



Report of the 9th Joint Permanent Committee of REMESA Tunis (Tunisia) 3-4 November 2014

Major conclusions

Subject	Decision	Implementation
JPC report validation	Validation at the end of a period of 30 days after sending the draft report	OIE-FAO Joint Secretariat
FMD	Approval of the OIE FMD resolution of REMESA (regional vaccine bank)	OIE
PPR	Continuing to support countries in the Maghreb region for the definition of a PPR regional strategy within the framework of the Global strategy and drafting dossiers for the official national control programmes;	OIE/FAO and Member Countries of North Africa
	A questionnaire elaborated by EFSA was distributed to countries to collect information to evaluate the risk of introduction of PPR into Europe	EFSA/CIRAD and Member Countries
FVR – Vmerge project	Vmerge project within the framework of REMESA: a letter would be sent by the Vmerge project coordinator to the Chief Veterinary Officers of the concerned countries in order to officially inform them about the activities of Vmerge project and to ensure the follow up of the conclusions of the Rabat meeting on RVF	Vmerge consortium
Tickborne diseases	“ARIMNet project” on ticks and transmitted diseases: finalization of the pre-proposal < 1st December 2014 and submission of the full project (if pre-proposal accepted) < 11th May 2015	Arimnet project consortium
Rabies	To organise an OIE meeting for the Maghreb countries in 2015 focusing on awareness, communication and training following the recommendation of the previous meeting held in June 2014	OIE and Member Countries
Training for official veterinarians	At the next meeting of JPC: to share information concerning the activities being implemented in the REMESA network for training official veterinarians (ENSV Lyon - Collaborating Centre for Training of Official Veterinarians)	France and other member countries of REMESA
Co-chair REMESA 2015	Algeria and Greece	CVOs of Algeria and Greece
10th JPC	16 and 17 March 2015 in Heraklion (Greece)	OIE/FAO Joint Secretariat in collaboration with Greece

Introduction

The joint OIE-FAO secretariat organised the 9th meeting of the Joint Permanent Committee (JPC) of REMESA in 2014 in Tunis (Tunisia) following the recommendations of the previous JPC meeting held in Malta in March 2014. The agenda of the meeting focused on the priority diseases identified by REMESA network such as FMD, PPR, Rabies and RVF, as well as a FMD vaccine bank implementation. The agenda of the meeting is in Appendix 1.

About 30 people participated in the meeting including Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) representatives from International and Regional Organisations, as well as experts from International Reference Laboratories. The list of participants is in Appendix 2. The meeting was co-chaired by the CVOs of Malta and Mauritania who assured the co-presidency of REMESA in 2014.

Opening session

The co-presidency (Malta and Mauritania) started the opening session by reiterating the main scope of REMESA network which is to share information, activities and objectives amongst countries in order to improve the sanitary situation in the Mediterranean area.

The meeting was officially opened by His Excellency Mr. Lassaad Lachaal, Minister for Agriculture of Tunisia. He welcomed the participants and emphasized the important role of the REMESA platform as a tool to continue to share information among countries for responding with efficacy to the challenges faced by the countries in the field of animal and public health. Nowadays, it is no longer possible for a given country to deal with these challenges in an isolated way but partnership is imperative to achieve common objectives. REMESA is an optimal platform to harmonize surveillance and control measures to fight against diseases such as FMD, PPR, RVF and rabies and – today – the fruitful results of this network witnessed the usefulness of this platform. Finally, the Minister reiterated the commitment of Tunisia to support this network.

The OIE Headquarters was represented by the Deputy Director-General, Dr Monique Eloit. She thanked the Tunisian Government for supporting the OIE activities and highlighted the importance of international solidarity among countries in the control of animal diseases. She re-affirmed the role of the REMESA platform as an opportunity for the countries to make the state of the art of the activities so as to plan further actions all together targeting common objectives.

Mr Benoit Horemans representative of the FAO Sub-regional Office for North Africa. He welcomed the new Countries which joined the network (Lebanon and Jordan) and emphasized the relevance of the REMESA network for combatting the priority diseases still present in the region. He also stated that the adhesion of the International Organisations to this network provide evidence of the pertinence of the network.

Note: This report does not detail all the information discussed during the two-days meeting. Detailed information are available in the presentations delivered during the meeting (documents submitted to the participants).

FMD session

The OIE sub-regional representation for North Africa delivered a presentation by providing an overview of the FMD situation in the region and the risk of introducing the disease into Europe. The OIE sub-regional representation for North Africa also reminded the importance (for North African countries) of reinforcing the surveillance for FMD (active/passive surveillance, serological/virological detection) to document the reduced prevalence or absence of virus circulation as well as for the post monitoring vaccination.

