



Organisation
Mondiale
de la Santé
Animale

World
Organisation
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Health

Organización
Mundial
de Sanidad
Animal

9th Conference of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Damascus (Syria), 29 October to 01 November 2007.

FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS

	Page	§
List of abbreviations	iii	
Introduction	1	1-3
Monday 29 October 2007		
Opening Ceremony	1	4-31
Election of the Conference Committee	4	32
Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable	4	33
Designation of Chairpersons and Rapporteurs	5	34
Animal Health Situation in the Middle East in 2006 and implementation of the New WAHIS System	5	35-73
Discussion	15	74-77
<u>Item I:</u>		
The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services	16	78-84
Discussion	16	85-97
Progress in Rinderpest accreditation for countries of the region	18	98-108
Discussion	19	109-117
Report of Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East	21	118-127
Discussion	22	128-134
Tuesday 30 October 2007		
<u>Item II:</u>		
The Geographic Information System (GIS) used for animal disease control	23	135-158
Discussion	25	159-170
An update on the Veterinary Services of Iraq	27	171
Regional control of HPAI	27	172-179
Discussion	28	180-188

	Page	§
Fourth OIE Strategic Plan, Strengthening of Veterinary services and Capacity Building: Middle East experience with the PVS Instrument	29	189-196
Discussion	30	197-200
Legislation and implementation of Animal Welfare in the Middle East	31	201-205
Discussion	31	206-216
Updated on developments in aquatic animal health	32	217-224
Discussion	34	225
Presentations by international and regional organisations	34	
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	34	226-233
EUROPEAN Commission (EU)	35	234
Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre	35	235-238
Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development	36	239
World Bank	36	240-242
United States Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Inspection Service APHIS-USDA	36	243-244
Discussion of Recommendations N° 1 and	36	245-
Venue, Date and agenda items for the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East	37	246-249
Wednesday 31 October 2007		
Professional and guided cultural visit	37	250
Thursday 01 November 2007		
Adoption of the Draft Final Report and Recommendations	37	251-252
Motion of Thanks	37	253
Closing Ceremony	38	254-259

Appendices

I. List of participants	39
II. Agenda	46
III. Timetable	47
IV. Recommendation No. 1	49
V. Recommendation No. 2	51
VI. Press release	52
VII. Motion of thanks	54

List of abbreviations

AHITF	:	Avian and Human Influenza Facility
AI	:	Avian influenza
AOAD	:	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
CMC-AH	:	Crisis Management Centre/Animal Health
CVO	:	Chief Veterinary Officer
ECTAD	:	Emergency Centre for TADs
EMPRES	:	Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases
EU	:	European Union
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FMD	:	Foot and mouth disease
GF-TADs	:	Global Framework for Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
GIS	:	Geographic Information System
GLEWS	:	Global Warning System
GPS	:	Global Positioning System
GREP	:	Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (FAO)
HPAI	:	Highly pathogenic avian influenza
IICA	:	Inter American Institute on Agriculture
MC	:	Member Country
MENA	:	Middle East and North African Region
MZCC	:	Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre
MZCP	:	Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme
NDVI	:	Normalised difference vegetation index
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
OFFLU	:	OIE/FAO Avian Influenza Network
OIE	:	World Organisation for Animal Health (Office International des Epizooties)
PPR	:	Peste des petits ruminants
PVS	:	Performance of Veterinary Services

RAHC	:	Regional animal Health Centre
RR	:	Regional Representation
RRME	:	Regional Representation for the Middle East
RVF	:	Rift Valley fever
SEFRA	:	Special Emergency Fund for Rehabilitation Activities
TADs	:	Transboundary Animal Diseases
TCPs	:	Technical Cooperation Projects
UNICEF	:	United nations Children's Fund
USDA-APHIS	:	United States Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
VS	:	Veterinary Services
WHO	:	World Health Organization
WAHIS	:	World animal Health Information System

Introduction

1. Following the invitation of the Government of Syria, the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East was held in Damascus from 29 October to 01 November 2007.
2. A total of 55 participants, comprising OIE Delegates and/or nominees of 15 Member Countries and 2 Observer Countries and senior officers from 7 regional and international organisations attended the conference. In addition, representatives of the private sector and private veterinary organisations from 2 countries were present. Dr Barry O'Neil, President of the OIE International Committee, Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General, Dr Salman A. Nabi, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, Dr George Khoury, OIE Delegate for Syria, Dr Dewan Sibartie, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department, Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East and Dr Karim Ben Jebara, Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department also participated in the Conference. The speakers of Technical Items I and II, namely Dr Pavlos Economides and Dr Karim Ben Jebara honoured the Conference by their presence.
3. The list of participants and the Agenda are presented in Appendices 1 and 11

Monday 29 October 2007

Opening Ceremony

4. Dr Ziad Namour, Chief Veterinary Officer of Syria, welcomed participants on behalf of the Organising Committee and the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture stating that it was an honour for Syria to have been chosen to host the 9th OIE Regional Conference for the Middle East.
5. Dr Namour expressed his gratitude to the Minister of Agriculture of Syria for his presence at the opening ceremony and extended a special welcome to the President of the OIE International Committee and the OIE Director General and his staff as well as representatives of regional and international organisations.
6. The Chief Veterinary Officer of Syria mentioned that the animal health sector has witnessed important developments during recent years and it now represents more than 32% of the total agrarian production.
7. Dr Namour pointed out that various services relating to veterinary health care covering prevention and control of animal diseases are provided free of charge by Government.
8. Dr Namour concluded by thanking the OIE for its continuous assistance and support and wished all participants a successful meeting. He invited participants to personally witness the warmth and hospitality of the people of Syria.
9. Dr Salman A. Nabi Al Khuzaei, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, on behalf of all the Delegates, thanked the Government and people of Syria for kindly hosting the conference. He also expressed his appreciation to Dr George Khoury and the Organising Committee for their valuable efforts in organising the Conference.

10. Dr Nabi stated that the spread of animal diseases due to globalised trade and services was a matter of concern. He stressed that concerted efforts on the part of all countries of the region were required for the prevention and eradication of those diseases.
11. Dr Nabi hoped that all the experts attending the conference would assist countries in the region to boost up animal resources and livestock economies as well as providing consumers with healthy food free from pathogens.
12. Dr Barry O'Neil, President of the OIE International Committee, began his address by thanking Dr Adel Safar, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of Syria and the OIE Delegate of Syria for hosting the 9th OIE Regional Conference in Damascus, Syria.
13. Dr O'Neil highlighted some of the challenges facing Agriculture in the region including water limitations, soil erosion, and poor agricultural production methods that have led to a growing gap between Agricultural production and consumption. This has resulted in countries of the region becoming net food importers. He mentioned a recently published United Nations study on the status of the planet which indicates very worrying statistics on the world situation. Over 20 years, the world population has increased by 35% to 6.7 billion people while Middle Eastern countries showed even greater increases some reaching up to 75%. Every person now requires 22 hectares of earth surface to meet his needs, yet the earth's capacity is just 15 hectares. Intensification of agriculture over the last 20 years has increased production by 40% but has also resulted in water shortages and other problems related to water and soil quality. It is therefore crucial to find more effective ways to produce crops and animals to feed people. This can be achieved by utilising new genetics and avoiding wastage and thus ensure security of the food supply especially from threats of pests and diseases.
14. Dr O'Neil reminded that the globalisation process with 2 billion people travelling by air every year and the inevitable climate change tend to favour new emerging pests and diseases which create risks to countries both economically and socially. Effective Veterinary Services are key to protecting countries from these risks. Disease surveillance is a core foundation of good animal health systems. Recent economic studies commissioned by OIE have clearly shown the values and significant benefits of effective surveillance systems that countries should strive to put in place.
15. Dr O'Neil continued by discussing OIE's role in standard setting and indicated that these standards must be based on the best science available in order to protect animal health and ensure food safety. While developing countries have sometimes argued that the standards are too difficult to comply with, OIE has provided ways to help such countries. For example, exporting countries can identify in the OIE Codes, commodities that are safe to trade irrespective of the animal health status. They can also use the concept of compartmentalisation where premises free from diseases and having an enhanced biosecurity will be able to export. On the other hand, importing countries must also ensure that they do not apply excessive trade restrictions which will ultimately undermine their credibility. The OIE now has a trade dispute settlement capacity to try and solve problems at a technical level.
16. Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE, thanked the Government and the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian reforms of Syria for hosting the Conference in the beautiful city of Damascus. He expressed his special gratitude to Drs George Khoury and Ziad Nammour and the staff of the veterinary department for the excellent organisation put in place to ensure the success of the Conference.

17. Dr Vallat highlighted the major activities undertaken in the region since the 8th Regional Conference that was held in Manama, Bahrain in 2005. He mentioned *Inter Alia*, the establishment of the Permanent Regional Steering Committee for the joint OIE/FAO Progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), the creation of the joint OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre and the work plan directing policies against priority animal diseases in the region particularly foot and mouth disease (FMD) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).
18. A regional harmonisation control programme has been developed for FMD with the support of the OIE and the OIE has held a number of workshops to facilitate dissemination of information on HPAI and to improve preparedness for early detection and rapid response in order to combat the disease.
19. With regard to evaluation and subsequent strengthening of Veterinary Services, Dr Vallat was pleased to note that the important OIE PVS tool which was presented during the Kuwait meeting in January 2007 has been successfully applied to the region. So far, 4 countries in the region have been evaluated by OIE trained experts and five others will be evaluated in a few weeks time. 53 countries have already requested the benefits of PVS evaluations.
20. Dr Vallat announced the Global Conference on Animal Welfare which would take place in Cairo next year stating that he was convinced that the region with its long history and culture on animal welfare represented an excellent venue to such a conference. He added that a technical presentation on the subject has been included in the conference agenda and that would prove useful especially to countries that have not yet embarked on legislation on animal welfare.
21. Dr Vallat commented on the other technical items that would be presented during the course of the Conference one of which would discuss the role of the Geographical Information System (GIS) a new evolving system that would radically improve animal disease surveillance in the region.
22. Regarding food safety issues, Dr Vallat was glad to note that several Middle Eastern countries had started updating their national animal health regulations to comply with international requirements. He stressed that the responsibility for animal production food safety represented one of the greatest achievements of modern animal health and strongly encouraged Veterinary Services to improve their visibility in that fast expanding field in order to further restore consumer confidence in food of animal origin.
23. In conclusion, Dr Vallat stressed on the ever-increasing threat of animal diseases and the importance of sound governance of Veterinary Services. He stated that with climate change and globalisation of goods and services, animal diseases were emerging and re-emerging and were striking where they were least expected. He added that Veterinary Services would always be in the frontline to combat such diseases including those transmissible to man. He reminded that more than 75% of emerging human diseases recorded over the past two decades have been traced to an animal source. The role of Veterinary Services including its "Public Good" component is now clearly recognised by the International community and more and more national and international resources are being placed at the disposal of Veterinary Services. The OIE and the World Bank recently organised a conference in Washington involving the participation of high level economists. The conference demonstrated that the costs involved in implementing veterinary surveillance complying with OIE standards are insignificant compared with those incurred during natural or intentional biological disasters linked with animal diseases. He pleaded for everything to be done to uphold the dignity of the veterinary services across the world.

24. His Excellency, Dr Adel Safar, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reforms of Syria, welcomed all participants and thanked his staff who worked very hard to ensure that the conference is fruitful.
25. He congratulated the OIE for its role in the fight against infectious diseases through harmonised efforts and improved collaboration between Member Countries. He also complimented the OIE for its remarkable expansion over recent years and for developing standards, guidelines and recommendations for animal diseases and for the transparent dissemination of animal disease information.
26. Animal diseases including zoonoses represent a major threat to animal production and food security in the region and they can also severely impact on public health including food safety.
27. The Government of Syria attaches a lot of importance to animal resources and provides free diagnostic and other services to livestock breeders. It regularly updates legislation regarding livestock to ensure compliance with OIE international standards.
28. Dr Safar stated that Syria strongly believes in regional cooperation particularly with respect to animal disease control and has in this respect signed a number of Agreements with neighbouring countries and organisations to act in a unified manner against animal diseases. However, he noted that despite these common efforts weaknesses still exist and there is a need for more capacity building in the region. In this respect, he welcomed the joint OIE/FAO efforts through their GF-TADS mechanism to help countries in the region.
29. Dr Safar wished the conference every success and promised the support of the Government of Syria in the implementation of the recommendations that the conference will adopt.
30. In conclusion, the Minister wished much success to the participants and declared the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East officially open.
31. The texts of the above speeches were made available to all the participants.

