft Speech: Assistant Director General ARNI MATHIESEN

(16 December, 09:00, German Room)

Round-Table Discussion: Moving Forward through Lessons Learned on Response Actions to Aquatic Animal Disease Emergencies

16–18 December 2019

German Room, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

On behalf of the FAO Director General, Dr Qu Dongyu, I am pleased to welcome you to this important round-table discussion on Moving forward through lessons learned on response actions to aquatic animal disease emergencies.

During the last three decades, the aquaculture sector and its governance (state and non-state actors) have been challenged by serious aquatic animal disease incursions; in some cases, the sector was caught off-guard by the emergence of new diseases.

For example, since 2009, we have seen the emergence of Acute hepatopancreatic necrosis diseases (AHPND), Tilapia lake virus (TiLV), *Enterocytozoon hepatopenaei* (EHP), Shrimp hemocyte iridescent virus (SHIV) and more recently Infectious spleen and kidney necrosis virus (ISKNV).

Some known diseases have re-emerged to cause mass mortalities in new geographical localities, for example, White spot disease (WSD) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Australia, Koi herpesvirus (KHV) in Iraq, Epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS) in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Infectious myonecrosis virus (IMNV) in India.

Additionally, large-scale mortality events due to environmental causes appear to be affecting both cultured and wild populations of aquatic animals with increased frequency and severity. These include losses due to such events as algal blooms, temperature extremes, oxygen depletion, point-source pollution (chemical and oil spills) and pesticide runoff from agricultural activities.

Due to various reasons, government agencies and the private sector often have difficulty in responding rapidly and effectively to mass mortality events. Such factors include a lack of planning for emergency response, absence of readily accessible funds, lack of appropriate organizational structure, and lack of adequate training, expertise and capacity. The effectiveness of responses to mass mortalities of aquatic animals varies from country to country, depending on the cause and the state of national emergency preparedness.

Often, there is a lack of follow up to a mortality event, in order to determine where improvements can be made. A systematic assessment of the economic and social impacts of a mass mortality of aquatic animals is often lacking, as, in general, standardized procedures for assessing such impacts are not available.

In view of the clear need to improve the response of national authorities and the private sector to mass mortalities of cultured and wild aquatic animal populations, this round-table discussion is

being organized by the FAO in collaboration with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

FAO is at the forefront of providing technical assistance and capacity building to our member states on aquaculture biosecurity and aquatic animal health. You will more about this in FAO presentations later today.

You may recall that FAO in collaboration with NACA organized the first Regional Workshop on Preparedness and Response to Aquatic Animal Health Emergencies that was hosted by the Government of Indonesia in September 2004, some 15 years ago. That meeting was triggered by diseases such as EUS, viral nervous necrosis (VNN), WSD and KHV. As earlier mentioned they are still a problem as of today. That workshop also produced very detailed guidelines on the same subject that you will be discussing today. The main authors of that guidelines are here, Drs Richard Arthur and Rohana Subasinge. I believe that these guidelines are technically rich in scope and are still valid.

Some of you may also be aware that FAO and partners are promoting the Progressive Management Pathway for Improving Aquaculture Biosecurity or PMP/AB. You may recall that we started discussions on this in April 2018 during the first consultation hosted by the World Bank in Washington DC and followed by a second consultation hosted by OIE in Paris last January and a third one here in Rome last March. I am pleased to inform that the 10th session of FAO's Committee on Fisheries Sub-Committee on Aquaculture held in Trondheim last August has endorsed and supported PMP/AB and the development of a long-term, multi-donor assisted partnership programme on Aquaculture Biosecurity. The PMP/AB has four stages and in each of the stage, emergency response and preparedness is an important consideration; it is also one of the five pillars of the proposed umbrella programme on Aquaculture Biosecurity.

This meeting is really an important event. I urge you to carefully assess what are the major gaps why biosecurity seems to be the greatest challenge in aquaculture. A final objective of this meeting is the planned Decision-tree manual that will hopefully provide guidance to all relevant stakeholders (national competent authorities and private-sector aquaculturists) in dealing quickly, efficiently and effectively with mass mortality events affecting stocks of cultured and wild aquatic animals. They are the frontliners at the ground level and the type and quality of response actions that they provide will determine the consequence of such emergency events. We have here many of the important players in this field and we have some of countries with very rich experiences in dealing with mass mortality events. I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this event and rest assured of FAO support to relevant follow up-actions that will be identified.

Before closing, I would like to express our deep appreciation to everyone for your kind support to FAO initiatives and together let us pursue more strengthened partnership so that we can collectively share the responsibility to assist the aquaculture sector in general in addressing and reducing mass mortality events.

Rome will be sunny the next three days so please enjoy the time that you are here. My staff will be around to assist in any way we can to make your stay enjoyable and memorable. All the best and good morning to everyone.