



**AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH THE REGIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH
CENTRE TO COORDINATE
THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF AVIAN INFLUENZA AND
OTHER
TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES IN THE MIDDLE EAST
AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

AGREEMENT BETWEEN

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS (FAO)**

and

WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE)

and

THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE OF LEBANON



BACKGROUND

In October 1998, the OIE opened the office of its Regional Representation for the Middle East in Beirut, Lebanon, in the premises of the Lebanese ministry of agriculture, Silk Bureau in the locality of Kfarchima. This office hosts an expert from the Region as the OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East and assisted by a technical and administrative team.

Since January 2006, the FAO has been financing two regional technical cooperation programmes (TCPs) to provide emergency assistance for the early detection and prevention of avian influenza in the region, one of which is for the 13 countries in the region and has its regional coordination unit in the premises of the OIE regional representation in Beirut.

In 2004, the FAO and the OIE signed an agreement setting up the GF-TADs (Global Framework for Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases). This initiative is designed to combine the experience and expertise of the two organisations in the control of transboundary diseases so as to strengthen the capacities of developing countries and help them establish prevention and control programmes for specific transboundary animal diseases according to the priorities in each region.

The complementary nature of the mandates implemented by the two organisations, in particular to improve animal health in the Middle East and neighbouring countries and thereby contribute to poverty alleviation, has formed the basis for a long-standing collaboration, which is notably to be maintained within the framework of the GF-TADs' programme.

The occurrence in February 2006 of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) due to virus Asian subtype H5N1 in the region and the high risk of the disease spreading to other countries and territories led the two organisations to draw up a formal agreement to establish an operational Regional Animal Health Centre aimed at ensuring better coordination of their activities.

In consideration of the above, the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. PURPOSE OF THE REGIONAL CENTRE

The parties to this agreement hereby establish the OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre. The purpose of the OIE/FAO Regional Animal Health Centre is to provide a framework for the coordination and harmonisation of strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of activities related to the prevention and control of avian influenza and other transboundary animal diseases in the region.

The Centre shall be located in the offices of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East in Beirut, Lebanon.

2. MODUS OPERANDI

As soon as the organisations involved and the host country sign the agreement on the Centre, the parties will draw up a quarterly programme of activities in Beirut, Lebanon, defining actions to be undertaken and missions to be carried out. Each party will act under its own responsibility and will inform the Secretariat of the GF-TADs Regional Steering Committee.

The members of the Centre undertake to share all relevant information concerning the fulfilment of their joint mission. The OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East will provide the Permanent Secretariat for the Centre and will report to the GF-TADs' Steering Committee.

As appropriate, the Parties shall meet for the purposes of this Agreement.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF ROLES BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONS

Taking into account the inherent experience of each of the institutions, flexible orientations have been selected regarding their special areas of intervention and their areas of added value.

Special areas of intervention for the OIE

- Evaluation of the Veterinary Services to help Governments and donor agencies target their investments in the field of animal health.
- Capacity building of OIE Delegates and their staff (focal points for animal health information, wildlife diseases, animal welfare, aquatic animal diseases and veterinary medicinal products and vaccines).
- Actions aimed at improving the disease notification system.
- Dissemination of animal health information.
- Harmonisation and technical monitoring of emergency response plans.
- Support to regional and international trade of animals and animal products.
- Support to national laboratories to become Reference Laboratories whenever relevant.

Special areas of intervention for the FAO

- Investigations into the role of migratory birds in the spread of avian influenza.
- Training in laboratory diagnosis and support for regional networks of laboratories and epidemiological surveillance teams.

- Support for feasibility studies for national and regional investment programmes.
- Provision of technical assistance, both for the Centre and at a national level to support the implementation of programmes.
- Support for the development of national and regional avian influenza and other transboundary animal diseases control strategies.

Common areas of intervention

- Definition of control strategies.
- Preparation of investment programmes for sustainable strengthening of the Veterinary Services.
- Preparation of a regional avian influenza control programme.
- Support for laboratories.
- Dissemination of technical information.
- Public awareness and information campaigns.
- Monitoring and evaluation of actions in the field.
- Harmonisation of emergency response plans.
- Support for the development of national and regional avian influenza and other transboundary animal diseases control strategies.
- Networking and exchange of data and information with other regions.
- Support for the development of control programmes for transboundary diseases and their sub-regional and regional coordination, and for associated training.

4. Staff requirements

For the purposes of this Agreement, the parties shall strive to provide the following human resources:

For OIE

- 1 ME veterinarian specialist in institutional matters, audit and training.
- 2 specialist trainers, including one for electronic information systems (one English-speaking and one French-speaking).
- 1 administrative and financial officer.
- 1 trilingual secretary.

For FAO

- 1 veterinarian economist.

- 1 epidemiologist specialising in monitoring projects relating to migratory birds.
- 1 administrative support officer.
- 1 veterinarian responsible for monitoring projects relating to regional networks of laboratories and surveillance teams.

For the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon

- Appropriate facilities and logistics.

Additional human resources requirements

To fulfil the aforementioned missions, the team at the Centre in Beirut will be backed up by additional staff as agreed from time to time by the parties as well as by consultants on an ad hoc basis.

Requirements for short term consultants will be defined as the need arises, but will include at least one expert in communication and one trainer.

5. Miscellaneous

The obligations of the parties under this Agreement, in particular the provision of human resources, shall be subject to the availability of the necessary extra-budgetary resources.

Any dispute between the parties shall be settled through negotiation.

The Government of Lebanon shall grant to FAO, its property, funds, assets and staff, and any persons performing services on its behalf, the privileges and immunities contained in Article VIII of the Agreement between FAO and the Government of Lebanon on the Office of the FAO Representative in Lebanon, signed on 5 February 1977. It shall extend the same privileges and immunities to the OIE staff as per the Agreement signed between the OIE and Lebanon on 17 December 2004.

Nothing in this Agreement or in any document or activity related thereto shall be construed as a waiver of the privileges and immunities of FAO or of OIE.

Done in Beirut and
Paris,

Date:	Date:	Date:
For the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture:	For the FAO:	For the OIE:
The Minister of Agriculture	FAO- Chief Veterinary Officer	Director General
Talal Al-Sahili	Dr. Joseph Domenech	Dr. Bernard Vallat

Regional Animal Health Centre: Action Plan for the years 2009 – 2010

The most important activities to be performed during this 2 year period are the following:

- the follow-up of conclusions and recommendations of the RAHC workshop on Rinderpest, hold in Amman in February 2008, to come to official country freedom recognition for all Middle Eastern countries.
- the implementation of a regional project for the control of FMD in line with the recommendations of the 4th FMD Round Table hold in Amman under the umbrella of the Regional Steering Committee of the GF-TADs. This project should be integrated in the global strategy for the global control of FMD, which will be defined during the OIE-FAO Global Conference on FMD next June in Paraguay.
- the study of a specific RVF predicting model adapted to the region to be able to prevent the apparition of the disease and to implement relevant measures.
- a better understanding of the situation of PPR in the region. Joint programmes with the RAHC for the North Africa from Tunis should be developed considering the involvement of this centre in the control of recent PPR outbreaks affecting Morocco.

The aim of the RAHC to promote the animal health in the Middle East is an important challenge for both organisations.

The continuous collaboration and cooperation established within the RAHC is an important tool to face such challenge by establishing relevant projects and strategies adapted to country needs.

The arrival of Dr George Khoury as Regional Coordinator for the FAO ECTAD Unit for the Middle East, demonstrating the FAO involvement in such matters and the good collaboration with OIE and FAO, will participate to achieve this objective.