Election of the Conference Committee

32. Participants elected the following Conference Committee:

Chairperson:	Dr George Khoury (Syria)
Vice-Chairperson:	Dr Kassem Al Qahtani (Qatar)
Rapporteur General:	Dr Obeida Moudawar(Lebanon)

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

33. The Provisional Agenda and Timetable were adopted.

Designation of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs

34. The Conference Committee was elected as follows:

Item I: Dr Bashir Taha (Sudan), Chairperson
Dr Molayemi Ibrahim (Iran), Rapporteur

Item II: Dr Mohamed Moussa Abdullah (United Arab Emirates), Chairperson
Dr Basem Adhad (Iraq), Rapporteur

Animal health situation:

Dr Salman Abdnabi (Bahrain), Chairperson
Dr Alexandros Konis (Cyprus), Rapporteur

Animal health situation in the Middle East in 2006 and implementation of the new WAHIS system

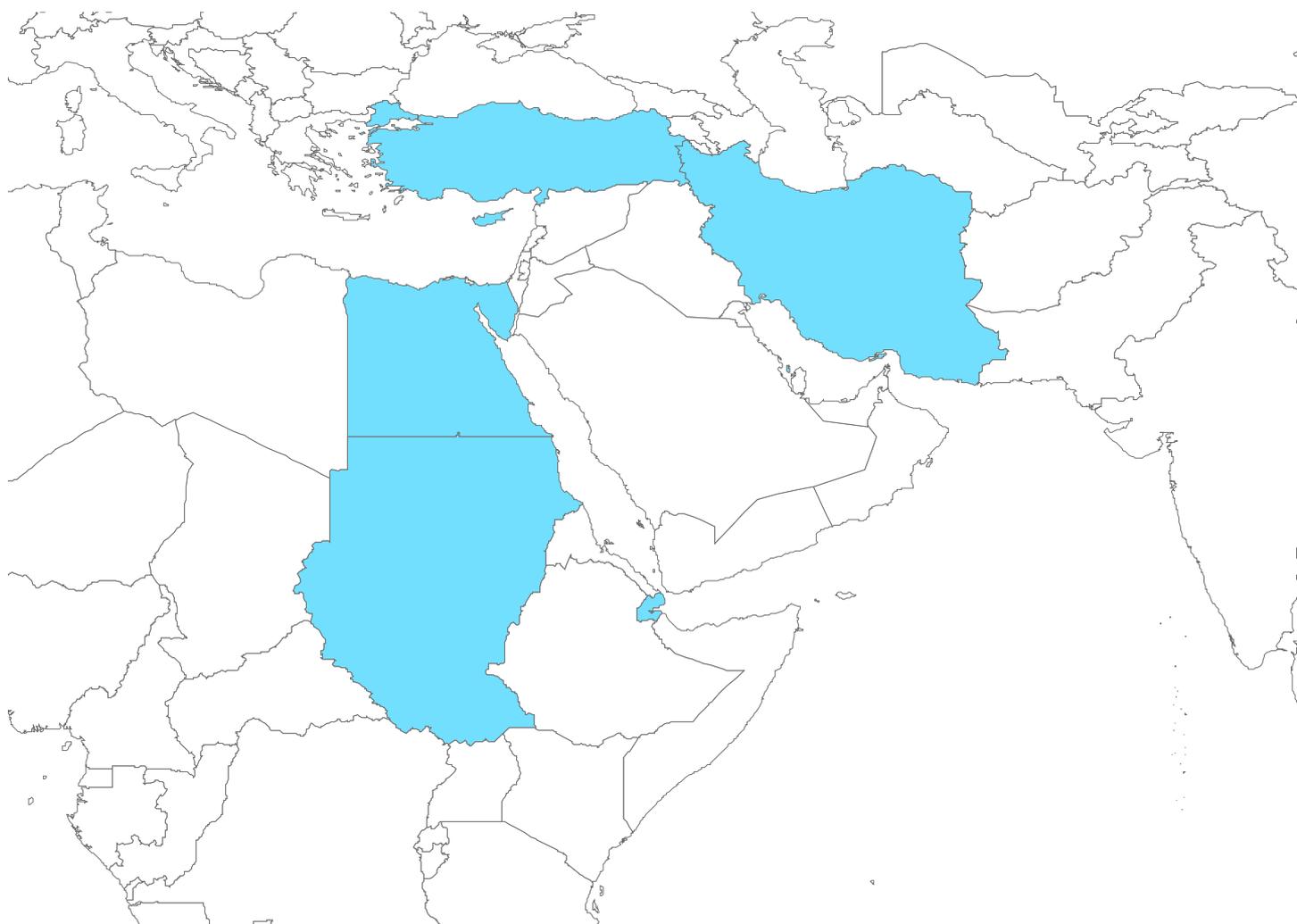
35. The Session Chairman, Dr Salman Abdnabi, invited Dr Karim Ben Jebara, Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department, to present the animal health situation of Member Countries in the region in 2006.

Animal health situation in Middle East in the first half of 2007

36. This report is based on information extracted from national reports provided by OIE Member Countries (MC) from the Middle East for the Regional Conference. It has been supplemented, whenever felt necessary, by relevant information from immediate notification and follow up reports of events happening in some countries up to September 2007, and from the annual questionnaires of 2005 and 2006 as well as the World Animal Health publication in 2004 for livestock population.

37. Of the 20 OIE Member Countries of the Regional Commission for the Middle East, 10 have submitted their reports for the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Middle East. These are Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Sudan and Turkey. They are represented in blue in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Member Countries that submitted their report for the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Middle East (in blue).



Livestock population in Middle East

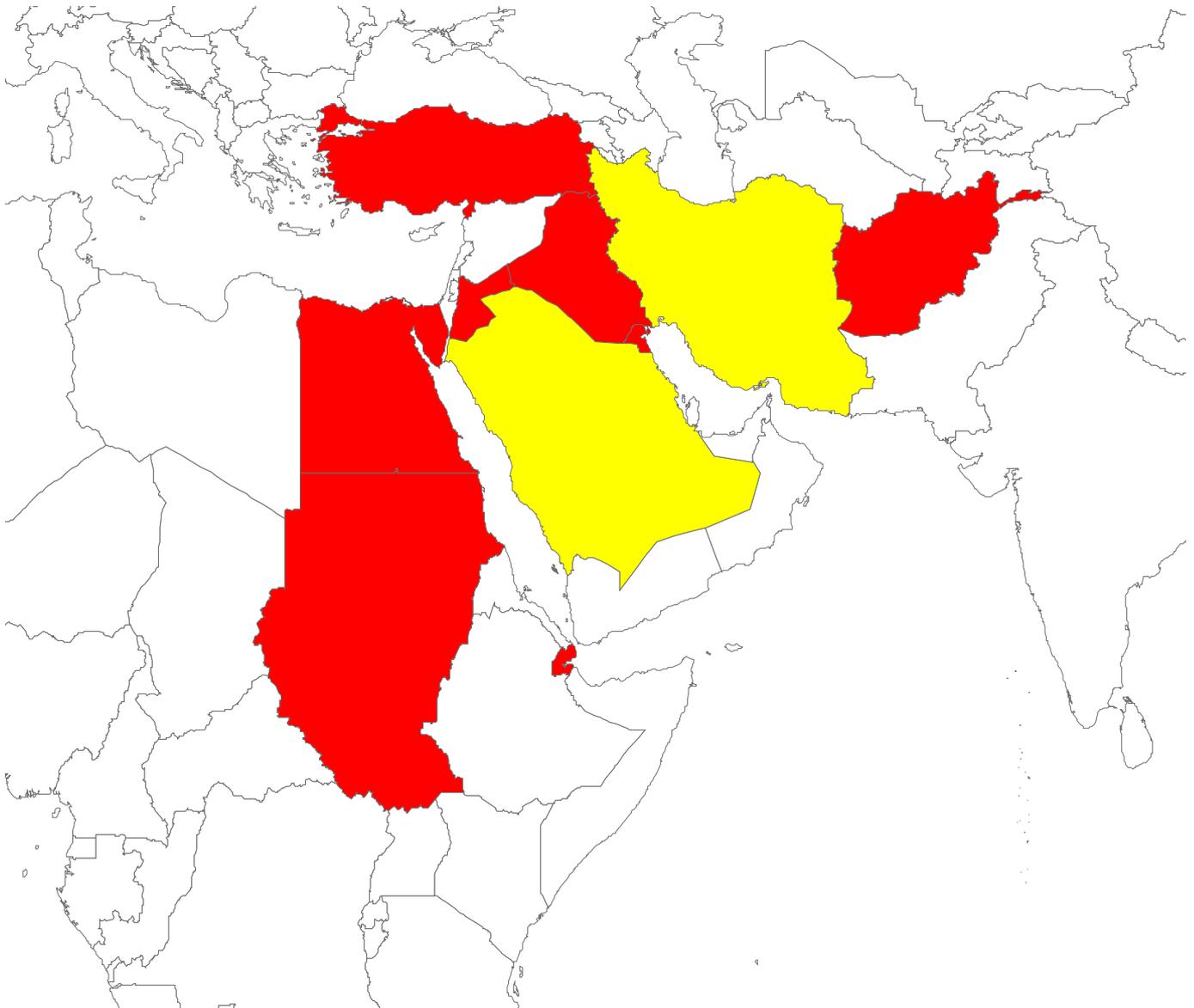
COUNTRY	BOVIDES	SHEEP & GOATS	CAMELIDES	Equidae	BIRDS
Afghanistan	3 715 409	16 053 217	175 270	1 729 688	12 155 846
Bahrain	9 000	44 000	2 000	2 000	5 000 000
Cyprus	56 904	619 615	-	-	16 674 000
Djibouti	40 000	1 000 000	50 000	-	6 000
Egypt	5 533 525	3 854 459	60 701	-	-
Iran	9 690 400	78 318 100	144 300	1 547 100	578 102 511
Iraq	1 700 000	15 000 000	7 000	10 000	50 000 000
Jordan	70 000	4. 6 000 000	19 500	18 000	150 000 000
Kuwait	20 000	1 175 000	10 000	1 500	39 000 000
Lebanon	88 000	805 000	-	3 140	75 000 000
Libya	215 000	6 754 000	185 000	-	55 000 000
Oman	301 558	1 908 214	117 299	-	4 200 000
Qatar	7 411	266 546	23 210	4 759	112 886
Saudi Arabia	346 069	9 089 208	283 913		474 777 888
Somalia	4 500 000	30 500 000	6 500 000	-	-
Sudan	41 000 000	93 200 000	4 100 000	3 500 000	-
Syria	940 000	16 300 000	15 000	150 000	25 058 000
Turkey	10 108 415	30 049 397	7 500	587 098	197 414 944
United Arab Emirates	113 200	2 050 000	260 000	16 000	38 850 000
Yemen	1 393 718	15 768 857	356 571	-	-
TOTAL	79 847 899	324 785 613	12 310 264	7 569 285	1 686 352 075

The above table gives an overview of the livestock population in Middle East.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (virus subtype H5N1)

38. The epizootic of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) due to virus subtype H5N1, which started in South-East Asia at the end of 2003 and remained confined to that region in 2004, spread to other regions and continents in 2005 and 2006. This situation is deemed unprecedented. Never before has an animal disease achieved such a rapid geographical spread in such a relatively short period of time.
39. Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1 in Middle East *from 2005 to 10 October 2007*.

Figure 2: occurrence of highly pathogenic avian influenza subtype H5N1 in Middle East from 2005 to 10 October 2007 (presence in domestic poultry in red, presence only in wild birds in yellow).



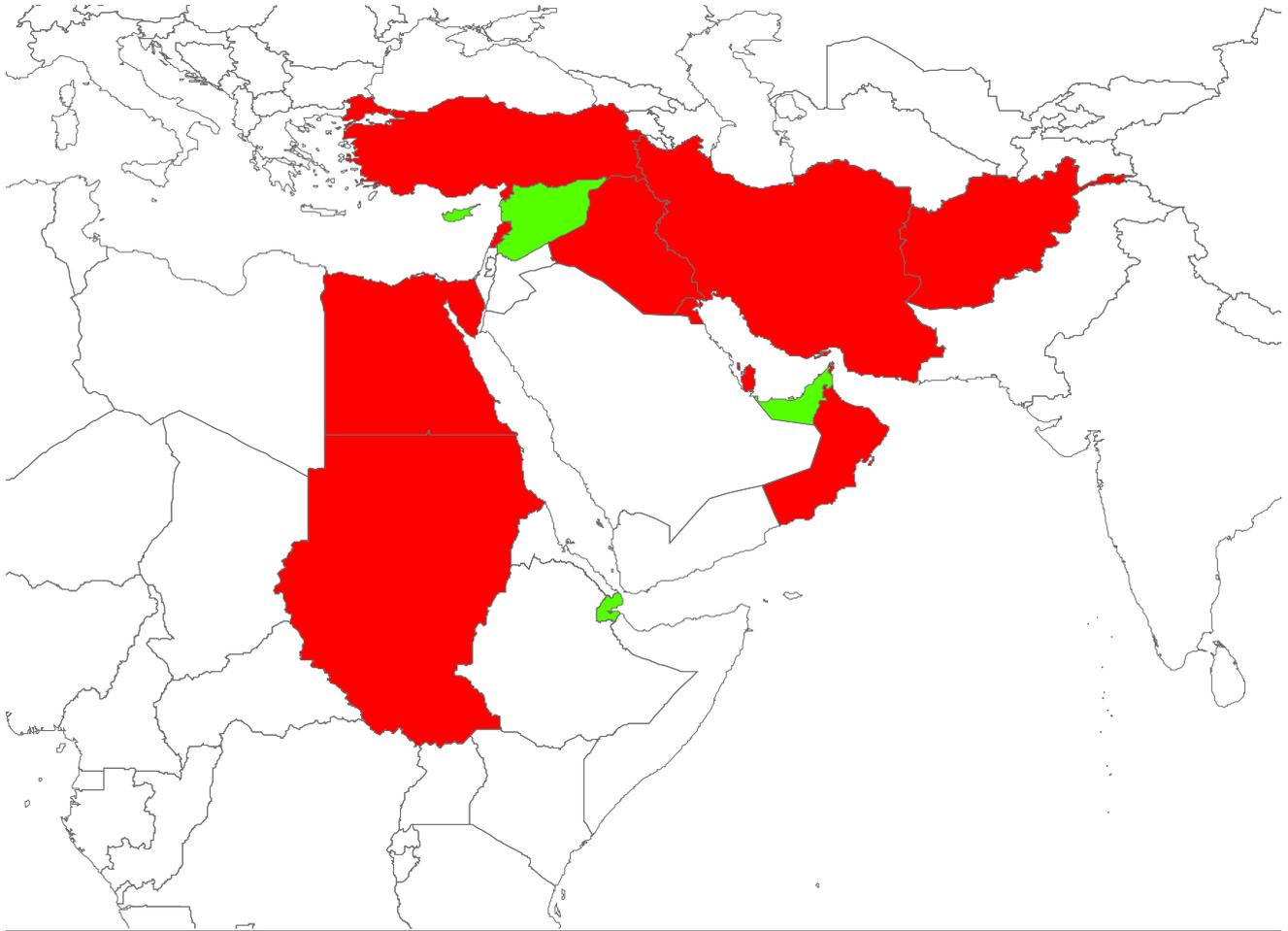
40. In February and March 2007 **Afghanistan** reported the re-occurrence of HPAI in poultry in Nangarhar (5 outbreaks), Kunar (3 outbreaks) and Kabul (1 outbreak) provinces. At that time, border and inter-provincial quarantines were strictly established, including chicken markets in Jalalabad, Kunar and Kabul city.
41. In April 2006 an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was reported in a poultry farm located in Boulaos, **Djibouti**. No new outbreaks have been reported since. In July 2007 active surveillance was carried out and training of technical personnel and breeders provided by the official Veterinary Services.

