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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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## 70<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

### COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE)

The following communication, received on 19 October 2017, is being circulated at the request of the OIE.

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The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 70<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SPS Committee.

The report summarises key developments in the OIE's standard-setting work programme, along with updates on the OIE's Capacity Building activities.

#### 1 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OIE STANDARDS FOR TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC ANIMALS

1.1. The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) met from 4 to 8 September 2017. The Scientific Commission examined comments from member countries on specific *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* chapters under discussion and provided advice to the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) for their consideration. The Scientific Commission also considered a scientific and technical document assessing the current risk associated with BSE, the OIE Standards for BSE in the *Terrestrial Code* and the link with the OIE official recognition of risk status for BSE, together with member country interventions at the last General Session in May 2017 and those submitted to the OIE after the General Session. Noting, that the majority of Members did not support a proposal to discontinue the OIE official recognition of risk status for BSE at this time, but supported a detailed revision of the OIE standards on BSE as a priority, it requested that the Director General establish an ad hoc Group dedicated to the revision of the BSE Chapter. This first meeting of the ad hoc Group is planned for December 2017.

1.2. The Scientific Commission reiterated the need to provide Members with preventive tools that would allow emergency, preventive and temporary zoning in response to an increased disease threat, while avoiding unjustified barriers to trade. The Scientific Commission and the Code Commission has proposed to address this need by including the new provisions within the existing concepts in the *Terrestrial Code*. The revised Chapter 4.3. Zoning and compartmentalisation will be circulated for OIE member countries' comments with the report of the Code Commission's September 2017 meeting.

1.3. The Biological Standards Commission met from 12 to 15 September 2017 and reviewed comments from member countries and experts on the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals*. It revised twenty nine chapters as well as the Glossary. These will be circulated for member country comments, these comments will be considered at its February 2018 meeting. The Biological Commission also discussed procedures to strengthen the OIE network of Collaborating Centres in order to create greater opportunities for collaboration and networking and improving their support to the OIE and its member countries.

1.4. The Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission) met from 13 to 20 September 2017 to review member country comments and prepare new and revised texts for the *Aquatic Animal Health Code (Aquatic Code)* and the *Manual of Diagnostic Tests for*

*Aquatic Animals (Aquatic Manual)*. The Commission revised seventeen chapters; the Glossary and User's guide in the *Aquatic Code* and seven chapters in the *Aquatic Manual* which were circulated for member country comments and which will be considered at its February 2018 meeting. The Aquatic Animals Commission reviewed the assessment of tilapia lake virus (TiLV) against the new criteria for listing aquatic animal diseases and agreed that TiLV still did not meet the criteria for listing because of insufficient information, particularly concerning analytical and diagnostic specificity and sensitivity of the assay.

1.5. Following the recent adoption of *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* for inclusion in Chapter 1.3. (Diseases listed by the OIE), the Aquatic Animals Commission is in the process of developing a new draft Chapter 8.X. Infection with *B. salamandrivorans* for inclusion in the *Aquatic Code*. The chapter will be circulated for member country comments. In the interim the Aquatic Animals Commission has developed a Technical Disease Card for *B. salamandrivorans* in order to provide guidance to member countries. The Technical Disease Card will be available on the OIE website in November 2017, <http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/specialists-commissions-groups/aquatic-animal-commission-reports/disease-information-cards/>.

1.6. The Code Commission met from 18 to 29 September 2017 and reviewed comments from member countries and experts and prepared new and revised texts for the *Terrestrial Code*. Twenty-three new or revised Chapters as well as the Glossary will be circulated for member country comments which will be considered at its February 2018 meeting. Of particular interest to member countries will be the revisions to Chapter 4.3. Zoning and compartmentalisation, the inclusion of proposed definitions for therapeutic and preventive use and growth promotion in Chapter 6.8. as they relate to antimicrobial resistance which will be proposed for adoption in May 2018. The Code Commission also considered a discussion paper prepared by the OIE headquarters in regards to the need to revise Chapter 10.4. Infection with avian influenza viruses and requested the Director General establish an ad hoc Group to discuss the problems associated with the current chapter (including those related to trade) and propose mechanisms for resolving these problems including a broad review of the chapter. The ad hoc group will be convened in December 2017.

1.7. The full reports of the above four Commission meetings will be available on the [OIE website](#) by the end of November 2017.

