



## **15<sup>th</sup> JPC/REMESA 2017 co-chair : Jordan – Italy**

### **FINAL REPORT**

#### **Summary**

Under the auspice of the co-presidency of Jordan and Italy - the Joint OIE and FAO secretariat (based in Tunis) – organised in collaboration with the Jordanian Authority the 15th meeting of the REMESA Joint Permanent Committee that was held in Jordan (Dead Sea) from 20 to 22 November 2017.

The meeting was co-chaired by Dr Sami Al-Edwan (General Secretary Assistant of Livestock of MoA of Jordan) and Dr Silvio Borrello (CVO of Italy) who welcomed the participants by highlighting the importance of the REMESA network. The Deputy Director General of the OIE, Dr Jean- Philippe Dop, and the representative of the FAO-HQ, Dr Ahmed El Idrissi (Senior Animal Health Officer) also addressed the opening messages to the audience. OIE and FAO staff from Regional and Sub-Regional representations of Middle East and North Africa was also present.

The meeting was attended by about 35 people including the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of REMESA member countries or their representatives from Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Mauritania, Spain and Tunisia) as well as the representatives from the European Union, Dr Moritz Klemm (DG SANTE) and from EuFMD, Dr Fabrizio Rosso and Dr Dinara Imanbayeva. Italian Experts from the “Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise” (IZSAM) and “Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell’Emilia Romagna” (IZSLER) also participated in the meeting by providing specific expertise. Experts from the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) attended the meeting as well.

It was acknowledged the effective participation of the newly appointed CVO of Libya - who was accompanied by Libyan experts – who provided very useful sanitary information about the epidemiological situation of FMD and PPR in their country as well as further activities being planned in light of the difficult political situation experiencing by the country and its sanitary impact in the region.

In the context of "One Health", Dr Jean-Philippe Dop provided an update on the current situation on avian influenza as well as the future challenges and the OIE commitments related to the revisions of the relevant chapters. Dr Ahmed El Idrissi also made a presentation on rabies by recalling the global perspective of eradicating human rabies cases and pertinent international initiatives.

The meeting was therefore an opportunity to update the epidemiological situation in the Mediterranean for some specific diseases considered to be priority for the network such as foot-and-mouth disease, PPR, rabies and avian influenza. Additional information was provided on bluetongue, lumpy skin disease and MERS-CoV. A session was devoted to present information systems and, in this context, the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) and Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) systems of the European Union were presented to improve collaboration with non-EU member countries. In the same session it was also presented the National Veterinary Information System of Italy.

Among the issues of increasing interest, a working session was held on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to Animal Health and Welfare and Veterinary Public Health in order to encourage the confrontation and stimulate exchanges of experiences between countries and to bring this issue into the REMESA platform for

further discussion and follow-up. Owing to its interest, the issue of antimicrobial resistance is a regular part of the REMESA agenda to be in line with international goals.

REMESA remains an official platform of considerable importance to allow Mediterranean countries to share and plan activities in the field of animal health and public health veterinary in order to control trans-national diseases and to increase mutual trust among the various countries.

Dr Facelli (Italy) confirmed that the “Health Med conference” for countries insisting in the Mediterranean basin will be held in Sardinia (Cagliari) in the second week of October 2018.

The next co-presidency for 2018 will be held by Morocco and France.

### **Opening session**

The meeting was chaired by the two co-presidents, Dr Sami Al-Edwan (General Secretary, Assistant of Livestock of MoA of Jordan) and Dr Silvio Borrello (CVO of Italy) who welcomed the participants by highlighting the importance and relevance of the REMESA network for countries sharing the Mediterranean basin which is considered an important crossroad between African, Middle East and European countries. The CVO of Italy emphasised the vital role of this network and confirmed the full support of Italy to REMESA. During the opening session it was also mentioned the recent agreement signed between Italy and OIE and, in this respect, Dr Dop welcomed the experts from the IZSAM and IZSLER participating in the meeting and recalled that convening together countries of this network is extremely important to control transboundary diseases. Dr El Idrissi reiterated the importance of coordinating activities and creating trust between countries and REMESA is nowadays widely recognised and a perfect illustration of that. He also mentioned the relevance of looking at the priority diseases of the network taking into account the issues related to migrations and conflicts. The capacity building activities remain also among the core functions of REMESA. He also welcomed the regular introduction in the agenda of AMR matters that is in line with the international objectives.