42. According to the information received from **Egypt**, there is a relapse phase of HPAI disease in the winter when the number of outbreaks increases mainly in backyard chickens, and a decline phase in summer when outbreaks decline but are observed mainly in backyard flocks. During the first half of 2007, 149 outbreaks of HPAI were reported in the country mainly in backyards.
43. In March 2006, an outbreak of HPAI subtype H5N1 was reported in turkeys in a backyard flock at Kofranja district in Ajloun Governorate in **Jordan**. Control measures including stamping out within a 3 kilometre radius, with compensation, has been applied. An on-going national surveillance programme for poultry and wild birds has not revealed any further H5N1 infection.
44. In February 2007, **Kuwait** reported to the OIE the first occurrence of HPAI in the country. Between February and April 2007 it notified 20 outbreaks in poultry farms located in Al Ahmadi, Al Farwaniyah, Al Kuwayt, Moubarak Al Kabeer and Hawalli governorates. No new case has been reported since 20 April 2007. All restrictions were lifted on 12 May 2007. Surveillance program has been ongoing in accordance with Appendix 3.8.9 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and no sample tested positive. Therefore, Kuwait declared itself free from highly pathogenic avian influenza on 21 July 2007 as per chapter 2.7.12 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code.
45. In March 2007 ostriches in a private rest house located in the village of Al-Gamma, Ash Sharqiyah governorate in **Saudi Arabia** were found positive for HPAI. The affected birds were hobby birds not used for the production of meat or eggs for consumption, other commercial products, or for restocking supplies of game, or for breeding. These birds are thus not considered as 'poultry' as defined in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. For this reason, **Saudi Arabia** maintained its HPAI disease free status.
46. As at 18 April 2006 the disease was confirmed in three foci in Khartoum and Gazira states in **Sudan**. Up to 1,200,000 birds died/slaughtered in 216 farms in Khartoum state where as in Gazira state around 10,000 birds died or were slaughtered in 5 farms. In August 2006, six more confirmed outbreaks were reported in Juba town, Central Equatoria State. The country's plan relied on general directives for the control operations in light of guidance of the OIE and the FAO. Targeted vaccination was conducted. The disease was confined in Khartoum, Gazira, River Nile and Central Equatoria States. No outbreaks have been recorded since August 2006 in those states or in the rest of the country. No human case was reported either. The country is however still considered as a high risk country.
47. Since the first reported case of HPAI in **Turkey** on 5 February 2007, there have been 11 outbreaks in backyard poultry and 1 case in a wild bird in Batman province and 6 new outbreaks in backyard poultry in Diyarbakir province. The total number of culled animals reached 27,190. After these outbreaks, Turkish Veterinary Research and Control Institutes tested 404 samples between 27/02/2007-17/08/2007 with negative results.

Foot and mouth disease (FMD)

48. Figure 3 shows the distribution of **FMD** in the Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007.

Figure 3: distribution of foot and mouth disease in the Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007 (presence in red, absence in green, no data available in white).



49. From the end of February until March 2007, outbreaks of FMD were recorded in large and small ruminants (cattle, sheep, and goat) in the northern governorate of the kingdom of **Bahrain**. The other governorates have been declared free of FMD. The serotype involved was identified as O1 by the Reference Laboratory in Pirbright (UK).
50. During the first four months of 2007 in **Iran**, there were 381 outbreaks in cattle and 197 outbreaks in sheep and goat. 5,263 cattle and 15,095 small ruminants were affected respectively.
51. **Jordan** experienced 3 outbreaks of FMD. The first one occurred in Aman in Mujar District and the serotype identified in cattle was serotype A. The second outbreak occurred in Province Al Karak in District Fago and serotype O was identified in sheep. The third outbreak occurred in Province AL Zarka in District AL Dilal and serotype O was identified in cattle. Both serotypes were identified by the OIE Reference Laboratory in Pirbright, UK.

52. Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is endemic in Anatolia, **Turkey**. At present, types O1 and A are reported. There has been no FMD case reported in Thrace Region since 2001, but the disease reoccurred once in 2006 (January 2006, serotype A) and again three times in 2007 (serotypes A and O).
53. An outbreak due to virus O was reported in January 2007 in the Edirne province; one outbreak in February in the province of Kirklareli and another in March in Canakkale province. The last event reported in Thrace region started on September 2007 and occurred in Cukurpinar Village, Kirklareli province. The vaccination of bovine animals is carried out twice through nationwide campaigns, with a trivalent (O1Manisa+A22 Mahmatli+Asia 1) FMD vaccine. In Thrace Region, also ovine and caprine animals are vaccinated with a trivalent FMD vaccine during spring campaigns. Compensated slaughtering is implemented in outbreaks in Thrace. 2007 Spring Vaccination Campaign was completed on 1 June 2007 in the whole country.
54. In **Egypt**, no new significant changes occurred during the period of the report. Sporadic cases of FMD were reported in four governorates.
55. In February 2007, **Lebanon** experienced two outbreaks of FMD, one in a farm located in Al Biqà province and another in the village of Hasbaya, Al Janoub province. The event was declared resolved on 5 July 2007. A ring vaccination was conducted using a trivalent vaccine (O, Asia 1 and A 22)
56. FMD is endemic in **Sudan** and it is reported almost every year during the cooler months. The following serotypes of FMD were reported in the Sudan: O, A, SAT 1 and SAT 2. 4 Samples collected from Kassala and Gazira States in November 2006 and from Khartoum state in January 2007 were sent in April 2007 to the OIE Reference Laboratory in Pirbright (UK) for testing. Serotypes A and SAT 2 were isolated. Serotype A was isolated from samples from Kassala and Gazira states whereas SAT 2 serotype was detected in the sample from Khartoum state. During the reporting period, 4 outbreaks were recorded in Khartoum, Gazira (central Sudan) and River Nile States (northern Sudan).

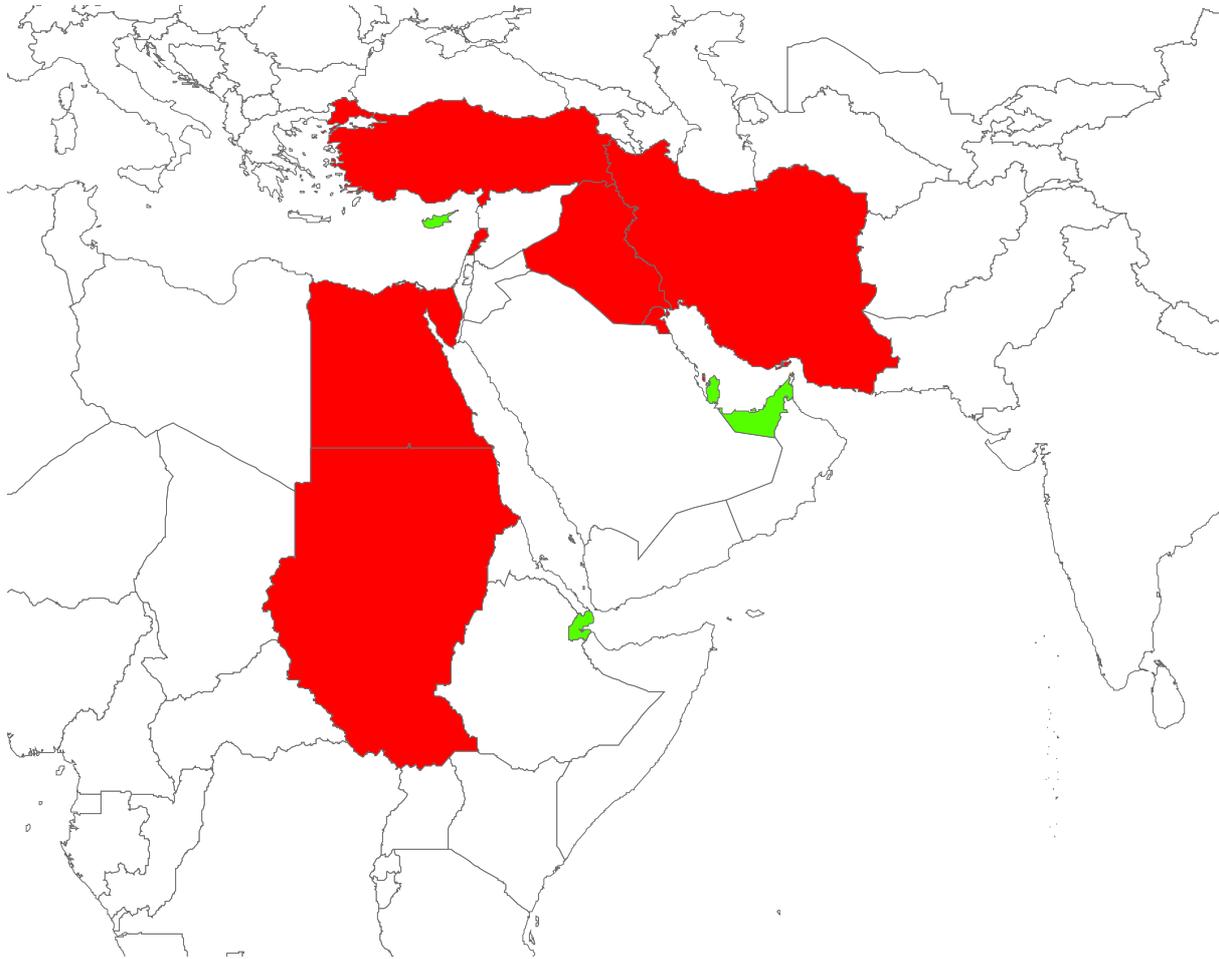
Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)

57. Between January and April 2007, **Iran** reported 18 outbreaks of PPR. Of the 520 cases, 258 animals died.
58. PPR was observed for the first time in **Sudan** in February 1971. During the first semester of 2007, 7 outbreaks were recorded. During this period 1,659,054 sheep were vaccinated against PPR.

Brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*)

59. Figure 5: occurrence of Brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*) in Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007.

Figure 5: occurrence of Brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*) in Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007 (presence in red, absence in green, no data available in white).

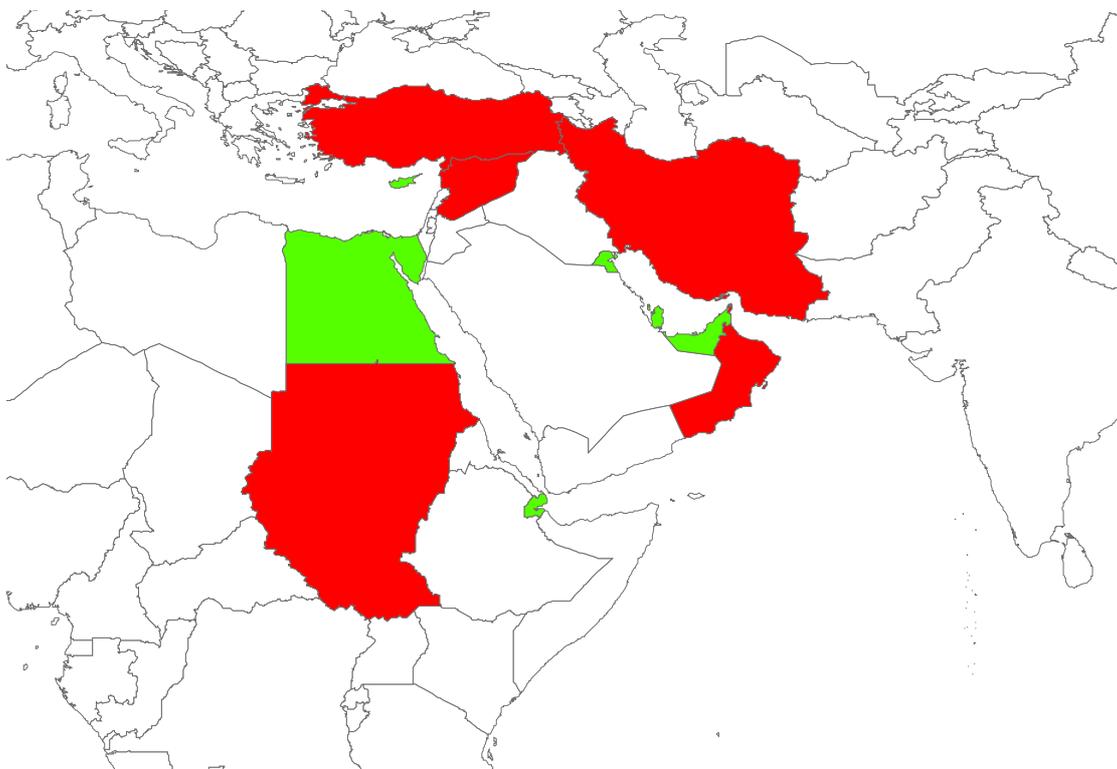


60. In **Cyprus**, the bovine brucellosis eradication programme is based on a test and extended slaughter or killing of positive animals or positive herds according to Directive 64/432 EEC. The programme is implemented in the areas controlled by the Veterinary Services. The target population comprises all bovine animals over the age of 12 months old. There are at present no infected herds in the territory of Cyprus and vaccination is prohibited. Of a total of 330 bovine herds, 268 have been declared officially free from brucellosis. The remaining herds are undergoing procedures to be granted the official brucellosis free status.
61. Brucellosis is endemic in **Sudan**. However, during the reporting period, no laboratory confirmed outbreak was reported.

