

PRESS RELEASE

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SANITARY/PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

International bodies join forces to advise OIE animal health and welfare fund

Five international organizations met for the first time in Paris on 20 October 2006 to advise the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on funding to help developing countries meet international standards for dealing with disease outbreaks and related issues.

By tackling these diseases effectively, countries can improve the welfare of their own citizens and their exports can face fewer trade barriers.

High level representatives from the World Bank, which chaired meeting, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), were joined by counterparts from significant current or potential donors, Japan, France, the US, Australia and the European Commission.

They met as the Advisory Committee for the OIE's World Animal Health and Welfare Fund at the OIE's Paris headquarters. The Advisory Committee agreed on its working procedures and objectives, and also decided to establish a communication mechanism for consultation between partners during crisis and at other times.

So far, the Fund has received US\$13 million, which is being used for economic studies, identification of priority investments, "training of trainers", and the evaluation of veterinary services in 15 pilot countries in all continents.

The European Commission has also announced that it will make a contribution for promoting animal welfare activities by helping countries implement standards related to the OIE. This was with the support of the EU Member States.

The fund was created by an OIE resolution in 2004 — voted unanimously by member countries — to help them strengthen their capacity for dealing with animal health and welfare.

When the avian influenza crisis struck, the OIE, FAO and WHO advocated the use of this facility to promote good governance worldwide so that countries can improve early detection and respond more rapidly to animal disease outbreaks, including those that can affect humans (zoonoses). A particular emphasis is on developing countries.

“When dealing with animal health governance and emergencies, it is crucial to have a mechanism between partner international organisations and donors for synergies and better routing of limited resources”, the OIE Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat said commenting on the meeting. “In the good governance relating to food safety and to animal disease prevention and control, it is crucial to ensure early detection and rapid response and therefore the international community needs this facility”, he added.

The Paris-based OIE, and Rome-based FAO — which recently launched the Crisis Management Centre (CMC) with the support of OIE — deal directly with animal health issues, including animal diseases that are transmissible to humans, the latter being dealt with also by the Geneva based WHO. The Washington-based World Bank handles development financing. The Geneva-based WTO has a Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures agreement and committee dealing with trade measures relating to protection of food safety and animal and plant health.

Weblinks

OIE: www.oie.int

FAO: www.fao.org

World Bank: www.worldbank.org

WHO: www.who.int

WTO-SPS: www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/sps_e.htm

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