### **FMD session**

The session on FMD gave the opportunity to countries of North Africa and Middle East to provide an update about their epidemiological situations and related activities being conducted.

The major points of the discussion were as follows:

- **Morocco:**
  - The country implemented a campaign of vaccination for cattle using a bivalent vaccine (serotypes A and O) during the period July - October 2017 following the incursion of serotype A in Tunisia and Algeria early 2017; the use of bivalent vaccine (A/Eritrea and O/Manisa/3039) will continue in 2018;
  - Study on the effectiveness of vaccination 2016-2017 and a risk-based serological survey of small ruminants in 2017 were implemented in 2017 (results are ongoing);
  - Morocco claimed the enormous difficulties in obtaining the appropriate vaccine during the 2017 FMD crisis with the incursion of FMD serotype A in the North African region and called for a better coordination of the International Organisation in order to get the appropriate information during the emergency phases;
- **Tunisia**
  - Tunisia registered no major epidemiological changes since the latest updates provided in Naples (July 2017) but also Tunisia implemented recent studies conducted in collaboration with EuFMD and results are expected in the coming weeks (vaccines effectiveness and prevalence); EuFMD recalled the importance of considering the matter of vaccine effectiveness in terms of both quality of vaccines and the level of immune protection of animals;
- **Libya**
  - Libya collected in April 2017 about 1.000 samples from small and large ruminants (mainly younger animals) and approximately 520 serum samples were tested in local laboratories (Tripoli and Zawia) showing about 14% NSP positive result. These are initial results and more samples will be collected and tested. All samples will be shipped to IZSLER in Italy for retesting, confirmation and characterization. Libya is not currently vaccinating against FMD because of vaccine shortages. Animal health sector is still suffering the political and security situation in the country. In addition, today the country is not in the position of controlling introductions of animal from sub-Sharan

- countries but would be feasible to build a proposal for a harmonised vaccination zone at the border (e.g. with Tunisia)
- The CVO of Italy reiterated and confirmed his support to Libya also through the IZSs
  - **Mauritania**
    - The country reiterated that FMD is not a priority for the country and this is why is neglected. Currently no epidemiological maps are available although the disease is endemic. Based on the previous studies the FMD serotypes circulating are A and O and they are planning field studies and EuFMD trainings that would help to better understand the epidemiological situation in the country.

Dr Ghazi Yehia presented an overview of the 4th FMD PCP Regional road-map meeting for the Middle East (held from 15 to 19 October 2017) by recalling the objectives and recommendations. These recommendations can be consulted in his presentation ([link PPT will be added](#)).

The representative of Italy (Dr Facelli) stated that the OIE, the European Union and countries such as Italy, France and Spain have made significant efforts (by making available also funds) in order to support the implementation of the FMD vaccine bank for North Africa and, therefore, overcome the problem of obtaining immediate and appropriate FMD vaccines (as mentioned by the representative of Morocco) during the emergency crisis. Unfortunately, as of today, there has not been a collaborative approach from North African countries about financial aspects as this was a prerequisite to establish the bank. The OIE agreed with the statement of Dr Facelli. The representative from Morocco reminded that the administrative procedures in place in his country does not allow to acquire vaccine through the OIE vaccine bank because any purchase should pass through an international call since the domestic law obliges the Veterinary Services to buy from the vaccine manufacturers. However, in an aside and informal meeting among the CVOs of the North African region, OIE staffs and EU representative agreed to prepare an official OIE document to be shared officially with the CVOs of North African region where the clear mechanism of the functioning of the OIE vaccine bank is outlined. This document would help the North African CVOs to influence their higher hierarchy and other relevant Ministries (e.g. Finance) about the advantages of implementing an OIE vaccine bank in North Africa.

### **PPR session**

Countries from North Africa and Middle East updated their epidemiological situation on PPR and some country presentations are available here: [link PPT will be added](#)

During the discussion, it is worth highlighting that the CVO of Italy stated that the G7 CVOs (Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States of America) - held in in Rome on 5 October 2017 - affirmed their full support to the PPR Global Eradication Programme launched by OIE and FAO and encouraged donors to mobilize resources.

Dr Ghazi Yehia expressed the importance of involving countries in trainings (by small groups) in order to better clarify the use of the OIE and FAO tools available to eradicate PPR. Experts from International Organisations should be involved in these trainings.