## **2 PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE TO THE OIE AND ITS MEMBER COUNTRIES**

### **2.1 Specialist Commissions**

2.1. A major objective of the OIE's Sixth Strategic Plan 2016–2020 is Scientific Excellence. In particular, the Delegates asked the OIE to improve transparency of the election process and establish term limits for the elected members of the Specialist Commissions. In order to fulfil this objective, the OIE General Assembly (May 2017) adopted a new procedure that will guide the selection of experts for election to the four Specialist Commissions. In summary, the OIE (Council and OIE HQs) will manage the process for Selection of Experts through a call for nominations, assessment of applications against a set of criteria (by an Evaluation Committee consisting of OIE headquarters staff, a representative of the Council and independent experts), in order to establish a list of suitable candidates to be proposed for election to the Specialist Commissions. This process is in line with best practice approaches used by many other international and national bodies and provides for the involvement of the OIE Council, Regional Bureaus and OIE Delegates in ensuring that the best scientific advice is provided to support the development of OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations.

2.2. Objectives of the new procedure include:

1. Engage veterinary and scientific experts that are reflective of the specific demographics of the respective professions while continuing to respect geographic and expertise parameters, whilst improving the gender balance;
2. To ensure that the OIE decision-making processes reflect the global membership of the organisation, are based on the most up to date and informed scientific opinion of specialists, including those familiar with cutting-edge scientific developments and technologies, as well as the opinions of specialist economic, social and environmental areas;

3. To ensure the transparency of the process for the election of such experts and to maintain the independence of those experts in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

2.3. The role of the [OIE Specialist Commissions](#) is to develop and revise [OIE international standards](#) and to address scientific and technical issues raised by member countries. Specialist Commission members are elected by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates in May every three years.

2.4. A call for nominations was published widely from June to September 2017. The purpose of the call for nominations was to establish a list of suitable experts from which the OIE Delegates to the World Assembly will elect members of the Specialist Commissions for a term of three years commencing in May 2018. The process for the selection of experts for nomination is to ensure that the candidates presented for election represent a range of expertise and viewpoints and include scientific experts from all geographic regions of the world. Applications were submitted to the OIE Headquarters and will be evaluated between October and November 2017.

## **2.2 OIE ad hoc Groups**

2.5. The Director General establishes ad hoc Groups in order to respond to specific technical and scientific advice required to support the work of the OIE and the Specialist Commissions. In order to improve the transparency of these groups the OIE plans to upload information to its website providing the dates and terms of reference of proposed ad hoc groups.

## **3 ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

### **3.1 World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) is becoming WAHIS+**

3.1. In its leading role to improve animal health and welfare worldwide, one of the OIE's key missions is to ensure transparency in the global animal disease situation. Access to high quality data is the cornerstone of the effective control of transboundary animal diseases, including zoonoses; this access ensures the early and appropriate response after detection of emerging diseases, contributes to protecting public health and global livelihoods, and plays a significant role in facilitating safe trade. The OIE's World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), developed and launched in 2005, is the global tool to achieve these objectives.

3.2. WAHIS enables the collection and the dissemination of data on animal diseases of epidemiological significance in both domestic species and wildlife and is vital for the global dissemination of information on animal disease events, including zoonotic pathogens. This reporting mechanism is based on the OIE's international standards and is representative of the global consensus and shared vision to collectively tackle animal diseases and their negative impacts. WAHIS is an evolving tool which responds to global needs, changes to international standards and has increased pace for innovation and technological change (WAHIS+).

3.3. The OIE continues to look towards the future and is making large strides to modernise WAHIS. Further to consolidated consultation with more 1,000 stakeholders including OIE Delegates and National Focal Points, the OIE is moving forward on the development of a quicker and more intuitive system with new features, including: extended data mining, customisable data queries and enhanced mapping features and displays, WAHIS+. Genomic data linked to epidemiological information will strengthen disease traceability and appropriate response. Integration with other databases and platforms for enriched risk assessment will make WAHIS+ a reliable source of knowledge and pave the way for future policy decision making. This is just the start. Innovative and strategic thinking will continue to inform the constant evolution of WAHIS+ to ensure its applicability and validity, not just for today and tomorrow but for generations to come.