Rabies

62. Figure 6 shows the distribution of Rabies in Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007.

Figure 6: occurrence of Rabies in Middle East between the 1st of July 2006 and 30th June 2007 (presence in red, absence in green, no data available in white).



63. **Cyprus** is considered to be free from rabies.
64. During the first four months of 2007, **Iran** recorded the following cases of rabies: 38 in cattle, 31 in goat, 24 in dogs, 2 in cats, 104 in sheep, 3 in donkey, 6 in wolf, 1 in fox and 2 in jackal.
65. In **Jordan**, there were 16 confirmed cases of rabies in animals (6 in dogs, 4 in sheep , 3 in goats, 1 in a cat, 1 in a fox and 1 in a donkey) during the reporting period.
66. Rabies continued to be a serious public health hazard in **Sudan**. During the reporting period 6 outbreaks involving dogs, donkeys and cows were recorded.
67. Canine rabies is endemic in **Turkey**, where cases of rabies are also detected in wildlife as well as farm animals. Basic control measures include establishment of quarantine, and implementation of vaccination, surveillance, training, and control of stray animals.
68. Under the framework of EU-Turkey 2005 Financial Cooperation Programme, a three year national project has just been initiated for the Control of Rabies in Turkey. Under the project, oral vaccination for the dog population and wildlife and parenteral vaccination of farm animals in the Aegean Region, will be realised.

Contingency plans and simulation exercises for animal diseases:

69. As expected, many countries in Middle East have recently developed, tested or implemented contingency plans for avian influenza.
70. **Cyprus'** Veterinary Services have conducted contingency plans for Foot and Mouth Disease, Classical Swine Fever, Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza. All of them have been approved by the European Commission.
71. **Iran** implemented contingency plans for FMD and Anthrax.
72. **Kuwait** developed a contingency plan for highly pathogenic avian influenza, before the occurrence of the disease in 2007.

Application of WAHIS in the Middle East Region

73. Countries of the Middle East that have either used WAHIS (W) or paper version (P) while reporting animal diseases to the OIE are given below. Empty space indicates absence of reports.

Countries that used either WAHIS(W) or the paper version(P)

Empty field = missing report

Country	2005			2006			2007
	1st Sem.	2nd Sem.	Annual	1st Sem	2nd Sem	Annual	1st Sem.
AFGHANISTAN	P	P		P	P	P	P
BAHRAIN	P	P		P	P		W
CYPRUS	W	W	W				
DJIBOUTI	P	P	W	P/W	W	W	
EGYPT	W	W	W	W	W	W	
IRAN	P	P	P	P	P	P	
IRAQ							
JORDAN	P/W	P/W					
KUWAIT	P/W	W	W	W	W	W	W
LEBANON	W	W		W	W		

Countries that used either WAHIS(W) or the paper version(P)
Empty field= missing report

Country	2005			2006			2007
	1st Sem.	2nd Sem.	Annual	1st Sem	2nd Sem	Annual	1st Sem.
LIBYA	P	P	P				
OMAN	P	P	P	W	W	W	
QATAR	P	W	W	W	W	W	W
SAUDI ARABIA	P	P	P	P	P		
SOMALIA							
SUDAN	W	P/W		W	W		W
SYRIA	P	P		P	P		P
TURKEY	P/W	P/W	W	W	p	W	W
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	P	P		P	W	W	
YEMEN	W	W	W				

Discussions

74. The Delegate of Sudan congratulated the speaker for an excellent presentation but noted that only 50% of countries in the region had provided reports. He spoke on the importance of transparency in disease reporting stating his own country's position with respect to HPAI which was reported even before the diagnosis was confirmed by an OIE Reference Laboratory. He added that stamping out of infected and in contact poultry was carried out without delay and the disease was effectively controlled. He added that the Veterinary Services of his country are now far better equipped and have over 70 veterinary mobile clinics.
75. Dr Molayemi of the Iranian Delegation stressed the importance of transparent reporting and urged all countries in the region to report diseases in a timely and unbiased manner.
76. The Delegate of Egypt commented on the spread of FMD in the region. He stated that some infected countries are still exporting without any regard to the provisions laid down in the OIE Terrestrial Code and are thus contributing to the spread of the disease. He strongly urged all exporting countries to abide by the provisions of the Code in order to avoid the spread of animal diseases through trade of livestock and livestock products.

77. Summarising the discussions, the speaker thanked the countries that responded to the questionnaire and requested those that did not send in their reports to do so as soon as possible. He stated that the fact that only 50% of countries responded to the OIE questionnaire does not necessarily imply a lack of transparency on their part. It could mean that the questionnaire was not considered a priority. However, he insisted that the non reporting of a significant epidemiological event would indeed tantamount to lack of transparency and strongly encouraged countries to report all such events

Item I

The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services

78. The Session Chairman, Dr Bashir Taha briefly introduced the speaker for this Technical Item, Dr Pavlos Economides, Veterinary Consultant in Cyprus.
79. The presentation included information and comments received from representatives of 10 Member Countries of the Regional Commission of the OIE on a questionnaire related to the issue of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations.
80. The Organisation, structure and functioning of the Veterinary Statutory bodies are prerequisites in ensuring the quality of Veterinary Services and private veterinary practice in a country.
81. These organisations ensure that veterinarians in the public and the private sector have the necessary qualifications, scientific expertise and experience and are free from any financial, commercial, hierarchical, political and other pressures which might affect their competence to make sound professional judgment based on existing scientific data.
82. It is essential that all veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals be licensed to practice by an autonomous Veterinary Statutory Body and be subject to legal disciplinary actions for any professional misconduct.
83. The following countries responded in time to the questionnaire: Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. 3 other countries sent their replies after the last dead line.
84. The existing structures and functional arrangements in most of the OIE Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East are not adequate. Changes are therefore necessary in order to comply with the provisions of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code particularly those dealing with the quality of Veterinary Services, the issue of International Veterinary Certificates and the regulation of the practice of Veterinarians and Veterinary paraprofessionals in the private sector.

Discussions

85. The Session Chairman congratulated Dr Pavlos Economides on his informative and interesting presentation. He then invited comments and questions from the participants.

86. A member of the delegation of Sudan congratulated the speaker on his comprehensive presentation and provided some information on the Veterinary council of his country. He stated that the Sudan Veterinary Council was established in 1949 and enacted in 1954 to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine in the country. He enumerated the functions and powers of the council which include *Inter Alia* the registration and licensing of veterinarians, setting professional ethics and investigating complaints and applying sanctions in case of non compliance.
87. A member of the delegation of Iraq asked whether there were criteria that determined the ratio of licensed veterinarians to the number of animals present in a country. The speaker replied that there were no such criteria as animal production systems differ considerably depending mainly on whether they were intensive or extensive. Standards based on animal numbers alone are thus almost impossible.
88. Dr Vallat briefly reviewed the provisions of the OIE Terrestrial Code regarding the quality of Veterinary Services including the right of any OIE Member Country to decide through its Veterinary Statutory Body the appropriate educational level of its veterinarians. However, certain regions such as the European Union, have decided to harmonise the curriculum of veterinarians in its 27 member states and to build a mechanism of control of all veterinary faculties. Dr Vallat also mentioned the role and obligations of Veterinary Statutory Bodies which form a key component of Veterinary Services. He stated that practice of veterinary medicine should be based on excellence and independence. He added that these qualities as well as the disciplinary powers of Veterinary Statutory Bodies need to be recognised by law.
89. The Conference Chairman stressed the importance of continuing education for veterinarians and asked whose responsibility it was to ensure such education. He also observed that the field of activity of veterinarians was widening increasingly but training in those activities was lagging far behind.
90. The Delegate of Syria also emphasised the importance of continuing education on animal health, wealth and welfare. He mentioned that in his country, Government was covering certain activities but not all.
91. Another member of the delegation of Syria suggested that international organisations such as FAO and OIE support programmes on continuing education for veterinarians.
92. A member of the delegation of Sudan also suggested that OIE and FAO promote the activities relating to continuous education.
93. Dr Hassan Aidaros, FAO consultant, suggested that one way of ensuring continuing education for veterinarians would be to have the Veterinary Services evaluated. This exercise would indicate the deficiencies resulting from lack of up to date training. Based on the evaluation report, support for the training of veterinarians may be requested.
94. Dr Vallat presented the views of the OIE on the competencies of veterinarians and Government's responsibilities in continuing education for veterinarians. He suggested that the region could adopt a similar system as that existing in the European Union where inter_state comparison of veterinary schools is carried out to establish which qualifications would be acceptable to member states. Regarding Government contributions towards continuing education, he stated that there are two categories of practitioners. One category deals with diseases such as HPAI that have a public good component and therefore benefits everybody. In such cases, practitioners should be able to benefit from support of Government and or international organisations. On the other hand, practitioners involved in certain activities such as treatments of race horses should not qualify for Government assistance as they work for private individuals and their expertise benefits exclusively to animal owners. He assured the

Conference that OIE was prepared to provide assistance for continuous education of veterinarians on OIE listed diseases but suggested that practitioners dealing with issues not having a public good component should seek resources from private bodies.

95. Dr Barry O'Neil indicated that continuing education means more than training programmes. He stressed the importance of continuous reading of scientific articles from magazines and journals including articles that appear on internet. He fully supported the idea that continuing education should fall under the responsibility of Veterinary Statutory Bodies. He agreed with Dr Vallat that Government should sponsor training dealing with public good issues. He suggested that Veterinary associations that receive subscriptions from veterinarians could be called upon to organise training programmes for veterinarians that provide care to animals kept for sports and other private activities.
96. Summarising the debates, the speaker agreed that continuing education is essential and should in principle be the responsibility of the Veterinary Statutory Bodies. He mentioned the situation in some countries where veterinarians are compelled to follow additional refresher courses in specialised disciplines in order to be allowed to continue practice in those disciplines.
97. The Session Chairman concluded by thanking all the participants, and then requested a small group comprising the speaker, Dr Pavlos economides, as well as Dr Bashir.Taha (Sudan), Dr Molayemi Ibrahim (Iran), Dr Basem.Adhadh (Iraq), Dr Hassan Ibrahim Khatab (Sudan) and Dr G.Yehia.(OIE RR) to draft a Recommendation on this item to be considered by the meeting.

Progress in Rinderpest accreditation for countries of the region

98. The Session Chairman, Dr George Khoury, invited Dr Dewan Sibartie, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department to present the OIE rinderpest accreditation scheme and the rinderpest status in countries of the Middle East.
99. Dr Sibartie briefly reviewed the history of rinderpest that has inflicted untold damage for several centuries to farmers, the causative agent having even been used as a biological weapon in Europe.
100. Nevertheless, rinderpest prompted the creation of veterinary schools and state veterinary services across the world and also laid down the basic principles of animal disease control comprising restriction of animal movements and stamping out as methods of reducing the spread of animal diseases.
101. The OIE Pathway for rinderpest accreditation that has been used until recently required in general a six to seven year period starting with a planned vaccination period (2 years) to eliminate clinical disease followed by cessation of vaccination and a declaration of provisional freedom, a period of no vaccination and no clinical disease (3 years) to gain the status of free from rinderpest disease and a further period of (1-2 years) of continuous sero surveillance to be declared free from infection.

102. In view of the virtual disappearance of rinderpest disease in susceptible domestic and wild animals, the almost total cessation of vaccination and the relative absence of antibodies in non vaccinated animals, the OIE Ad hoc Group of experts have recommended that the OIE Pathway for recognition of country freedom from rinderpest be restricted to 2 years of sero-surveillance demonstrating the absence of virus circulation. A new Chapter on Rinderpest in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code has been adopted in May 2007 and this will greatly facilitate certain countries to acquire the free status.
103. Regarding the Middle East, some doubts exist about possible residual infections in the Somali ecosystem but latest sero-surveillance results indicate that the virus may no longer be circulating in that ecosystem. Evidence of absence is almost certain for Ethiopia and Kenya but some further work is on-going in Somalia.
104. In the Middle East, many countries have embarked on the old OIE Pathway but follow up has been limited as rinderpest is no longer viewed as an economically important disease. Some countries have made no declaration to the OIE and need to be encouraged to embark on the new pathway with the hope of demonstrating absence of viral circulation within the next two years. This is considered largely achievable.
105. The dossiers of two countries namely Iran and Sudan to be declared free from rinderpest infection, have been examined by the OIE Ad hoc Group and the recommendations will be submitted for endorsement by the International Committee in May 2008.
106. In view of the OIE objectives and the FAO's Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP) to declare the world free from rinderpest in the next few years, The FAO and the OIE need to work together to help countries that are not recognised free by the OIE to submit dossiers to that effect. FAO may assist countries with the implementation of Technical cooperation projects (TCPs) in needy countries of the region.
107. For countries in the pacific or the Americas, the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Disease will consider simplifying further the procedures for countries with a proven history of rinderpest absence to be declared free.
108. It is hoped that with concerted FAO/OIE efforts, the world may be declared free from rinderpest by 2012. This would be the first animal disease to have been eradicated in the world.

Discussions

109. The Chairman congratulated Dr Dewan Sibartie for his very lively and comprehensive presentation.
110. The Delegate of Syria stated that his country witnessed the last clinical manifestations of rinderpest in 1983. Control of the disease using vaccines continued for many years but has ceased completely since 2004. The country is now actively preparing itself to be recognised free from the disease. He added that Syria does have the capacity to produce rinderpest vaccines. Strategic stocks can be prepared and systematically destroyed on the expiry of the validity and if no rinderpest incursion occurs.