### **Rabies session**

Dr Rachid Bouguedour presented the rabies initiatives undertaken in collaboration with the Veterinary Authority of Tunisia under the framework of project “Strengthen Veterinary Services in Developing Countries (SVSDC)” which is a 3-year project funded by the European Union, through the European Parliament and the European Commission, aimed at building better African Veterinary Services that deliver effective governance, health safety, food security and food safety for their citizens in accordance with OIE Standards. The Project is formed of two components one focused on strengthening national Veterinary Services in Africa and the second component centered on rabies control and elimination in Kenya and Northern Africa. Under this context, a total of three workshops were held in Tunisia and, in particular, two were dedicated to train relevant personnel in handling aggressive dogs on the field and one devoted to the review the rabies control strategy in Tunisia. As results, staff was trained to capture difficult stray dogs and a fixed vaccination center in Tunis was established where dogs are vaccinated, spayed and identified. Dr Bouguedour announced that these initiatives could be replicated in Morocco and Algeria in 2018 if these countries are interested.

Dr. Ahmed El Idrissi also made a presentation on rabies by recalling the global perspective of eradicating human rabies cases and pertinent international initiatives ([link PPT will be added](#)).

The CVO of Tunisia congratulated EU and OIE for running this initiative in the region and, based on the actions conducted in Tunisia, he confirmed that the project brought concrete results to the country that will certainly contribute to fight against rabies. Awareness campaigns were also launched and he mentioned that in the current year (2017) Tunisia has registered (up to the date of the meeting) only one human case which is a very positive indicator if compared with the number of cases recorded in the recent past years ( on average 6-7 human cases per year).

The representative of Morocco stated that his country started to consider controlling rabies disease through vaccination, sterilisation and identification of dogs. The OIE recalled that is at disposal for any requested support.

### **Avian influenza session**

In the context of "One Health", Dr Jean-Philippe Dop provided an update on the current situation on avian influenza as well as the future challenges and the OIE commitments related to the revisions of the relevant chapters ([link PPT will be added](#)). Dr Friederike Mayen (FAO-ECTAD Egypt) gave an updated situation of HPAI in Egypt (H5N1-H5N8) as well as the achievements reached for the period 2014-2016, challenges, lessons learnt and measures needed ([links PPT will be added](#)).

The CVO of Italy stated that the G7 of CVOs held in Italy in October 2017 discussed avian influenza and generated a document. He made available this document through this report (Annex XX) since it is very important to share these information with veterinary services of other countries since a collaborative approach at human-animal interface in the "One Health" perspective is necessary in the framework of decision making process.

### **Session on Antimicrobial resistance**

The issue of antimicrobial resistance is nowadays regularly discussed in the REMESA platform to be in line with international goals. Dr Dop said that the OIE, FAO and WHO are doing common efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance and therefore preserve the capacity of countries to effectively protect animals and humans from infectious diseases. A full toolkit has been created and provided to OIE Member countries to help them raise the awareness on the importance of responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials in animals. During this session were shown three OIE videos for the campaign on AMR (these videos are also available on the OIE website).

Dr Loris Alborali (IZSLER) presented the veterinary prescription and drug control as well as indicators of animal welfare and biosecurity in place in Italy.

### **Session on Trade**

A session was devoted to present information systems and, in this context, the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) of the European Union were presented to improve collaboration with non-EU member countries. It is a system that allows continuous recording and monitoring of goods, including live animals, marketed within the EU and to/from third countries ([link PPT will be added](#)). Some of the comments highlighted that although North African and Middle East countries are mainly "importing countries" the implementation of TRACES in North Africa and Middle East would be very beneficial for the countries. The CVO of Malta asked the possibility of increasing the number of participants from non EU member countries to the training for this system by using – for example – BTSF programme or other initiatives. In this respect, Dr Bouguedour highlighted the need of modernizing the information systems in North Africa and – as example – moving forward towards the E-certificate which will allow having real time and precise information about the shipments of products and, therefore, save time in the negotiation between countries.

In the same session it was also presented the National Veterinary Information System of Italy. Dr Paolo Calistri (IZSAM) illustrated the national veterinarian information system, developed and managed by the IZSAM on behalf of the Ministry of Health. In particular, the main functionalities used by the Italian veterinary services for the management of animal health activities have been described, showing the benefits in using them ([link PPT will be added](#)).

### **Session on disaster management**

Among the issues of increasing interest, a working session was held on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to Animal Health and Welfare and Veterinary Public Health in order to encourage the confrontation and stimulate exchanges of experiences between countries and to bring this issue into the REMESA platform for further discussion and follow-up.

