

**Informal Consultation for Europe and Central Asia  
29-30 May 2017, Budapest, Hungary**

**Background Note**

**Session 7 – Provisional Annotated Agenda, Fortieth Session of the European**

**Commission on Agriculture (ECA), Budapest, Hungary, 27-28 September 2017**

The assessment conducted on the ECA has highlighted that many member states feel that the added value of the biennial ECA could be increased by focusing on fewer topics to allow more in-depth technical discussions to stimulate participation of national technical experts (which has not been possible in the past as the sessions were addressing many diverse technical topics required the presence of more experts). Having reviewed potential topics for the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the ECA, the Executive Committee has identified the effect of climate change on transboundary animal diseases (TADs) as the main theme of the 40<sup>th</sup> session and all other items should be arranged around this main topic. Based on these recommendations, the Secretariat has developed the following draft annotated agenda for the review of the ECA members.

**1. The effect of climate change on animal diseases, trade and food security in the REU region.**

The REU region spans an extremely large range of agro-ecological environments. Animal production systems occurring across this large area are similarly fairly diverse: from predominant intensive animal production in the North-West to much more extensive, even pastoralist, animal husbandry systems in the South-East. Extensive belts of zonal environments, such as semi-deserts, steppes, forest-steppes, forests and tundra, sharing similar climatic and animal production characteristics, stretch in longitudinal direction across Eurasia for thousands of kilometers. This significantly facilitates longitudinal spread of diseases through agro-ecologically similar settings. The most densely populated mid-latitudes of the area, bridging Asia and Europe, provide an “epidemiological Silk Road” for the spread of TADs in both directions. Middle latitudes of Eurasia experience complex climate change processes, whose effect on the epidemiology of animal diseases needs to be carefully re-analyzed and monitored in future in order to anticipate emerging epidemiological threats to animal production.

One of the difficulties here is that the effects of climate change develop over large spatial scales and often accumulate over a period of time before their agro-ecological and epidemiological implications become apparent. Many of the recent epidemics or local flare ups of TADs (ASF, LSD, PPR, AI, rabies etc.) seem to have been preceded by certain changes in regional climate systems, modulating host or vector population dynamics and thus favouring elevated disease activity. Most visibly, variations in climate affect vector borne diseases such as Blue Tongue, West Nile Fever, Schmallenberg disease, Lumpy Skin Disease, Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever and others. However, on the interannual and decadal scale climate also strongly modulates the dynamics of other diseases such as African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza and fox rabies, which are often actually considered largely climate irresponsive. This calls for a change in the way in which we perceive the problem of animal diseases towards accounting more and more for a broad environmental context of their epidemiology and expanding the range of disciplines and approaches likely to help (wildlife ecology, climatology, remote sensing, GIS, niche modelling etc.).

Session one will review these and other examples and case studies in order to identify climate-TADs related issues that need to be addressed scientifically and practically. Presentations and discussions will be held on if and how changes in climate and weather patterns have already affected disease occurrence rates and ranges, and will provide an outlook into the future climate scenarios likely to bring even more changes to the vectors, pathogen and host distribution patterns.

The session will also review the current impacts of animal diseases on trade and the development of the animal production sector under the conditions of climate change, in the context of local and international trade restrictions. The session will particularly focus on how animal diseases impair the production of smallholder farmers, their likely production losses, and the implications for food security and public health challenges (zoonoses) in the region. Trade-related sanitary and phytosanitary issues, international food safety and quality standards and the transparency of agrifood policy will be considered. The regulatory and enabling environment measures needed to ensure viability for small holders, while ensuring food safely and preventing the further spread of transboundary diseases will be addressed too.

## **2. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR): the loss of a major defence to the emerging challenge?**

The availability and use of antimicrobial drugs in terrestrial and aquatic animals and in crop production is essential for both health and productivity and contributes to food security, food safety and animal welfare, and in turn, the protection of livelihoods and sustainability of animal and crop production. However, there are growing global concerns about resistance to antimicrobial drugs, including antibiotics, and that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) will reverse these benefits. The livestock sector is one of the main sectors that is associated with antibiotic resistance. There are a range of factors which have contributed to this such as: (i) a lack of regulation and oversight of use; (ii) poor therapy adherence; (iii) non-therapeutic use; (iv) over-the-counter or internet sales, and; (v) the availability of counterfeit or poor quality antimicrobials. The consequences of AMR include the failure to successfully treat infections, leading to more severe or prolonged illness, death, production losses and negative consequences for livelihoods and food security.