111. The Delegate of Jordan reported that his country declared provisional freedom in 1997 but continued to use PPR vaccines against rinderpest for a number of years and so could not be declared free from rinderpest disease in accordance with the rules of the OIE. The country no longer uses PPR vaccines in cattle and is now ready to embark on the new OIE pathway to be declared free.
112. The Delegate of Bahrain stated that his country collaborated fully with the FAO rinderpest project in 1995 and carried out sero surveillance. His country can qualify for historical freedom.
113. A member of the delegation of Sudan congratulated the speaker for his brilliant presentation and enquired as to how surveillance could be carried out in wildlife. The speaker replied that surveillance in wildlife poses problems for any disease. With respect to rinderpest, the Ad hoc Group of experts has proposed a more targeted approach and that should simplify matters. He added that for countries wishing to be declared historically free, the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases would be asked to review surveillance in wildlife. For countries having significant wildlife populations, surveillance would indeed have to be carried out.
114. Dr Vallat observed that Africa is ahead of the Middle East with respect to OIE recognition of free status. He urged the OIE RR and the RAHC to work together to help countries of the region that are not yet declared free to follow the OIE pathway to prove absence of infection. He added that the OIE is committed to simplify procedures without however compromising on technical details that are important for assessing freedom from infection. He stated that OIE would work together with FAO at national and regional levels to help countries submit dossiers so that the world can be declared free from rinderpest as soon as possible. He cautioned that the target of 2010 may be a bit too optimistic but the goal could be achieved by 2012.
115. Dr Domenech commented that the rinderpest situation was very favourable and a final declaration of eradication was still possible by 2010. He recognised that the OIE Pathway has been simplified but insisted that some countries need to put in additional efforts to finalise their dossiers to be submitted to the OIE. He reviewed progress accomplished under the FAO GREP Programme particularly regarding regional and international coordination stating that the experience gained under the GREP Programme has proved beneficial in the control of other TADs. He recalled that the main differences between GREP and other control programmes in place in Africa lay in the fact that the GREP Programme took into account post vaccinal immunological status of herds and the tracking of virus circulation in susceptible animals including wildlife. The use of eligible community animal health workers in participatory disease approach especially in regions affected by civil unrest also yielded effective results. He maintained that final declaration of eradication by 2010 was still possible and assured that FAO would collaborate with OIE and continue to help countries of the Middle East for that goal to be achieved.
116. Dr Yehia recalled the various workshops scheduled in the region to assist countries in presenting dossiers to the OIE for declaration of freedom.
117. The Conference Chairman thanked the speaker and all participants for the meaningful discussions on the subject.

Report on the Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East

118. The Session Chairman invited Dr Yehia Ghazi, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East to present his report.
119. The OIE Regional Representation (RR) for the Middle East, established in Beirut in 1999, is mainly involved in the reinforcement of capacities of Veterinary Services to control and manage animal diseases, particularly those of a transboundary nature.
120. The objectives of the RR also include the harmonisation of regulations relating to regional trade of animals and animal products, improving animal disease information system, strengthening collaboration with regional and international organisations, organisation of conferences and seminars that help target specific issues related to animal and public health and the promotion of the creation of regional reference laboratories and coordinating their activities, for diagnosis, sero-mapping and vaccine production adapted to regional needs.
121. Since 2006, the RR became the permanent secretariat for the OIE/FAO GF-TADs regional steering committee and for the recently established OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC).
122. Collaboration has also been reinforced with other organisations, such as WHO/MZCC and a Regional Educational Centre for training physicians and veterinarians on food safety and zoonoses issues is currently being established.
123. In 2007, the RR organised several workshops/seminars on the evaluation of Veterinary Services (PVS tool), WAHIS information system, Avian Influenza, Rift Valley fever, BSE and FMD.
124. In the two next years, the RR will concentrate its efforts to improve the capacities of Veterinary Services by encouraging countries to apply for a PVS evaluation and to use the results to develop strategies to comply amongst others with their obligations to transmit timely and transparent sanitary information, using the WAHIS system.
125. The RR will also focus on Rinderpest to assist countries of the region in the official recognition of their free status, FMD to increase the knowledge on circulating virus strains, HPAI to reinforce capacities of VS to prevent and control the disease, RVF to implement a predicting model of the disease, and also on the evaluation of the situation of brucellosis and Orbivirus diseases (BT and EHD).
126. Cooperation and collaboration with FAO through the RAHC will also be strengthened to implement adapted and concerted regional strategies to control animal disease in the region.
127. The RR will also continue to translate as far as practically possible all documents of importance into Arabic language to promote the access to such information and will upload them on its website.

Discussions

128. The Conference Chairman thanked the speaker for a clear and comprehensive presentation. He expressed appreciation for the excellent work carried out by the RR. He sought additional information on the updating and harmonisation of the Web site of the RR with that of the OIE Central Bureau and enquired about the implementation of projects being undertaken under the GF-TADs mechanism.
129. Dr Yehia replied that the Web site which exists since three years is now well coordinated with the central OIE Web site server and that member countries had their own passwords to add specific information on the site. Regarding the GF-TADs projects, he stated that workshops were being organised to help identify specific problems that can be subsequently resolved through the implementation of projects.
130. Dr Bernard Vallat briefly recalled the responsibilities of the Regional Commissions and Regional representations outlining that the Commission is a political body and members are elected by the regional commission members and then endorsed by the international committee whereas the Representation is a technical body. The main objective of the OIE RR is capacity building particularly with respect to building or reinforcing early detection of and rapid response against animal diseases. He congratulated the RR for the translation of major OIE documents into Arabic which is the official language of many countries of the region. He added that the addition of Regional Commission and Regional Representation in the Middle East gives to the OIE Regional Commission the status of a true Regional Organisation Dr Vallat also drew attention to the good working relationship of the OIE with other organisations particularly FAO. The creation of the joint OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre is a demonstration of the good relationship existing between the two organisations.
131. Dr Joseph Domenech, Chief Veterinary Officer of FAO provided some additional details to the observations made by Dr Vallat. He pointed out that the appropriate institutional set up is now in place. This involves amongst others, the GF-TADs Agreement, the establishment of the Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) and good governance initiatives. Technical teams are now active at the regional level to work in partnership with OIE in all the regions and also with IBAR in Africa. He recalled that advocacy work for better funding to address the prevention and control of animal diseases is being carried out since 3 years. He mentioned the excellent meeting organised recently in Washington by OIE and the World Bank in collaboration with FAO to obtain donor funding particularly for the establishment of a global emergency fund. He added that the momentum today is much better than it was one or two years ago to prepare project proposals with countries to be submitted to donors and governments. He expressed the wish to see the Joint FAO/OIE RAHC play a prominent role in that respect.
132. A member of the delegation of Sudan recalled that during the last GF-TADs FMD round table meeting held in Amman, an FMD surveillance project was proposed by the RR for West Asian countries. During that meeting, the representative of Sudan had requested that some African countries such as Sudan be included in that project and wanted to know if a decision had been taken. Dr Yehia replied that the project would be implemented in stages, the first one being to take stock of the actual information particularly as regards the circulating strains. This exercise would be followed by actual project implementations in some countries.

133. Dr Pavlos Economides, veterinary consultant, speaking as a former member of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East congratulated Dr Yehia for the excellent work being carried out by the RR under the difficult circumstances that are well known.
134. Summarising the discussions, Dr Yehia pointed out the need to have more workshops to decide on strategies. He concluded by urging countries of the region that have not yet requested the OIE to evaluate their VS to do so as soon as possible.

Tuesday 30 October 2007

Item II The Geographic Information System (GIS) used for animal disease control

135. The Session Chairman, Dr Mohamed Moussa Abdullah, briefly introduced the speaker for this Technical Item, Dr Karim Ben Jebara, Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department.
136. The presentation included information and comments received from representatives of 11 Member Countries of the Regional Commission of the OIE on a questionnaire related to the issue of Geographic Information System. He pointed out that the questionnaire on GIS that was initially prepared by Dr Hussain Gadain and subsequently amended by the OIE Central Bureau.
137. Dr Ben Jebara described the GIS as a computer system for capturing, storing, checking, integrating, manipulating, analysing and displaying data related to positions on the Earth's surface. Information is presented cartographically, graphically, or as a report. Practitioners also define a GIS as including, in addition to the software, the procedures, operating personnel, and spatial data that go into the system.
138. Most of the information existing in the world contains a location reference, placing that information at some point on the globe. If there is no notion of location, then it is not considered geographic information.
139. To locate geographic information, one uses either maps that use a coordinate system to allow locations to be read, or uses shapes (polygons) of the geographic information, where shapes of the features and themes are drawn onto the map. Applications of GIS could reveal links between different sources of information, when it is presented on a map and can establish relationships between features that are not readily apparent in spreadsheets or statistical packages. It often creates new information from existing data resources that are very useful for decision making. This implies that use of such information by Veterinary Services can lead to a better management of diseases and other emergency situations.
140. The application of the GIS in the veterinary field has developed over the last decade. Specialised software becomes more affordable and user-friendly, in addition to the development of open source tools for mapping.

141. Several applications of GIS can be found in veterinary activities. For example, GIS helps in understanding and explaining disease dynamics and spreading patterns. It helps increasing the speed of response in case of an emergency linked with the introduction of a disease. Overlapping maps of location of outbreaks, with the map of location of establishments, as well as abattoirs, roads, for example, can help better define perimeters of security, surveillance zones as well as available facilities to implement the decided control measures. The addition of other factors, such as the NDVI, Satellite images, vector distributions for vector borne diseases, can correlate disease trends and be used as an early warning tool or for predicting the evolution of a disease, if it has been introduced.
142. 11 countries out of 20 responded to the questionnaire giving a response rate of 55%. Responses were received from the following countries: **Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen**
143. All responding countries use a computer or other form of digital information in their tasks. MS Office is by far the most common software used but Access, Arc View and GIS are also used.
144. All countries have access to internet. 8 have direct connection and 3 use the modem.
145. The digital information concerns mostly base line data on Veterinary Services (VS) such as disease outbreaks, vaccination, livestock census.... The information is used in disease surveillance, analysis of disease outbreaks including geographical distribution and the evaluation of disease control programmes.
146. Only 5 countries use maps or blue prints on a regular basis. The maps are generally country maps indicating borders, districts, rivers, mountains, and in one case, political boundaries as well. Only one country states that the maps indicate the distribution of Veterinary Services including mobile units. One country states that it uses satellite images. 4 of the 5 countries using maps observe that the maps are accurate for their needs. The remaining country states that the map is too old as it does not reflect the exact number of districts in the country. Most of the countries feel however that a better map would help them do their job better. Such a map would need to include water resources, soil layers and composition of soil, rainfalls and plant coverage areas.
147. 6 countries are currently using computer-based mapping technologies in respect of animal health activities. The countries that do not use such technologies rely on maps received from mapping agencies, their association with other partners or through an internet mapping service. The main barrier from acquiring computer-based mapping technology seems to be lack of trained staff. Costs are indicated as the main barrier in three countries. Countries using mapping technology seem to prefer Arc GIS packages followed by Arc view.
148. Of the 6 countries using GIS, 3 claim to be using it daily and 3 use them on a monthly basis. 4 countries share digital information with other agencies, departments, or international organisations. One country shares the geo-coordinates with the OIE WAHIS system.
149. Countries using GIS are unanimous in stating that the GIS provides a means to view/analyse important issues for livestock and provides a method to identify areas of potential disease risk for early warning purposes. Some other countries state that GIS is useful for mapping, recording and tracking livestock population. Only two countries feel that the GIS is important for public outreach or for educational activities.
150. 5 of the 6 countries using GIS integrate GIS maps and data in their baseline data documentation.

151. Most countries feel that GIS could be helpful for their VS particularly the components dealing with data input and the output products.
152. The VS of all six countries using GIS use the global positioning system (GPS) to collect data for GIS documentation activities and track their projects in a database or spreadsheet. However, only one country feels that its VS are maximising the benefits accruing from GIS. The main reasons for not maximising its use are lack of awareness of the potential uses of GIS and scarcity of trained staff.
153. The majority of countries would like to build in-house GIS capacity to view data and print basic maps and to develop data layers and to produce and analyse detailed large-scale maps. A few countries would like to establish a GIS resource centre to provide mapping services to other livestock activities in their countries on an on-call basis.
154. Only two countries use satellite imagery in identifying animal health problems, tracking animal movement or monitoring disease and resources. Of the countries that do not use it, two indicate that their VS do have the capacity to archive data. They state that software such as oracle 10G, Arc GIS and that quantitative data such as those relating to disease incidence, geographical distribution of diseases, bovine passports etc are available.
155. In countries using mapping technology, that responsibility has been entrusted to the animal health departments particularly the epidemiological units. These units are also generally the OIE focal points for WAHIS.
156. 4 countries faced exceptional disease events in 2006 which have been reported to the OIE along with the geo-coordinates of the location of the outbreaks. The geo-coordinates have been obtained by using GPS or from the WAHIS map.
157. Regarding the six monthly notifications to the OIE, 4 countries have an updated map for at least the first administrative division. 3 countries keep their maps in shape files or other formats. The projections are all known: Clarck 1866 lambert conformal conics for one country and Geographic Projection of the World WGS 84 for the other two.
158. 5 countries informed that they have checked their digital maps that are built in WAHIS. 4 of them state that the map is not updated. In one case the first administrative level is not differentiated for the new separated provinces. In another case, changes at administrative levels are on-going. One country feels that updating is not necessary.

Discussions

159. The Session Chairman congratulated Dr Ben Jebara on his informative and interesting presentation. He then invited comments and questions from the participants.
160. At the invitation of the Session Chairman, Dr Molayemi of Iran made a brief presentation of the application of GIS in his country. The system known as GISVET is implemented by the Iranian Veterinary Organisation and involves dairy, beef, sheep and goat farms, village pastures and water sources. 75000 locations are registered by GIS in Iran and geographical layers include roads, rivers, drains and dams. The GIS functions at three levels namely at district, provincial and headquarters levels. There are currently 7 pilot provinces dealing with an FMD project and the GIS is covering the whole country.
161. The Session Chairman noted that only six countries are actually using GIS and enquired on how the use of the tool could be promoted in the region.