Dr Alessandro Ripani (OIE Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa) has opened the working session by presenting the OIE guidelines on disaster management and risk reduction in relation to animal health and welfare and veterinary public health, underlining the opportunity to actively engage veterinary services of the REMESA countries in preventing, mitigating and managing the effects of natural or man-made disasters ([link PPT will be added](#)). Dr Bouguedour stated that after having looked at the «ORSEC/*ORganisation des SECours*» plans in place in North African countries noted that there is lack of Veterinary Services component although sporadic interventions were done by the Veterinary Services during natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes in Algeria in 2003).

Dr Friedericke Mayen (FAO Cairo) has provided important elements for reflection on the impact of conflicts and migrations on the already fragile socio-economic and health conditions of many Mediterranean countries ([link PPT will be added](#)). Finally, Dr Paolo Dalla Villa (IZSAM) described the recent experiences of Italian veterinary services in the management of severe natural disasters (earthquakes) that have repeatedly affected the central Apennines in Italy ([link PPT will be added](#)).

The related discussion highlighted the need of sharing synergies between countries in elaborating preparedness and contingency plans. Dr El Idrissi (FAO) stated that also FAO is very active in this subject and agreed that thus topic should be addressed in the Mediterranean region and veterinary services can play an important role in building resilience of communities. The CVO of Malta also agreed.

Libya and Lebanon asked support to FAO to build resilience in the livestock communities that flees from their countries because of political or security instability (e.g. by providing vaccines for poor farmers). Dr El Idrissi replied that FAO has a “livestock emerging support strategy” for countries surrounding Syria but reminded that FAO is not a “donor” and therefore this plan is depending from the available resources.

## Other topics

Updated epidemiological situations and control measures being implemented were provided on MERS-CoV, Lumpy Skin Disease and Bluetongue (serotype 4) in France. See presentations ([link PPT will be added](#)) for details. However, some discussions were raised about MERS-CoV and on the different epidemiological context between North Africa (where high number of camels are present and no human cases notified) and Middle East where human cases are regularly recorded. Dr El Idrissi (FAO) mentioned – among the potential explanations – the different phylogenetic profiles of the strains between the two regions, the different susceptibility of the population (e.g. risk factors that can trigger the clinical disease, different breeding systems (in North Africa more extensive breeding if compared with Middle East and therefore less close relationship between camels and humans). There are currently a couple of potential MERS-CoV vaccines candidates although the matter is still under discussion since the vaccine should be used in animals to protect public health. One of the issues being discussed is to convince camel owners to vaccinate their animals for a disease that does not show clinical signs in camels.

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) system of the European Union was also presented to improve collaboration with non-EU member countries, International Organisations and stakeholders. It was presented the structure of the network, the main functionalities, the classification of notifications and the way forward. The 2016 annual report RASFF has been published and available at the following link: [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/rasff\\_annual\\_report\\_2016.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/safety/docs/rasff_annual_report_2016.pdf). The 2016 report introduces Sankey charts and country fact sheets, giving a deeper insight in the data on the activity of RASFF in 2016.

The CVO of Tunisia reported that when a product coming from non-EU member countries is confiscated through the RASFF system there is no possibility to undertake additional tests on the product since it is destroyed the day after the seizure. Dr Moritz Klemm noted the statement and assured that this concern is reported back to the relevant office in Brussels for clarifications.

Dr Jean Philippe Dop suggested including in the next REMESA meeting the presentation of the Animal Disease Notification System (ADNS) in place in EU as well as the project that is linking ADNS with the OIE world animal health information system (WAHIS).

Dr Ghazi Yehia provided an overview on the biodiversity in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, including its impact on aquatic animal health in the Middle East. Dr Dop reminded that this is an important topic linked to climate change, ecosystems and health. He also recalled that the OIE will organise in the near future a global conference on aquatic animal health in Chile.

The CVO of Tunisia mentioned the problem related to the heavy metal pollution occurring in the Mediterranean Sea (e.g. cadmium) because high levels are recorded in tuna fish and, therefore, suggested to add this topic in the next agenda mainly in relation on how to increase the awareness of this risk in the population.

### **Other communications**

Dr Facelli (Italy) confirmed that the “Health Med conference” for countries insisting in the Mediterranean basin will be held in Sardinia (Cagliari) in the second week of October 2018.

The next co-presidency for 2018 will be held by Morocco and France. The first meeting will be held in Morocco in April 2018.

All the presentations are available here: [link PPTs will be added](#)

### **Group picture**