The underlying reasons, current status and challenges faced in the region and how will these effect REU's response to regional shifts in animal diseases will be discussed. Similarly, prevention and response measures at the regional level will be addressed. There is a need for a multi-sectorial and multi-dimensional One Health approach. The FAO/OIE/WHO tripartite, together with public and private sector organizations, shares the responsibility for and coordination of global activities addressing AMR at animal-human-ecosystems interfaces. FAO, being a multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary organization in itself, brings into practice its expertise on aquatic and terrestrial animal health and production, food safety and crop production, with due attention to the regulatory aspects.

### **3. Disease occurrence tracking, strategic response to TADs and informed decision making**

Ensuring timely and reliable information flows on the disease situation all the way from the farm to the international level is key to effectively fighting transboundary diseases, developing strategic response measures and applying informed and effective control actions in the affected areas. Firstly, existing approaches to international disease tracking and reporting used by the EC (ADNS), FAO (EMPRES-i), OIE (WAHIS), WHO and DTRA will be reviewed to find ways to better coordinate their efforts and where possible avoid duplication. The practice of sharing disease occurrence information internationally: either as opportunistically reported outbreaks or results of systematic targeted surveillance campaigns, needs to be strengthened and enhanced, possibly with the use of more advanced information management solutions.

Secondly, attention will be brought to the fact that strategic responses to any TAD requires a good understanding of a wealth of other epidemiologically relevant information, such as host population data, production systems, vector distribution, risk factors and environmental variables (land cover, climate, trade patterns etc.). Currently, there is no international information facility aimed at collecting, managing, updating and making this kind of data available to animal health analysts and decision makers. Disease risk modelling efforts are strongly restrained by the availability of such background information and are currently restricted geographically to just a few selected countries, mainly in Western Europe. This situation can be greatly improved to make epidemiological observation and disease situation monitoring much more intelligent, strategic and risk based, through use of a wide range disease relevant information products.

Thirdly, recent advances in information technologies (dynamic cartographic applications, mobile data collection, data management and visualisation techniques, etc.) make it much easier to integrate disease occurrence data with other epidemiologically relevant information into the decision support tools, which can help to prepare for animal health emergencies and to respond in a strategic and informed way.

The session will review some of the existing solutions developed in the framework of FAO projects, including risk analysis and communication, disease risk modelling, tools for data collection and support of the decision making process. FAO's assistance to countries with animal disease response measures and engagement of stakeholders will also be presented and discussed, i.e. Crisis Management Center missions, Good Emergency Management Practice (GEMP), capacity building, etc. The session will analyse what is available and what needs to be improved based on the new challenges to ensure stakeholders can prepare and respond adequately.

### **4. Policy and regional collaboration**

The session will stress the need for countries in a region to share information, coordinate and cooperate in the fight against transboundary animal diseases. This translates into the need to develop policies at national and regional scales, to evaluate current and needed collaborations and the roles of FAO and other partners. The key barriers to achieving the needed transitions and agreements will be discussed.



## **5. UNFCCC Paris agreement: how do countries' INDCs/NDCs commitments relate to transboundary diseases what does this mean for climate financing**

The session will review the pledged commitments of member states under their INDC/NDCs towards the UNFCCC Paris agreement. In particular the session will assess how such commitments are linked to animal diseases and considerations on how animal and other transboundary diseases can be included in national as well as regional climate financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

## **6. Gender and social inclusion in FAO's assistance in the region: update on the progress made and challenges**

Livestock management is linked to gender disaggregated roles which in turn differs depending on the animal, farming and production system size and type. Containing the spread of transboundary diseases through prevention and outbreak responses measures need to ensure the needed gender considerations. Men and women are also effected in different ways by outbreaks and this needed to be taken into consideration to ensure adequate support mechanisms and safety nets. The session will provide an update on the progress made by FAO in the region in addressing gender-related challenges and will provide recommendations on integration of gender into responses.

## **7. International Years 2014-2016 and their contribution to the activities in the regions**

The past few years, has seen a number of agriculture and food security issues being the topic of United Nations International Years; namely, the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in 2014, Soils (IYS) in 2015 and Pulses (IYP) in 2016. The agenda item will review how these international years were received and what activities and impacts where achieved in the region. In addition discussions will be held on what further work is needed to be supported by members.

## **8. ECA assessment report review**

Members will review the findings of the report on the assessment of the ECA and discuss its recommendations, it will also assess if the new format of the ECA session was successful and what new modalities might be useful in "modernizing" the ECA.

## **9. Election of Members of the Executive Committee**

## **10. Other business**

## **11. Date and place of the Forty First Session**

### **Closing of the Session**

### **FIELD TRIP**

Relevant field trips are being organized by the Government of Hungary and will occur on the morning of day 2.



**SIDE EVENT Proposals, before the dinner 1<sup>st</sup> day and lunch 2<sup>nd</sup> day**

- 1) Tracking disease and modelling climate change scenarios, show casing FAO tools and methodologies.
- 2) Presentation of Food Security and Nutrition Regional Panorama.