

# Concept note for the AQMENET (AQuaculture Middle East NETwork)

## Working document

### RATIONALE

Considering the:

- multifunctional importance of the aquatic animal productions, and the peculiarities of the aquaculture in the Middle East region.
- Increasing demand for aquatic animals and their products.
- higher risks of spreading diseases with increasing international trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animals products.
- need for more knowledge and diagnostic capacities and development of vaccines to better prevent, investigate and control the aquatic animal diseases.
- **need to set up a network of laboratories for aquatic animal diseases has been identified by the OIE Aquatic Animals Commission and confirmed by the OIE Biological Standards Commission**
- importance of the production practices, producing systems and trade as potential risk factors for disease occurrence, spread and transmission.

### OBJECTIVES OF AQMENET

The **main objective** of the network is to assist Member Countries to develop their aquaculture sector, through the prevention, early detection, and control of aquatic animal diseases.

**More specifically, AQMENET will aim at:**

1. Improving scientific and technological capacities in epidemiology and diagnostic of aquatic diseases in the region by:
  - Promotion of research in aquatic species diseases' epidemiology and pathology.
  - Training staff in Member Countries on disease prevention, early detection, and control of aquatic animal diseases, including surveillance and diagnostics of specific diseases.
  - Information, preparedness, and management of health crisis related to wild fisheries and aquaculture.
  - Address monitoring and surveillance of AMR/AMU in aquaculture
2. Contributing to the OIE procedures for the development of guidelines and harmonisation of standards for validation of specific diagnostic methods of major diseases.
  - Design and dissemination of specific biosecurity elements in the laboratories for aquaculture of the region.
  - Production and distribution of diagnostic reagents.
  - Harmonization of laboratory methods used in Member Countries.

- Development and validation of curative products.
  - Development and quality control of specific vaccines.
  - Engage in responsible and prudent AMU and build capacity to control AMR,
3. Coordinating the support of international organizations (FAO/OIE/WHO) to the national authorities of the Member Countries (including the Aquatic Animal Health Services) on surveillance, prevention, and control of aquatic animal diseases, including emerging diseases.
  4. Facilitating collaboration between the national, regional, and international institutions and FAO/OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres for capacity building and exchange of expertise and cooperation.
  5. Promoting specific studies on aquaculture practices, socioeconomics, and risk factors at the marine species-humanenvironment interface.
  6. Disseminating knowledge on prevention, early detection and control of aquatic animal diseases and aquaculture production best practices to Member Countries and the international scientific community.
  7. Developing communication resources, updating publications, delivering training, connecting experts, and supporting existing programs

#### **AQMENET ESTABLISHMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

1. AQMENET includes the following countries, bordering the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Gulf:  
**Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen**
2. The activities of the network will be supervised by a **Steering Committee (SC)** composed of:
  - a. The Chief Veterinary Officers/OIE delegates of the Member Countries.
  - b. The representatives from OIE (1) and from FAO (1).
  - c. Consultative ad hoc experts.
3. The SC will meet at KSA MEWA facilities at least once a year. Additional meetings can be decided according to the request(s) made by member countries.
4. KSA MEWA Aquaculture department, Eng. Fares Alghamdi, will assure the **Secretariat** of AQMENET in close coordination with the regional representation for the Middle East (Dr Ali El Romeh)
5. The role of the national focal points will be defined by the SC.
6. The **work plan, the budget and the financial contributions** will be regularly discussed, audited, and updated during the meetings of the SC.
7. The AQMENET **website** will be funded and hosted by KSA MEWA AQ. Dept.
8. The OIE and FAO make available to AQMENET the FAO/OIE Reference Laboratory network and Collaborating Centres for the achievement of its objectives.

### **ROLES OF MEMBER COUNTRIES.**

For the establishment and proper functioning of AQMENET, Member Countries are required to:

- Designate 2 Contact Persons (CP) operating in the field of Aquaculture and in laboratory diagnosis of aquatic animal diseases.
- Designate one or more national laboratories to participate in the network activities.

Through AQMENET platform, Member Countries in Middle East will have the technical support, international workshops, trainings on diagnostic methods for PCR, Histopathology, Virology, Microbiology and Parasitology. AQMENET has the goal to uplift aquaculture industry by providing state of the art knowledge on aquatic animal disease prevention, early detection and control, diagnostics, surveillance, AMR/AMU and related aspects.

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