

AQMENET Regional Group Discussion Report

Date: 27/10/2025

Participating Members: Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Iraq and Bahrain

Discussion 1-Priority Disease and Diseases Control Strategies

1. Priority Disease

Participants identified Vibriosis as the top aquatic animal disease of concern, along with Oodinium and Cryptocaryon infections affecting fish. The emergence of shrimp viruses was also highlighted as a growing threat due to species introduction and transboundary movements. The group discussed several major diseases affecting aquaculture, including Viral Nervous Necrosis (VNN) in grouper and Koi Herpes Virus (KHV).

2. Control Strategies

Movement control and export restrictions are applicable in all countries, however, only Bahrain has quarantine enforcement with passive mortality-based surveillance and reporting. Kuwait has a surveillance but at research level.

3. Main Gaps and Challenges

Surveillance remains a critical gap. Most member countries rely on passive monitoring, with challenges in implementing zoning due to small national areas and limited technical capacity. Also, there is a need for risk assessment and risk management.

4. Harmonizing National and Regional Aquaculture Strategies

The group emphasized the need for AQMENET to strengthen regional collaboration and coordination with international organizations such as the FAO and RECOFI. A unified regulatory approach would facilitate harmonized disease control, data sharing, and trade compliance.

Discussion 2-Laboratory Diagnostics

1. Current Capacities

Most of the equipment are available in all country members, but still there is a need to build diagnostic capacity and standardize testing methods. There is a need to improve communication between laboratories and decision-makers. Diagnostic results should guide management actions through emphasizing economic impact on public health. Authorities must activate their role by having access to farms for sampling and inspection.

2. Challenges

All regional countries are facing same challenges in terms of limited budgets for surveillance activities, low demand for diagnostic testing and reliance on general animal laboratories rather than specialized aquatic labs.

3. Collaborations or networks

Members proposed establishing a regional reference laboratory, potentially hosted in Saudi Arabia, since number of farms and samples are limited. This step can be the baseline for capacity building. Regional reference laboratory can carry out confirmatory diagnostics and support training and capacity building.

Priority actions and recommendations

1. Prioritize regional surveillance for shrimp and finfish viral diseases.
2. Develop and fund national aquatic animal health laboratories.
3. Enhance AQMENET's coordination with FAO and other international partners.
4. Implement compartmentalization to ensure sanitary guarantees for export.
5. Establish a regional reference laboratory for aquatic animal diseases.
6. Standardize biosecurity measures for all farm scales.
7. Invest in training and awareness programs for diagnostic and field personnel.

Disease Autobrake Risk Assessment and Management

Standardize outlet water management for aquatic inshore farming operations.