

**ANIMAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Working Group of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain,  
Animal Health and Plant Health**

**FRIDAY 19 JUNE 2015, 10.00 H – 17.00 H**

**Conference Centre Albert Borschette – Rue Froissart 36 – Bruxelles, CCAB-4C**

## **SUMMARY**

*Note: the summary below covers discussions after and beyond the presentations which are already available embedded into the online agenda:*

[https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/comm\\_ahac\\_20150619\\_agenda.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/comm_ahac_20150619_agenda.pdf)

**Morning session 10:00-13:00**

**Introduction, opening: A-E. Fuessel, acting Head of Unit G2 Animal Health - DG SANTE**

### **1. Information on the EU position and developments at 83<sup>rd</sup> OIE General Session, SANTE G2**

The Commission explained that this year the most important point beside of the update of standards were the elections of persons for various OIE functions, including also its Director-General and the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the various Commissions. He referred to the press release circulated to the delegates and explained these changes in more details. All EU candidates have been elected, a very successful outcome for the EU member states. As regards changes to the international animal health standards, he highlighted that the horizontal chapters of the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes, while being similar, still contain differences, some of which are confusing, which will be addressed (e.g. on anti-microbial resistance). An important change to the BSE chapter (to exclude atypical BSE from the country risk status evaluation) influences significantly, for the better, the status of countries. The chapter will be further revised more thoroughly in coming years. On the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter, changes were rejected by many countries mostly due to procedural issues linked to new proposals regarding poultry stunning methods. A new Chapter on the animal welfare and dairy cattle production systems was also adopted.

UECVB asked for confirmation that Romania's BSE risk status would be upgraded to "negligible risk" (they had one atypical case in recent years). Eurogroup for Animals questioned the rejected changes and the documents leading to EU position. AVEC asked about the composition of the planned OIE ad-hoc group on poultry slaughter and whether stakeholders could participate. Commission explained and/or answered these questions.

### **2. Updates from OIE**

#### **– Global Conference on PPR**

The OIE representative gave a presentation on the FAO/OIE global PPR control and eradication strategy, which had been elaborated under the FAO/OIE GF-TADs mechanism and has been adopted at a recent international conference held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (31 March – 2 April 2015). Overall, the target is to eradicate PPR in fifteen year, using a stepwise approach ultimately leading to the OIE official free status. After the presentation

FVE inquired about technicalities concerning status and number of countries, which were clarified. Eurogroup asked about the extent of culling during eradication, especially in light of available vaccines. OIE indicated that individual control policies such as vaccination or stamping out are likely to be applied at different levels of intensity while an individual country is moving along the stepwise approach, with vaccination preferably used in the early stages of control and stamping out – if to be used – in the latest stage, just before attaining freedom from the disease and when few animals are concerned. In any cases, culling of animals for disease control purposes should be made in compliance with the welfare provisions of Chapter 7.6 of the OIE Terrestrial animal health Code. The Commission added that the EU fully supports the conference recommendations and the global PPR eradication roadmap, with the priority from the EU's animal health policy point of view being to control PPR especially in neighbouring countries. Key part of the eradication is animal identification, which has been problematic several third countries. The Commission also stated that it is important that these countries remain in the loop, under peer-review until complete eradication, and are not left alone once the plan is endorsed. DG DEVCO also specifically supports PPR projects in developing countries e.g. in Africa.

#### – **6<sup>th</sup> Strategic plan**

The OIE representative presented the OIE 6<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan, covering 2016 to 2020, which had been adopted during the recent 83<sup>rd</sup> OIE General Session in May 2015. After the presentation AVEC considered that OIE should increase its efforts to increase acceptance of its standards by its member countries and to harmonise their implementation, which AVEC feels are often diverging among members. OIE reiterated that while the Code is binding, ultimately in the context of the WTO SPS Agreement, the OIE makes significant efforts to improve implementation by technical assistance, in particular with EU contribution. AVEC welcomed such useful and trust building efforts.

#### – **Statement on Avian influenza**

The Representative of OIE presented in detail the HPAI and LPAI situation with a focus on H5N1, H5N8 and H7N9, in Europe and the world. In 2014 and early 2015 there has been a clear increase in the number of notifications for HPAI and in the variety of subtypes reported. This situation is quite alarming from both an economic and a public health perspective. Asia and Europe are the areas that will require special vigilance. For this reason it has become very important to strengthen the overall monitoring of both poultry and wildlife to protect animal and public health.

### **3. Update on avian flu in the EU and worldwide, SANTE G2**

After the subsequent OIE and Commission presentations FVE inquired about some elements of the speed and means of the disease spread between its various strains. OIE referred to ongoing work for details. Eurogroup highlighted a press release<sup>1</sup> on considerations by one of their members on how to better prevent spread of disease and respect better animal welfare (density of production, waterways, lack of vaccine etc.), and altogether asked to respect animal welfare needs such as outdoor access even when biosecurity measures need to be increased. ERPA described the situation as worrying, echoed that more research is needed to uncover the link between risk factors and potential preventive measures considering that free range poultry can also be protected. It also mentioned a draft regulation on organic farming which should be aligned to agreed protection measures. Commission confirmed that both outdoor and indoor systems can be protected with different measures and some measures were tailor-made to HPAI H5N1 earlier. Currently EFSA opinion is in the pipeline on a number of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/?p=1391>