3.4. The Sixth Strategic Plan (2016-2020) adopted by OIE's 181 Members has underscored the pressing need for WAHIS+ to incorporate a transdisciplinary and holistic approach to data collection, analysis and dissemination – not only addressing animal diseases, but also public health, climate and the environment. This approach will be of high impact and could prevent imminent animal disease threats and public health emergencies of international concern. Building bridges between WAHIS+ and national/regional databases will support this endeavour and regional initiatives are already underway.

3.5. To enable free access to world animal health data, the OIE provides Internet users with several computer tools designed to answer specific user needs. This portal provides easy access to these tools, for more accurate results while searching for [world animal health information](#).

## **4 CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway**

4.1. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway "Think Tank" Forum was held at OIE Headquarters in Paris, in April 2017, to mark the ten-year milestone of the OIE flagship programme that supports the sustainable improvement of a country's Veterinary Services. The Forum brought together a diverse group of 74 participants comprising OIE member country representatives, Donors/Partners, OIE Staff and PVS Pathway Experts to review the programme's successes, build on lessons learned and collectively plan for the strategic evolution of the PVS Pathway.

### **4.2 Key Directions Emerging from the Forum**

4.2. The OIE will enhance the profile, impact and resourcing of the PVS Pathway by elevating the programme beyond the veterinary and technical to the higher strategic and intersectoral level, particularly through engaging and linking with priority global agendas. In terms of country engagement, the OIE will adopt a more flexible, tailored approach to create a more targeted and responsive PVS Pathway with enhanced country ownership, whilst maintaining its integrity. New options for OIE PVS engagement will include PVS training (to deepen understanding and engagement, and/or facilitate PVS self-evaluation), PVS Strategic Planning support (to assist integration of PVS outputs within established or new national strategic planning cycles), PVS Specific Content (to develop more defined and accessible content within PVS reports on major global priorities such as PPR eradication or AMR) and to further develop PVS/International Health Regulations 'One Health' systems linkages, including via IHR/PVS national bridging workshops. These new directions are appropriate given that the basic tools and methods of the PVS Pathway are long established and robust, with many countries already possessing a solid baseline of PVS Pathway evaluation and planning from which to build. With all this, the whole-of-systems approach and philosophy of the PVS Pathway as an independent, voluntary and country-driven process based on the PVS Tool and internationally agreed standards were identified as key strengths that should be maintained. The PVS Pathway Evolution Placemat, summarizing the key outcomes of the Forum is included as Appendix A.

4.3. OIE's PVS Pathway evolution will be rolled out intensively over the next 12 to 18 months. The OIE has collated and arranged all the main action ideas arising from the Forum (and subsequent feedback) into a form conveying clear, phased implementation over time, and has also developed detailed action planning. The OIE will continue to engage and consult with all four key stakeholder groups throughout the PVS Pathway evolution planning and implementation process through an inclusive consultation framework.

### **4.3 Implementation of Standards Workshops**

4.4. A regional workshop 'OIE Standards: Facilitating safe international trade' was conducted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 22 to 24 August 2016 with the assistance of funding provided by the European Union. The workshop was aimed at providing participants with: i) an understanding of the OIE standards and how they relate to the WTO framework; (ii) how to implement these standards to ensure safe trade, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade; and (iii) an understanding of, and how to, effectively participate in the OIE standard setting process. Participants were OIE Delegates or representatives from veterinary services involved in the area of risk assessment or risk management related to import/export of animals and animal products. 23 member countries of the Americas participated in this workshop.

### **4.4 Regional Seminars for OIE National Focal Points**

4.5. OIE capacity-building activities also include Information Seminars for Recently Appointed OIE Delegates and Regional Seminars for OIE National Focal Points appointed for eight different areas (Animal Disease Notification to the OIE, Veterinary Products, Communication, Animal Production

Food Safety, Animal Welfare, Veterinary Laboratories, Wildlife and Aquatic Animals). The aim of this programme is to provide good governance concepts for improving animal health, animal welfare and food safety of animal-origin products at the national, regional and international levels, and to explain and clarify the role and responsibilities of newly-appointed OIE Delegates and of OIE National Focal Points with respect to OIE activities.

4.6. The list of Regional Seminars scheduled for 2018 will be provided to the SPS and STDF Secretariats once it has been approved later in the year.

## APPENDIX A