162. The Delegate of Lebanon confirmed that his country has started developing and applying the GIS.
163. A member of the delegation of Sudan briefly shared his country's experience with the use of GIS. He indicated that GIS has been established in Sudan since the early 90's and has benefited from the support of international organisations. GIS is used extensively and the 105 existing mobile veterinary units are all using GPS facilities on a routine basis. The information gathered is analysed and interpreted into the GIS process. He added that Sudan was willing to provide support in the establishment of GIS as well as training of neighbouring countries.
164. Dr Domenech pointed out that the FAO has provided support to some countries in the region such the Sudan and assured that such support would continue in the field of GIS and disease intelligence.
165. Dr Etienne Bonbon, representative of the European Commission asked whether the GIS can be used to trace nomadic and animal movements. Dr Ben Jebara replied that it was possible but pointed out that animal movements change with climate and availability of water and feeds.
166. Dr O'Neil complimented Iran on their GIS. He agreed that the GIS is a very useful tool but pointed out that like other tools, it can only be effective if good data is incorporated in the system. The existence of the GIS in itself cannot replace accurate data emanating from good surveillance studies and he urged countries to ensure that their surveillance systems yield effective data.
167. Dr Yehia reminded participants that the subject of GIS was chosen as one of the technical items because of the ability of the system to predict climate change, vector behaviour and resultant virus activity. One of the objectives of the region is to establish a model to detect climate change for TADs particularly RVF which is a very important disease in the region. Training of personnel in GIS will also constitute a priority for the region.
168. Dr Vallat pointed out that while new technologies often impress politicians, their adoption does not necessarily solve all the problems. Before embarking blindly on new technologies including GIS, Veterinary Services should ensure that veterinary networks are able to cover all the national territory and that veterinarians are well trained and are able to provide accurate data on disease surveillance. He agreed with Dr O'Neil that the GIS can be a fantastic tool only if the quality of data supplied is good. He assured that the OIE will in collaboration with FAO provide support in building GIS capacity. Regarding nomadic animals, he remarked that these animals always move towards water and grass sources and the GIS can trace these animals thanks to advanced detection of grass and water and thus help to have information on vector activities and then institute certain measures such as target vaccination in high risk premises.
169. A member of the delegation of Egypt enquired whether the GIS can be used in risk assessments. Dr Ben Jebara replied that the GIS can display predictive information on events that may occur. Such information may be used in risk analysis when determining the chance of untoward events occurring and deciding on possible mitigating measures.
170. The Session Chairman concluded by thanking all the participants, and then requested a small group comprising the speaker, Dr Karim Ben Jebara, as well as Dr Mohammed Moussa (United Arab Emirates), Dr Basem Adhadh (Iraq), Dr Ghazi Yehia (OIE RR), Dr Mohamed Abboud (Syria), Dr Fares Al Bakhit (Jordan), DR Molayemi Ebrahim (Iran) and Dr Mohamed A.Raziz (Sudan) to draft a Recommendation on this item to be considered by the meeting.

An update on the Veterinary Services of Iraq

171. With the permission of the Session Chairman, Dr Basem Adhadh, representative of Iraq made a brief presentation on the Veterinary Services of Iraq. He described the structure of Veterinary Services of Iraq that fall under the responsibility of the 'State Company for Veterinary Services' in the Ministry of Agriculture. Iraq has a livestock population comprising 1.5 million cattle, 15 million small ruminants and 100 million poultry. Passive disease surveillance is in progress and active surveillance is envisaged soon. Programmes to control major animal diseases such as HPAI, FMD, RVF and rabies are being implemented. Regarding rinderpest, action is being taken to present a dossier to the OIE for declaration of freedom.

Regional control of HPAI

172. The session Chairman, Dr Khoury invited Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East to make his presentation on the Regional control of HPAI.

173. Dr Yehia stated that the current epidemiological status of HPAI in the Middle East and the actual location of the virus at the cross roads of three continents namely Asia, Europe and Africa are causes of major concern.

174. The endemicity of HPAI in Egypt and the recurrent episodes of the disease in Turkey present a real threat to Middle East, Africa and Western Europe.

175. The East of the region is threatened by the possible incursion of the virus from South East Asia. The viral strains found in Kuwait in February 2007 and subsequently in Saudi Arabia are similar to the Pakistani strain and it is suspected that the virus could have been introduced from Pakistan via illegal or uncontrolled trade of poultry and poultry products.

176. The exchange of hunting birds, e.g. falcons presents another possibility for virus transmission and has been incriminated especially by the OIE expert's mission to Kuwait in March 2007.

177. Countries of the region are not adequately prepared to react against a potential incursion of the disease. Although contingency plans have been prepared and measures taken in most countries, these procedures have been rarely tested or evaluated through simulation exercises. In addition, capacities such as the early warning system and laboratory diagnostic capabilities are still limited.

178. The OIE Regional representation for the Middle East has been particularly active in assisting countries build their capacity to face the HPAI situation. Several workshops have been organised for the Veterinary Services of the region on epidemiology, vaccination strategy, communication, contingency plans, etc...

179. The recent creation of the joint OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) in the context of the joint FAO/OIE initiative on the Global Framework of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) Agreement, will further improve coordination and harmonisation of control and monitoring strategies for avian influenza as well as other transboundary diseases. FAO and OIE will provide the relevant expertise for the optimal performance of the RAHC. This type of regional approach has been strongly recommended during the workshop held in Doha (Qatar) on 'Avian Influenza Control Strategy', in May 2007.

Discussions

180. Dr Domenech briefly reviewed the support and the control strategies of the FAO and the OIE with respect to HPAI. He remarked that major efforts have been made by countries especially as regards preparedness measures. Several countries have successfully eradicated the disease while others have managed to bring it under reasonable control. In general, the incidence of the disease has significantly decreased but the re-occurrence of the disease in many countries indicates that the virus is still circulating. The situation in some countries such as Nigeria and Egypt is a matter of concern and call for additional efforts.
181. At the request of the Session Chairman, the representative of Egypt described the HPAI crisis that occurred in his country. Numerous outbreaks occurred and caused enormous economic losses. The geographical position of Egypt favoured the spread of the disease and containment was impossible. Appropriate policies to control the disease were adopted by Government and these included vaccination of backyard chickens. He thanked the OIE for having provided a substantial amount of vaccines to control the disease. Surveillance against HPAI is progressing and by 2008, it would cover the whole country.
182. The Delegate of the United Arab Emirates enquired about the role of migratory birds in the HPAI epizootic in Egypt. The representative of Egypt replied that surveillance in wild birds has been carried out and the infection has been detected in those birds.
183. The Delegate of Jordan asked whether there was a possibility that vaccination helped to spread the disease in Egypt. The representative of Egypt replied that he did not think that it was the case.
184. The Delegate of Sudan expressed gratitude to the OIE for all the administrative and technical guidance to control HPAI in the world. He added that countries have full confidence in the OIE and will follow all OIE recommendations regarding the control of HPAI.
185. Dr Yehia stated that the exact source of the disease in the Middle East is not known but it is certain that the region is at risk.
186. Dr Economides agreed with Dr Yehia regarding the Middle East as a region of high risk. He stated that control of the disease in backyard poultry presents a major difficulty and that public awareness programmes are important to sensitise backyard poultry owners in particular.
187. Dr Vallat agreed that Egypt remains a potential source of the virus and applauded Egypt's decision to implement a full blanket vaccination. He pointed out that under the circumstances, vaccination is an appropriate measure that should continue until time is ripe for an exit strategy sustaining a stamping out programme. The OIE is ready to support Egypt by providing vaccines again on request.
188. Dr Vallat commented that Veterinary Services require political support and should be on the frontline regarding the control of zoonoses. He stated that he is personally opposed to these responsibilities being fully entrusted to the public health authorities as recommended by the WHO as at the beginning of the crisis, many experiences in this field were negative. He added that PVS evaluations will help Veterinary Services obtain more resources from Governments and international donors to deal with zoonoses.

Fourth OIE Strategic Plan, Strengthening of Veterinary services and Capacity Building: Middle East experience with the PVS Instrument

189. Dr Bernard Vallat, OIE Director General made a presentation on the OIE Fourth Strategic Plan, Strengthening of Veterinary Services and the application of the OIE Performance of Veterinary Services tool (OIE-PVS) for the evaluation of Veterinary Services in the Middle East.
190. The Fourth Strategic Plan builds on the success of the Third Strategic Plan. The global vision of the OIE enunciated in the Third Strategic Plan has been globally retained and the Fourth Strategic Plan is, in fact, an organic development of the preceding Plan.
191. The following three strategic elements from the third Strategic Plan have been reinforced: a) improving the dissemination of timely and accurate information on animal diseases including zoonoses, by making the best use of modern information technologies and non official information tracking systems; b) strengthening the role of the OIE as a reference organisation for setting science-based standards on all matters concerning animal health, animal welfare, diagnostic methods and control of diseases, animal production food safety and the facilitation of international trade of animals and animal products with minimal sanitary risks and c) the provision of scientifically-based standards, guidelines and recommendations on measures for the prevention and control of animal diseases including zoonoses, taking into account the economic, social and environmental impacts of such measures, and the provision of services for the determination of animal health status in relation to specific diseases.
192. Dr Vallat described in detail the two new strategic elements that have been added to the Fourth Strategic Plan. The first of these is the support to capacity building for Veterinary Services. In addition to its role as a catalyst for major capacity building activities, the OIE will also provide support to Member Countries wishing to be more engaged in the work of the Organisation, in the form of educational training materials and training programmes for official Delegates, especially to those who assume office for the first time. The second new element identified in the Fourth Strategic Plan deals with strengthening of the OIE's involvement in national and international governance related to decision-making in animal health and welfare including capacity building (mainly using PVS tool), applied research, communication, and the 'mediation' of potential disputes.
193. With regard to institutional arrangements and funding of the Fourth Strategic Plan, Dr Vallat emphasised that the visibility of the OIE to the general public, media, decision-makers, veterinary professionals and farmers will be enhanced. The Plan had foreseen adjustments to the design and scale of assessed contributions in order to facilitate the recovery of contributions from all Members. He added that he has received a mandate from the OIE International Committee to prepare a new mechanism allowing direct funding of the activities of OIE Regional Representations through compulsory contributions of Member Countries of the OIE Regional Commissions. This new mechanism was adopted by OIE Member Countries in May 2006.
194. Since the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) crisis, the front line role of Veterinary Services (VS) in the prevention and control of animal diseases and zoonoses has been clearly recognised by all national policy-makers as well as by the international donor community. To fulfil their functions efficiently, VS especially in developing and in transition countries need to be strengthened and provided with the necessary human, technical, financial and legislative means. This can be achieved if the VS are properly evaluated for compliance with OIE international standards on the quality of VS. The OIE has in this respect developed in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Performance of Veterinary Services tool (OIE PVS) to evaluate VS in order to identify gaps and

weaknesses in VS that can subsequently be remedied through resources from national budgets or international aid. It is interesting to note that the Middle East is one of the first region where the OIE started discussions on evaluation of Veterinary Services during the 8th OIE Regional Conference that was held in Manama, Bahrain in 2005.

195. Three seminars have been held so far at the OIE Headquarters in collaboration with the 'Ecole Nationale des Services Vétérinaires' of Lyon to train veterinary experts in the harmonised application of the PVS tool. Over 80 experts have thus been trained and certified by the OIE to carry out evaluations of VS. These experts are also recognised by the World Bank and other main donors. An Ad hoc Group comprising internationally renown experts has been set up to continuously review the PVS tool including the critical competencies and the indicators regarding Veterinary Services. In addition, a manual for use by evaluators has also been produced.
196. Many developing and in transition countries have requested the OIE to evaluate their VS. Some countries have given their consent to release their evaluation reports to donors or even to the public domain. In the Middle East, the VS of Djibouti, Egypt, Turkey and Yemen have already been completed and the VS of Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sudan will be evaluated in the weeks to come.

Discussions

197. The Session Chairman congratulated Dr Vallat for his comprehensive presentation and thanked the OIE for its enormous contribution towards the strengthening of Veterinary services worldwide but more particularly in developing and in transition countries. He stated the development of the PVS tool by the OIE represented a major breakthrough in the performance of Veterinary Services and expressed the wish that all countries of the region request the OIE to assess their Veterinary Services.
198. The Delegate of Sudan indicated that his country has already used the PVS tool to carry out a self assessment of the Veterinary Services of his country and has requested the OIE to carry out an independent evaluation. He sought clarifications as to when the OIE would carry out the evaluation. Dr Vallat assured the Delegate that a team of OIE experts would soon undertake an evaluation of the VS of Sudan free of charge. He explained that Sudan is a vast country with a huge livestock population and he would ensure that the evaluation of the VS of Sudan is carried out by a team of experienced evaluators before the end of this year.
199. The Delegate of Sudan stressed the need for OIE to recommend the nomination of a focal point on food safety as according to him, veterinarians are not adequately represented in the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Dr Vallat recalled the working relationship between OIE and the Codex Alimentarius Commission defining the responsibilities of each organisation. It has been agreed that the OIE's responsibility starts on farm and extends until the first processing of carcasses. Codex would thereafter be responsible for further processing and packaging. It is thus difficult to claim an OIE focal point on all aspects of food safety which include processing and packaging. However, consideration can be given by OIE to consider a focal point for animal production food safety that covers the prevention of animal pathogens and contaminants on farms.
200. Dr Domenech supported the statements of Dr Vallat on food safety recalling that FAO is fully involved in Codex Alimentarius. Both the Animal Health and Nutrition Divisions of the FAO work together at the level of Codex and ensure that food safety issues on the live animal side are appropriately dealt with.