The CVOs of Tunisia and Algeria presented an updated situation of FMD highlighting an improvement of FMD situation in the area. In particular, it was noted the absence of new FMD outbreaks in Algeria since 22 September 2014 and a decrease in Tunisia. The CVO of Mauritania confirmed that FMD is considered endemic in the country and that - at present - this disease does not represent a major problem for the farmers since the autochthonous races of dairy cows do not produce large amounts of milk.

Dr Monique Eloit presented the model of OIE vaccine bank (an innovative tool OIE) illustrating the positive experiences of the OIE in implementing and managing such a model of vaccine bank along with the advantages for the countries which benefit from such mechanism. She also brought to the attention of the audience some proposals for implementing such a model of OIE bank within the framework of REMESA network. Following the discussion, an OIE Resolution of REMESA on FMD vaccine bank was drafted, discussed and finally approved by all the participants attending the 9th JPC of REMESA with the objective of entrusting OIE in the implementation of a regional vaccine bank. The Resolution as approved during the meeting is in Appendix 3.

Additional presentations were given in this session and, in particular, by the OIE Reference Laboratory for FMD based at the "Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna" (IZSLER Brescia, Italy), the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD), the ANSES' Animal Health Laboratory located in Maisons-Alfort (Paris, France) and the FAO sub regional office for North Africa.

PPR session

The conclusions of the meeting held at the OIE sub regional representation in Tunis (May 2014) were presented by reiterating the continuous support provided by the OIE office about the ongoing work in North Africa aiming at the preparation of national control plans and dossiers for obtaining disease free status for PPR along with a regional strategy – in line with the global strategy - for controlling and eradicating the disease. From the meeting some recommendations were raised such as the implementation of harmonised surveillance systems and protocols for epidemiological investigations and the necessity of gathering data to demonstrate the economic impact of PPR in the region through economic studies.

In this context, Dr Monique Eloit, presented an update on the Global PPR Control and Eradication Strategy including the major conclusions of the GF-TADs meeting held in Rome in October 2014. Yet, the FAO sub regional office for North Africa showed a tool for supporting the decision-making process and especially for calculating cost-benefit analysis in the framework of control programmes for PPR.

The discussion highlighted that REMESA should play a significant role in implementing the Global PPR Control and Eradication Strategy in the area. In relation to the Global PPR Control and Eradication Strategy, the CVO of Morocco stated some concerns with the reference to objective of eradicating the disease from the globe by 2030. This because of the high number of small ruminants in the world and because this population is subject to frequent movements if compared with cattle population (bovine main target for rinderpest eradication). The CVO of Morocco called for sharing more information about national control programmes for PPR- in particular - with regard to their efficiency and on which control measures the concerned countries are applying in response to the outbreaks.

The representative from Egypt stated that no studies on socio-economic impact for PPR are available in Egypt and confirmed the need to harmonize control measures and objectives amongst countries to achieve the goal of global eradication in the coming 15 years.

The CVO of France highlighted the significant role - within the context of the Global PPR Control and Eradication Strategy - played by the training of official veterinarians to be able to deal with the declared objective. He proposed that at the next meeting of JPC an item should be dedicated to share information concerning the activities being implemented in the REMESA network for training official veterinarians while recalling the role of the Collaborating Centre for Training of Official Veterinarians based at Ecole Nationale des Services Vétérinaires (ENSV) in Lyon (France).

Finally, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) delivered a presentation and informed the participants that European Commission requested to EFSA an update assessment of the risk of introduction and spread of peste des petits ruminants (PPR), sheep pox (SPP), goat pox (GTP) and lumpy skin disease (LSD). For this purpose, a questionnaire elaborated by EFSA - in collaboration with CIRAD - was distributed to countries of North African region to collect information useful to evaluate the risk of introduction of PPR into Europe.

RVF session

The FAO sub regional office for North Africa presented the major conclusions and recommendations of the sub-regional workshop (organised by FAO in collaboration with the OIE) held in Rabat (Morocco) from 17 to 19 September 2014 entitled "Towards a surveillance and control strategy in the Maghreb against RVF". The workshop aimed at sharing and exchange information on the situation of RVF and to make the state of the art about the disease so as to strengthen the capacity of veterinary services and laboratories in the implementation of control strategies, monitoring and communication in the region. The focal points from North African countries were invited to attend the meeting as well as representatives from Vmerge Project and Institutions involved within Vmerge Project.