measures. Similar USDA study is already available. Experience with outbreaks back in early 2000's in Italy also give us food for thought, e.g. decrease of density remains controversial due to socio-economic difficulties and lack of solid basis whether it decreased risk or not. Vaccines are cumbersome to use and it seems that competent authorities, also at present overseas, still prefer stamping out. AVEC mentioned the lack of threshold for high density poultry areas and that producers resist vaccination due to known problems (inadequate protection across subtypes and lacking acceptance by the market). It asked OIE to play a bigger role in fostering acceptance of vaccination to ensure facilitation of international trade. AVEC considered biosecurity as key. IFAH-Europe confirmed that the current circumstances (questions, costs, lack of market access etc.) do not invite manufacturers to develop and improve vaccines. The Commission added that such factors will play a role in the shaping of the delegated and implementing rules for the new Animal Health Law, recently agreed by EP and Council on political level. Similar problems are also known for other diseases.

#### **4. Rabies subgroup of the Task Force on the eradication of animal diseases, SANTE G2 (taken in the afternoon)**

After the presentation OIE asked whether programmes address canine rabies (clarified, not).

#### **5. EFSA scientific opinion on canine leishmaniosis, EFSA**

After the presentation FVE asked about the difference between the number of PCR-positive, seropositive and clinically sick animals. EFSA explained the difference as based on the characteristics of the disease. Eurogroup asked about the extent of trade of dog trade contributes to the spread and the percentage of infected animals in EU countries. EFSA confirmed that infection can be up to 80% in certain countries, while data is not available on trade. A question was also raised on the need to further research on this area. The Commission explained that although this mandate stems from the EU Pet Regulation, currently this disease is neither listed for regulatory measures, nor such is required by member states, therefore this limits potential further actions.

### **Afternoon session 14:30-18:00**

#### **6. Rapidia-field, Martin Beer project coordinator**

After the presentation FVE inquired about the availability of tests commercially. It was confirmed that there are three categories (prototypes, ones in the pipelines, and available ones) and the presentation focused on the available ones. It was clarified that the project focused on viral diseases. As regards validation, ring trials were used among participants with standard reference samples. Eurogroup asked about the potential detection of animal welfare problems. Speaker explained that some diseases are actually welfare problems where early detection decreases suffering of animals and also that the same monitoring tools (e.g. by video-system for movements) can be used for both animal health and welfare purposes.

#### **7. Information from the Latvian Presidency**

After the presentation the Commission added and appreciated the significant role of the Presidency on the Animal Health Law. FVE also thanked the Presidency for the co-organised seminar on natural disasters and animal health. Eurogroup asked about the extent animal welfare issues were raised during the ongoing discussions on organic farming. UECEBV also appreciated the work of Presidency and Commission on the Animal Health Law file.

#### **8. Summary of EIP-AGRI Workshop “Biosecurity at farm level: challenges for innovation”, AGRI H5**

After the presentation AVEC asked about the follow-up of the workshop and the main outcomes. The Commission explained that the full report is available and promoted, it is one of the main outputs but no specific follow-up is planned under EIP. In fact there are several mechanisms under EIP where the stakeholders, interested groups and authorities could take up ideas from the report, perhaps by way of starting operational groups or to establish a thematic network under H2020 funds. Some ideas may be taken-up later by H2020 but that also depends on many other inputs. A question was raised on the extent (lack of) civil society in the workshop. The Commission explained that space restrictions favoured only the invitation of core and more technical stakeholders as the topic concerned on-farm biosecurity. In a different, wider theme and setting other (retailers, civils etc.) would be welcome too.

## **9. Any other business**

### **– Recent Wildlife Conference**

The Commission briefly summarised that the recent conference<sup>2</sup> seems to have been a success, with over 300 participants, with over 300 other persons following the web streaming. The wide range of stakeholders – both speakers, roundtable speakers and participants – contributed to highlight different perspectives on the issues, stimulated lively discussions and gave rise to several good questions and ideas. The conference helped to broaden the participants perspective on wildlife and encouraged them to take the more holistic look at issues involving wildlife as well as to network among themselves. In the conclusion acting Director-General of DG SANTE Ladislav Miko addressed the the main question: “health and species protection – converging or diverging objectives?” “It is not a matter of choosing one or the other; it is possible to take both into consideration in a mutually reinforcing manner as we have seen today. To face this calls for a close communication and cooperation between actors representing both human and animal health, animal welfare as well as environmental aspects and biodiversity.”

### **– TRACES videos**

The Commission explained that in recent years two short videos have been produced on various aspects of the TRACES, designed to reach broad audience, stakeholders, even citizens and officials or stakeholders from third countries. One of them, on general aspects, is already available online<sup>3</sup>, also on YouTube<sup>4</sup>, while the other one on traceability of bovine animals is brand new. This latter was shown to the Committee, it will be available online soon. The Commission suggested to the participants to use these when they are disseminating information to e.g. trading partners, to farmers etc., as a communication tool, that is easy to understand and available in several languages.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_food-safety/information\\_sources/events/20150505\\_wildlife\\_conference\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/information_sources/events/20150505_wildlife_conference_en.htm)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/traces\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/traces_en)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2l59EWhJzeU>