Legislation and implementation of Animal Welfare in the Middle East

201. The Session Chairperson Dr Khoury invited Dr Hasssan Aidaros to make his presentation on legislation and implementation of animal welfare in the Middle East
202. Dr Aidaros stated that in the Middle East region, the concept of animal welfare depends more on religious background and human ethics rather than on legislations. Most countries do not have any animal welfare legislations. In a few countries, some legal articles are included in the animal health legislations. Some countries such as Cyprus, Egypt, Iran and Sudan have clear animal welfare legislations but even there, the enforcement seems to be inadequate.
203. Animal welfare activities in the Middle East are carried out by official veterinary authorities, non-governmental organisations and even by private individuals. However, the efficacy of such activities is not always evident due to a lack of coordination amongst the various bodies involved.
204. Dr Aidaros recommended that countries of the region develop and adopt animal welfare legislations based on OIE guidelines.
205. Dr Aidaros announced an OIE worldwide conference on animal welfare in Cairo in October 2008. This conference will be dedicated to the implementation of OIE standards on animal health in developing countries.

Discussions

206. The Delegate of the United Arab Emirates informed that his country has adopted new legislation on animal welfare and is now preparing executive regulations. This represents a great responsibility for his country and he will seek advice to ensure that the legislation is in line with the recommendations of the OIE.
207. The Delegate of Jordan assured the conference that in his country legislations on animal welfare actually exist. These legislations cover both domestic and wild animals and also include aspects relating to transport of animals.
208. A member of the Egyptian delegation commented on the problem existing between his country and Australia on animal welfare issues and stated that negotiations are on-going and he was hopeful that a solution would be reached soon.
209. The Delegate of Bahrain commented on religious slaughter and explained that traditional slaughter habits take time to change. It is a long process requiring continuous dialogue with all parties concerned and many countries in the region are not yet ready to adopt new legislations.
210. Dr Aidaros stated that religious habits are not against animal welfare as all religions are against torture of animals before slaughter.
211. A member of the delegation of Syria indicated that Syria passed a decree in 2006 on animal welfare issues including handling, feeding and slaughtering of animals. A decree on trade of large and small animals also exists.

212. Dr O'Neil congratulated Dr Aidaros on his presentation on a very challenging issue. He agreed that improvement of the animal welfare situation in the region would take time but stressed that it was the duty of veterinarians to strive towards that goal. He suggested that another area of improvement would be to ensure that shipments of live animals are rapidly unloaded on arrival as there are significant animal welfare issues especially if there are long delays in the offloading of large animal shipments.
213. Dr Yehia referred to the international conference on animal welfare to be held in Egypt in 2008 and expressed the wish that all countries of the region would attend.
214. The Delegate of Iraq quoted the Hamourabi law that dates back as far as 3000 B.C and stated that out of the 296 articles contained in that law, 6 concern animal welfare.
215. The Delegate of Sudan recalled the Islamic teachings on animal welfare and humane slaughter of animals noting that in his country, regulations and bills that have been adopted are very much in favour of animal welfare.
216. Dr Vallat summarised the discussions and briefly reviewed OIE policies on animal welfare. He stated that more and more pressure is being received from policy makers, members of the public and a large number of OIE Member Countries. He stressed that animal health is a key component of animal welfare and urged Delegates to pay more attention to OIE standards that are being developed on the subject and adopted by unanimity including Middle East countries.

Updated on developments in aquatic animal health

217. The session Chairman, Dr Dr Khoury invited Dr Barry Hill, Vice-President of the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission and Director of the CEFAS Weymouth Laboratory, Weymouth, United Kingdom to present an update on the OIE activities in aquatic animal health.
218. The importance of aquatic animal health continues to increase, not least because of the steady expansion of aquaculture production (mainly the farming of fish, molluscs and crustacean species) throughout the world. The latest figures from FAO (1) show that the contribution of aquaculture to global supplies of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic animals has increased from 3.9 percent of total production by weight in 1970 to 27.1 percent in 2000 and 32.4 percent in 2004. Countries in the Asia and the Pacific region accounted for 91.5 percent of the production quantity and 80.5 percent of the value in 2004. Of the world total, China is reported to account for 69.6 percent of the total quantity and 51.2 percent of total value of aquaculture production. The top ten producing countries for food fish supply from aquaculture in 2004 are indicated in the table below along with the top ten countries in terms of annual growth in aquaculture production for the two-year period 2002–04.

Top ten aquaculture producers of food fish supply: quantity and emerging growth

Producer	2002 (Tonnes)	2004 (Tonnes)	APR (Percentage)
Top ten producers in terms of quantity, 2004			
China	27 767 251	30 614 968	5.0
India	2 187 189	2 472 335	6.3
Viet Nam	703 041	1 198 617	30.6
Thailand	954 567	1 172 866	10.8
Indonesia	914 071	1 045 051	6.9
Bangladesh	786 604	914 752	7.8
Japan	826 715	776 421	-3.1
Chile	545 655	674 979	11.2
Norway	550 209	637 993	7.7
United States of America	497 346	606 549	10.4
TOP TEN SUBTOTAL	35 732 648	40 114 531	6.0
REST OF THE WORLD	4 650 830	5 353 825	7.3
TOTAL	40 383 478	45 468 356	6.1
Top ten producers in terms of growth, 2002-04			
Myanmar	190 120	400 360	45.1
Viet Nam	703 041	1 198 617	30.6
Turkey	61 165	94 010	24.0
Netherlands	54 442	78 925	20.4
Republic of Korea	296 783	405 748	16.9
Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	76 817	104 330	16.5
Egypt	376 296	471 535	11.9
Chile	545 655	674 979	11.2
Thailand	954 567	1 172 866	10.8
United States of America	497 346	606 549	10.4

Note: Data exclude aquatic plants. APR refers to the average annual percentage growth rate for 2002-04.

219. All regions showed increased growth rates in production from 2002 to 2004 but were led by the Near East and North Africa region with 13.5 percent average annual growth. In the region, Turkey has seen the biggest rate of increased production with an annual growth rate of 24 percent, followed by Iran with 16.5 percent, but Egypt is by far the dominant country in terms of total production (providing 92 percent of the regional total) and is now the world's top producer of mullets and the second biggest tilapia producer after China.
220. Worldwide, aquaculture production continues to grow more rapidly than all other animal food-producing sectors. The aquaculture sector has grown at an average rate of 8.8 percent per year since 1970, compared with only 1.2 percent for capture fisheries and 2.8 percent for terrestrial farmed meat production systems over the same period.
221. However, diseases continue to impact heavily on aquaculture production, and international trade in aquaculture animals is still causing spread of major infectious diseases. Several new diseases have emerged in recent years and some have spread internationally, particularly in shrimp aquaculture.
222. The OIE international health standards for international trade in aquatic animals are continuously reviewed and updated by the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (AAHSC) with the assistance of internationally renowned experts. The current editions of the Aquatic Animal Health Code (OIE 2007) and the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals (OIE 2006) incorporate several important modifications agreed during the 74th General Session in May 2006, including amendments to the listed aquatic animal diseases. It is important that Members are aware of these changes and meet their obligations on reporting the occurrence of the listed (and emerging) aquatic animal disease to the OIE. Work has commenced in new areas such as aquatic animal welfare for which a draft set of guidelines has been prepared, and aquatic animal disease surveillance for which a Code chapter has been drafted for Members' comments. Also, the OIE International Committee agreed at the 75th General Session in May 2007 that amphibian diseases should be included in the remit of OIE. An Ad hoc group of the AAHSC has identified two diseases that meet the OIE criteria for listing, and draft Code chapters for these diseases have been prepared and will be distributed for Members' comments.

223. There have been continuing efforts to encourage greater involvement of Veterinary Services in the field of aquatic animal disease and to improve cooperation between veterinary and other authorities with competence for aquatic animal health. In this regard, an OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health ' Defining Roles and Responsibilities' was held in Bergen Norway in October 2006 to provide an opportunity for OIE and its Members to exchange the latest information on developing a science-based approach to the management of aquatic animal health. This will assist in the evaluation and improvement of the current standards and guidelines for better control of infectious aquatic animal health and countries' capabilities to prepare for, and respond to, aquatic animal disease emergencies, as well as better defining roles and responsibilities. The proceedings of the conference will be published in the near future.
224. In addition, there will be a special multi-author issue of the Scientific and Technical Review Series on 'Changing Trends in Managing Aquatic Animal Disease Emergencies' due for publication in April 2008. Finally, the AAHSC pages on the OIE website (www.oie.int/aac/eng/en_fdc.htm) are kept continuously updated to provide easy access to the current OIE standards for aquatic animal health as well as the latest reports of the Commission and its Ad hoc groups, and aquatic animal disease occurrence reports submitted by Members.

Discussions

225. Dr Vallat congratulated Dr Hill for his excellent presentation. He observed that there is a potential wealth of aquaculture in the Middle East and he foresees significant developments in the near future. He advised Veterinary Services to be ready for active participation in those developmental activities. He assured OIE support to Veterinary Services especially in the field of training in aquatic animal diseases. He asked Dr Yehia to follow up developments in that field through the Regional Animal Health Centre.

Presentations by International and Regional Organisations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

226. Dr Joseph Domenech, Chief Veterinary Officer of the FAO and Dr Hassan Aidaros, FAO consultant posted at the RAHC in Beirut made a joint presentation on the global and regional activities of FAO.
227. The FAO/OIE collaboration has developed significantly over the past 3-4 years. The HPAI crisis has accelerated the establishment of new tools such as the Crisis Management Centre/Animal Health (CMC-AH), the Global Early Warning System (GLEWS) and the OIE/FAO flu (OFFLU) network of HPAI Reference centres and networks.
228. FAO has undergone an internal reorganisation with the creation of the post of a Chief Veterinary Officer. In addition, the establishment of the Emergency Centre for TADs (ECTAD) and the Special Emergency Fund for Rehabilitation Activities (SEFRA) allow the FAO to respond better to crisis situation.
229. Dr Domenech stressed the importance of certain methods/tools such as i) disease intelligence as developed within the GLEWS and EMPRES Programmes (data collection and analysis, rumours tracking, modelling and methods allowing prediction and warnings, ii) networks of laboratories, epidemio-surveillance teams and socio-economic experts that allow integration of national officers/teams and thus improve efficiency through capacity building, proficiency

testing and the use of performance indicators; iii) regional and international coordination through publications, meetings (workshops, conferences); iv) Regional Animal Health Centres established jointly with OIE, the centre for the Middle East being located in the OIE RR in Beirut where the FAO ECTAD decentralised unit is also situated. FAO/OIE activities relate to disease assessments, strategy design, support to surveillance and laboratory diagnostic networks, capacity building in disease information and warning (disease intelligence, preparedness, socio-economics, biosecurity...)

230. Regarding advocacy, FAO and OIE have and are still striving to convince Governments and donors to increase investments in order to prevent TADs particularly HPAI. The objective is to strengthen Veterinary Services and establish a better partnership with the private sector (producers, traders,...).
231. Dr Domenech briefly presented the evolution of the HPAI situation worldwide indicating the main trends of the disease. He stated that although the incidence of the disease is on the decrease, the reoccurrences observed in many countries indicate that the virus is still circulating.
232. Rinderpest eradication programme (GREP), FMD control and RVF are other examples of TADS illustrating FAO/OIE collaboration at the regional and international level.
233. Dr Hassan Aidaros presented the FAO activities within the framework of GF-TADs which is now fully functional and the Beirut RAHC since its establishment earlier this year. He recalled the objectives of the RAHC and listed the joint FAO/OIE activities (Workshops...) as well as some FAO country projects.

European Commission (EU)

234. Dr Etienne Bonbon, Representative of the EC briefly presented the animal health situation in the EU regarding FMD, Bluetongue and HPAI insisting on the new rules regarding the latter disease. The first two diseases appeared in summer and were successfully controlled and eradicated, whereas BT serotype 8 progressed West, North and South causing few mortalities but major trade problems for live animals. Dr Bonbon stated that a vaccine against serotype 8 could be available in 2008. He advised that member countries comply with the provisions of the OIE code regarding trade relating to these diseases. He informed that the EC has already distributed the 2006 report on the activities of the Animal Health Unit and presented a document of a new animal health strategy for 2007-2013.

Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre

235. Dr A. Seimenis, Director of the Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre reviewed the perspectives of the WHO/MZCC proposed strategy which includes:
- Solid intersectoral collaboration and coordination;
 - Sustainable technical assistance by international organisations.
 - Timely information exchange on disease occurrences and early warning systems and
 - Effective epidemiological surveillance systems.
236. Dr. Siemenis identified the core targets of a global strategy which includes, increasing capabilities of countries and training and motivating staff.
237. He enumerated programmes and activities of MZCC comprising epidemiological surveillance of zoonoses and establishment of electronic epidemiological surveillance systems.

238. Dr. Siemenis concluded by stressing the importance of a Global Strategy for Health and Development which requires joint efforts. The objectives of the strategy presume strong political commitment by Member Countries for reforms and sustainable support and contribution by WHO, FAO, OIE and carefully selected NGOs

Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development

239. Dr Elsayed Elowni, Representative of the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development presented the activities of the Organisation. He made a particular mention of the HPAI project and thanked the OIE and FAO for their collaboration. He mentioned the work of AOAD to fund animal health programmes to be implemented jointly with OIE and FAO.

World Bank

240. Dr Jean-Philippe Tré, Regional AI Coordinator for the Middle East and North African Region (MENA) made a brief presentation on the activities of his organisation in the region.
241. Since the onset of worldwide HPAI outbreaks in 2005, the Bank established an emergency assistance programme in collaboration with OIE, FAO, WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Several financing tools have been made available amongst which the newly established Multi-Donor Avian and Human Influenza Facility (AHITF). Mainly funded by the EU, the United Kingdom and Australia, the Facility has already funded several national and regional projects in countries in the MENA region including Egypt, West Bank and Gaza, Djibouti and Yemen. Possibilities exist for extending these projects to other countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Syria. While short term support actions will be maintained to prevent and control the spread of HPAI in infected countries, additional focus should be placed in the medium and long term to control not only HPAI but other zoonoses as well.
242. The Bank is pleased to note that the OIE PVS tool is being widely adopted by countries of the region as this would strengthen the efforts being placed in the control of animal diseases including HPAI and other zoonoses in the long term.