In line with this, the representative from CIRAD gave an updated on Vmerge project within the framework of REMESA. Amongst the conclusions, he mentioned that a letter would be sent by the Vmerge project coordinator to the Chief Veterinary Officers of the concerned countries in order to officially inform them about the activities of Vmerge project and to ensure the follow up of the conclusions of the above-mentioned Rabat meeting on RVF.

The representative from CIRAD also delivered a presentation on a project called "ARIMNet project" on ticks and transmitted diseases and in particular the ARIMNet 2 - Call for 2014/2015. This ARIMNet Project is an ERA-NET action supported and funded under 7th Framework Programme by the European Commission. The main objectives of the project are to develop sustainable production in the context of increasing ecological and climatic stresses, to enhance the advantages of Mediterranean agriculture and food as well as to sustain the management of landscape and resources used by agriculture. He showed the main working packages and the Institutions part of the consortium for the Call for 2014/2015. He also informed the participants on the next steps expected for this project such as the finalization of the pre-proposal by 1st December 2014 and submission of the full project (if pre-proposal accepted) by 11th May 2015.

Rabies session

The OIE representative for North Africa presented the conclusions of the meeting on rabies organised by the OIE sub regional office for North Africa in June 2014. The meeting was organised in the spirit of the tripartite concept agreed by OIE, WHO and FAO so as to bring together representatives of the medical and veterinary authorities of the countries of North Africa in the framework of the fight against rabies in the region. Amongst the major conclusions it was highlighted the need for improving awareness strategy, communication campaign and training for rabies in the region. In this regard, countries in the region were encouraged to support awareness campaigns to fight against rabies, to develop tools for public education including young people and to exchange experience and materials on this subject. A meeting would be organised by the OIE sub regional representation in Tunis in 2015 with reference to these subjects.

The representative of the FAO Headquarters in Rome delivered a presentation showing the contribution of the Tripartite concept (OIE/FAO/WHO) in the prevention and control of rabies and the importance of inter-sectorial collaboration amongst animal health, human health and ecosystem to better control the disease. In this framework, the presentation also reminded the collaboration between OIE, FAO and WHO with other organizations involved in the control of rabies in the world such as Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC).

The CVO of Tunisia gave an updated overview on the epidemiological situation and rabies control in North Africa highlighting constraints and perspectives. He focused on the factors limiting the control of rabies in

North African countries such as insufficient vaccination coverage able to break the transmission cycle, inadequate management of stray dog population, difficulties in managing household waste and limited availability or interruption of post-exposure treatment. However, the CVO of Tunisia reiterated the message that human rabies is preventable and the eradication in dogs is feasible based on real political will and sustainable efforts needed at both national and regional levels.

Miscellaneous

Network REEV-Med¹: The OIE office in Tunis presented an updated on REEV-Med network created in September 2012. This network currently consists of 20 Veterinary Education Establishments (VEE) involving several countries of the Mediterranean. The results of the REEV-Med network has showed at present that two Establishments for Veterinary Education (Ecole Nationale de Médecine Vétérinaire, Sidi Thabet, Tunisia and L'Institut agronomique et vétérinaire Hassan II Morocco) embarked the evaluation process similar to the evaluation system applied by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE).

The Third REEV-Med General Assembly will be held in Tunisia on 9 December 2014 and this meeting will be organized in coordination with the second Congress of Veterinary Technical Groups Tunisians (GTVT) which will be held on 9 and 10 December 2014. The upcoming REEV-Med General Assembly will be an elective assembly and a Cooperation Agreement between REEV-Med and EAEVE should be signed.

Emerging global health threats of animal origin: The representative of the FAO Headquarters in Rome delivered a presentation highlighting aspects related to why and how pathogens of animal origin have become a major global public health threat over the past years and on what are disease dynamics at the human-animal-ecosystems interface. At the end of the presentation a publication issued by FAO entitled "World Livestock 2013 – changing disease landscapes" were distributed to the participants.

EuFMD: The representative from EuFMD reiterated - upon request from the member countries - the availability of EuFMD to support countries belonging to REMESA network in the framework of FMD control in relation to the different objectives presented with the 2015 EuFMD Workplan (component 2.3) support to REMESA.

Next JPC: evolution of the network: The next meeting of the JPC will be organized in Heraklion (Greece) on 16 and 17 March 2015.



From the left to the right: Dr Monique Eloit (OIE Deputy Director General), Dr Nemine Lemrabott (Mauritania; co-presidency of REMESA 2014), His excellency Mr. Lassaad Lachaal, Tunisia's Minister of Agriculture, Dr Anthony Gruppetta (Malta; co-presidency of REMESA 2014), Mr Benoit Horemans (FAO Representative Tunis and coordinator FAO/SNE)

¹Network Veterinary Education Establishments in the Mediterranean