United States Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Inspection Service APHIS-USDA

243. Dr Linda Logan, representative of APHIS-USDA, presented the activities of her organisation in the region.
244. The APHIS office located in Cairo, Egypt covers 30 countries of the region providing support to activities undertaken by OIE and FAO. Some 68 million dollars USD have been earmarked to support programmes directed at the prevention and control of HPAI. In this respect, APHIS has hosted several workshops and training programmes on the surveillance and control of the disease. Veterinarians have also been posted in Afghanistan, Iraq and Egypt.

Discussions of Recommendations N° 1 and 2

245. Draft Recommendations Nos. 1 and 2 on the two Technical Items of the Conference were presented to the participants and tabled for discussions. A few amendments were called for in both recommendations, which were presented for final adoption on Thursday.

Venue, dates and agenda items for the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East

246. The President of the Conference asked Delegates present if any of their countries wished to host the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East. The Delegate of Qatar expressed the wish of his country to host the Conference. This proposal was unanimously accepted.
247. The following countries expressed strong interest to host subsequent Conferences: Iran, Jordan and Kuwait.
248. The exact dates of the meeting, which should be in October 2009, will be decided at the meeting of the Regional Commission held back to back with the OIE General Session in May 2008.
249. Dr Vallat informed participants that the OIE Administrative Commission has suggested that as from 2008, only one technical item warranting the distribution of a questionnaire to Member Countries will be presented during the General Session. The second technical presentation, which will be decided by the Administrative Commission, will deal with a current topic of international interest and will be presented, without a previous questionnaire, by a world renowned expert. He therefore suggested that all regional conferences adopt a similar approach. This proposal was unanimously accepted.

Wednesday 31 October 2007

Professional and guided cultural visit

250. Participants found the visit organised for the day by the host country to be of great interest. Sincere thanks to the organisers for their kind hospitality were presented.

Thursday 1 November 2007

Adoption of the draft Final Report and Recommendations

251. The draft final report was adopted with a few minor amendments.
252. The draft recommendations were adopted without any amendment.

Motion of Thanks

253. The motion of thanks to the Government of Syria was presented by Dr Kassem Nasser AL Qahtani, OIE Delegate of Qatar.

Closing ceremony

254. Dr Hassan Aidaros, speaking on behalf of FAO, thanked the Government of Syria for the organisation of the Conference and the hospitality extended to participants. He congratulated Drs Yehia Ghazi, Dewan Sibartie and Karim Ben Jebara and Mrs Nathaly Monsalve for their personal efforts in ensuring the success of the Conference.
255. Dr Yehia Ghazi thanked all Delegates and participants for their active contribution to the Conference and assured that his office in Beirut is always open to welcome Delegates.
256. Dr George Khoury thanked all participants including speakers, interpreters and the Secretarial staff of the OIE Representation and the OIE Central Bureau for making the Conference meaningful and interesting.
257. Dr Barry O'Neil congratulated all participants who helped to make the Conference a success. He stated that the presentations were of high standards and the discussions lively. He thanked the organisers for the excellent hospitality offered to participants and wished foreign participants a safe journey home.
258. Dr Bernard Vallat thanked all participants including organisers, interpreters, staff of the OIE representation and OIE Central Bureau, representatives of regional and international organisations and speakers for a successful Conference. He expressed his gratitude to the Government and people of Syria for their kind hospitality.
259. Dr Bernard Vallat declared the Conference closed at 11.00 a.m.



9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Damascus (Syria), 29 October-1 November 2007

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**9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Damascus, Syria, 29 October – 1 November 2007**

AGENDA

- I. The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services (Technical Item I)
- II. The Geographic Information System (GIS) used for animal disease control (Technical Item II)
- III. Animal health situation of Member Countries in the first half of 2007
- IV. Updated information on aquatic animal health activities by the OIE
- V. Activities of the OIE Regional Commission and Regional Representation for the Middle East
- VII. Presentations by international and regional organisations
- VIII. Evaluation and Strengthening of Veterinary Services
- IX. Regional control of Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza
- X. Implementation of World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) in the region
- XI. Other matters:
 - Selection of the Technical Items for the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
 - Date, venue and agenda for the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
 - Miscellaneous



9th Conference
of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle east
Damascus, Syria, 29 October - 1 November 2007

Provisional Timetable

Sunday 28 October 2007

4.30 pm - Registration and distribution of documents

Monday 29 October 2007

8.30 am - Registration and distribution of documents (Cont.)

9.00 am - Opening Ceremony

- OIE Delegate, Host country, (Dr Ziad Namour)
- President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, (Dr Salman Abdnabi Ebrahim)
- President of the OIE International Committee, (Dr Barry O'Neil)
- OIE Director General, (Dr Bernard Vallat)
- Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian reform of Syria

10.00 am - Break

10.30 am - Election of the Conference Committee (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur General)

- Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

- Election of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs for Technical Items and Animal Health Situation

11.00 am - **Animal health situation of Member Countries during the first semester of 2007**
(Dr Karim Ben Jebara)

12.00 pm - End of the session

12.30 pm - Lunch

2.00 pm - **Technical Item I: The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services.** (Dr Pavlos Economides)

3.30 pm - Break

- 4.00 pm - OIE Rinderpest accreditation scheme- Situation in the Middle East (Dr Dewan Sibartie)
- 5.00 pm - Activities of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East (Dr Ghazi Yehia)
- 5.30 pm - End of Session
(Preparation of recommendation for Item 1 by designated small group)
- 7.00 pm - Reception given by the Government of Syria

Tuesday 30 October 2007

- 9.00 am - **Technical Item II:** The Geographic Information System (GIS) used for animal disease control (Dr Ben Jebara)
- 10.30 am - Break
- 11.00 am - Regional control of HPAI (Dr Yehia)
- 11.30 am -Strengthening of Veterinary services: Middle East experience with the PVS Instrument (Dr Bernard Vallat)
- 12.15 pm -Legislation and implementation of Animal Welfare in the Middle East (Dr Aidaros)
- 12.45 pm - Lunch
- Preparation of recommendation for Item II by designated small group
- 2.00 pm - Update on the activities of the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Dr Barry Hill)
- 2.45 pm - Presentations by other international and regional organisations
- 3.45 pm -Break
- 4.00 pm -Discussions of Recommendations N° 1 and 2
- 4.30 pm - Date, venue and agenda items for the 10th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
- 7.00 pm -Reception given by the OIE

Wednesday 31 October 2007

- 8.00 am - Professional and guided cultural visit

Thursday 1 November 2007

- 9.00 am - Adoption of the draft Final Report and Recommendations
- 10.30 am - Break
- 11.00 am - Closing Ceremony



9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Damascus, Syria, 29 October to 01 November 2007

Recommendation n° 1

The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services

CONSIDERING THAT:

The quality of Veterinary Services of a country is an essential prerequisite for animal health and welfare, veterinary public health, food safety and hygiene and for the protection of the environment,

Veterinary Statutory Bodies regulate the registration, licensing and the eligibility for veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals to continue practice,

Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Veterinary Associations promote public confidence in the practice of veterinary medicine and other veterinary activities.

Veterinary Associations represent veterinarians and promote their recognition by society,

The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code provides standards and guidelines on the quality, organisation and structure of Veterinary Services and Veterinary Statutory Bodies as well as on the qualifications and educational and scientific expertise of their human resources,

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. OIE Member Countries of the Middle East improve the implementation of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code Standards and fundamental principles for the quality of Veterinary Services and their human resources;
2. Member Countries not currently having autonomous Veterinary Statutory Bodies establish such bodies, in accordance with the OIE guidelines, empowering them with legal authority to:
 - i. define the educational, ethical and level of expertise of veterinarians and paraprofessionals;
 - ii. develop a code for professional ethics and conduct and the procedures to ensure compliance of the veterinarian and veterinary paraprofessional to the principles of the code;
 - iii. protect the interests of animal owners, consumers of animal products and other stakeholders by ensuring the availability of services provided by

persons who are properly qualified and practice in a professional and ethical manner;

- iv. regulate the interface between the members of the profession and their clients;
 - v. maintain high standards and credibility of the profession;
 - vi. promote the art and science of veterinary medicine;
 - vii. examine complaints against veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals and take appropriate measures, including sanctions in case of violation of set standards;
 - viii. develop educational programmes for continuing professional development for veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals;
 - ix. apply the provisions of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code for independent and credible veterinary certification;
 - x. encourage safe trade of animals and animal products to regional and international markets;
 - xi. regulate and encourage the participation of accredited private veterinarians in the activities of the Veterinary Services;
 - xii. register and license to practice all veterinary para-professionals, who should work under the responsibility and supervision of licensed and registered veterinarians.
3. Member countries encourage and support the functions and activities of Veterinary Associations.
 4. The OIE develop more detailed guidelines and recommendations for the establishment and functioning of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Veterinary Associations



9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Damascus, Syria, 29 October to 01 November 2007

Recommendation n° 2

The application of the Geographic Information Systems in the surveillance of animal diseases

CONSIDERING THAT:

The Geographic Information System (GIS) helps in understanding and explaining disease dynamics including spreading patterns and can also be used as a warning tool against disease or for predicting the evolution of a recently introduced disease. Such remote sensing increases the speed of response against disease emergencies,

Although the application of the GIS in the veterinary field has been developed over the last decade and specialised software has become more affordable and "user-friendly", very few countries of the Middle East have applied such technologies,

All Veterinary Services in the Middle East have hardware and access to internet. Some use other form of digital information in their tasks but very few have computer-based mapping technologies with respect to animal health activities,

The majority of countries in the Middle East would like to build in house GIS capacity. Some even wish to establish a GIS capability within the epidemiological unit of the Veterinary Services to provide mapping services to other livestock activities in their countries on an on-call basis.

Even those countries of the Middle East that have GIS technology, are not making optimal use of their investments mainly because of lack of trained staff. GIS work in these countries is generally entrusted to focal points responsible for the notification to the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS).

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST RECOMMENDS THAT:

1. Member Countries should consider as a first step to improve animal surveillance networks in their territories and provide appropriate training to members of such networks,
2. Member Countries should work towards improving data quality collection, storage and analyses while developing the use of GIS tools for spatial analysis related to animal health activities,
3. OIE:
 - a. provide necessary support to Veterinary Services for the application of GIS to animal health activities,
 - b. organise in collaboration with its Collaborating Centres on epidemiology and additional geospatial expertise, regional training courses on the application of GIS technology for Veterinary Services particularly for OIE - WAHIS focal points,
 - c. prepare and publish guidelines in the use of GIS in animal health.



**9th CONFERENCE
OF THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**
Damascus, (Syria), 28 October- 01 November 2007

PRESS RELEASE
01 November 2007

The 9th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) was held in Damascus , (Syria) from 28 October to 01 November 2007 .

The Conference was chaired by Dr George Khoury, the OIE Delegate for Syria . His Excellency , Dr. Adel Safar, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of Syria , Dr Barry O’Neil, President of the OIE International Committee, Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE, Delegates of OIE Member Countries, representatives of international and regional organisations and observers attended the Conference.

In his opening speech, the Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian reform of Syria commended the role of the OIE in the international control of animal diseases and the facilitation of international trade of animals and animal products and thanked the OIE for the support provided to countries of the region. Regarding standards, he said “ *as a strong believer of international standards, Syria regularly updates legislation regarding livestock to ensure compliance with OIE international standards*”.

Two technical items were discussed during the Conference namely:

- The role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Veterinary Associations.
- The application of the Geographical Information Systems in the surveillance of animal diseases.

Dr Vallat stressed the importance of these two items for the Middle East and expressed the wish that countries implement the recommendations adopted during the Conference on those topics as soon as possible.

Dr Vallat reminded that more than 75% of emerging human diseases recorded over the past two decades have been traced to an animal source. He commented on the frontline role played by Veterinary Services in the prevention and control of such diseases which are likely to become more frequent due to climate change and globalisation of movements of goods and services. He observed “ *Veterinary Services are now considered as a “Public Good’ by the international Community and more national and international resources are being provided. I urge you not to betray the trust placed in your services to tackle animal diseases and zoonoses.*”

The OIE Regional Commission expressed its gratitude to the support provided by the OIE to Member Countries of the Region and strongly supported the actions being undertaken by the OIE to promote the control of animal diseases and zoonoses worldwide and in the region.

Dr Bernard Vallat warmly thanked the Government of Syria for kindly hosting and supporting the Regional Conference and all participants for their valuable contributions to the outcome of the Conference.

All recommendations adopted by the conference will be submitted for consideration and adoption during the next OIE General Assembly of all Member Countries in May 2008.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), created in 1924 under its initial name "Office International des Epizooties", is one of the oldest international organisations and, with its 170 Member Countries, is one of the most representative intergovernmental organisations.

Present on all five continents through its Regional Representations, its 200 Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres, the OIE oversees animal health and surveillance in the world and plays a key role in scientific research and the dissemination of veterinary information.

The close relationship between animal health and animal welfare has prompted the OIE to play a key role as the leading international organisation for animal welfare and elaborates specific recommendations and guidelines on relevant subjects.

Operating at the interface between animal and human health, the OIE works in close collaboration with other agencies supporting and financing the fight against animal diseases and zoonoses and helps its Member Countries to prevent, control and eradicate those diseases.

In its capacity as the international reference organisation for animal diseases, the OIE also elaborates sanitary standards that safeguard the world trade in animals and animal products within the framework of the WTO SPS Agreement.

The OIE is also a key partner of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in the field of farm prevention of the release of animal pathogens and contaminants of importance to food safety.



MOTION OF THANKS

The President and the members of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, the Director General of the OIE, the President of the International Committee of the OIE, members of delegations, country representatives, representatives of international and regional organisations and observers, wish to express their gratitude to the Government of Syria, the Host Country of the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission, held from 29 October to 1 November 2007, for the excellent welcome extended to the participants and for all facilities made available to them during their stay in Damascus.