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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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78TH MEETING OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

COMMUNICATION FROM THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE)

The following communication, received on 5 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of the OIE.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is pleased to provide this report for the information of WTO Members attending the 78th meeting of the SPS Committee.

1 COVID ACTIVITIES – OIE'S RESPONSE

1.1. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our communities and ways of life with devastating effects on society in nearly every country of the world. It has heavily challenged our food supply chains, livelihoods, economies as well as animal production systems. All these components are intrinsically linked.

1.2. The OIE has been working intensively with its network of experts and liaising closely with WHO and FAO, as well as its members to better understand the virus and its emergence and to enhance the capacity of countries to respond to this multifaceted crisis. The activities of Veterinary Services contribute to addressing critical needs, such as food supply, which are heavily challenged in the current circumstances. In these times where solidarity is more important than ever, Veterinary Services have also been supporting the response capacity of human health services in various ways.

1.3. All relevant information about OIE's response to this pandemic is available on the OIE COVID-19 Portal at: <https://www.oie.int/en/scientific-expertise/specific-information-and-recommendations/questions-and-answers-on-2019novel-coronavirus/oies-response/>.

2 2020 TECHNICAL ITEM: "REQUIRED COMPETENCIES OF VETERINARY SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES"

2.1. As a consequence of the postponement of the 2020 OIE General Session, the report of the Technical Item on "Required competencies of Veterinary Services in the context of international trade: opportunities and challenges" was published in the OIE News.

2.2. The Technical Item Report provides a rich source of information summarising the international trade regulatory framework and their implications for Veterinary Services currently engaged in or aspiring to expand activities supporting trade.

2.3. The Report is composed of five distinct parts - which can be used as stand-alone documents. Each of them is presented with associated resources, which all together intend to assist OIE members to better implement OIE standards and secure international trade of animals and their products.

- a. PART I – The international trade regulatory framework: describes the WTO Agreements and OIE international standards as the framework to facilitate the negotiation between exporting and importing countries, and agreements on the sanitary requirements to be applied in the trade of live animal and animal products;

- b. PART II – Role of Veterinary Services in international trade: describes the conditions required for trade between countries and the essential role of Veterinary Services;
- c. PART III – Challenges faced by Veterinary Services in the context of international trade and examples of successful practices: presents the results of an extensive analysis of PVS reports and other data sources (OIE official status, self-declaration, WTO SPS notifications and Specific Trade Concerns) that identified key challenges faced by Veterinary Services in the context of international trade as well as successful practices;
- d. PART IV – Veterinary Services' competencies to secure and facilitate international trade; and PART V - OIE capacity-building activities to reinforce Veterinary Services capacity on trade: presents the new OIE Trade Competence Package development, as well as the future approach to OIE trainings by country typology (instead of by region), and the elaboration of a wide range of e-modules.

2.4. The complete report including the five parts is available at: <https://www.oie.int/en/conferences-events/2020-world-assembly-of-the-oie-delegates/technical-item/>.

3 MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF OIE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS – THE OBSERVATORY PROJECT

3.1. In May 2018, the World Assembly of OIE delegates adopted [Resolution No. 36](#) recommending the establishment of an Observatory on the implementation of OIE standards by member countries. Through the Observatory, the OIE will be better able to identify and analyse the difficulties faced by OIE members and better support them.

3.2. To explore the potential solutions for the design of the Observatory, in July 2018, the OIE entered into a specific collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), that provided an analysis of key features of implementation of OIE standards and, as well as a review of the existing mechanisms supporting the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of OIE standards. The final report of the OECD study was published in February 2020 and is available at: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/oecd-study-on-the-world-organisation-for-animal-health-oie-observatory-c88edbcd-en.htm>.

3.3. The OIE has considered the OECD recommendations for the development of the next phase of the project, with the preparation of a roadmap to make the OIE Observatory operational. The deployment of the roadmap was started in 2020 with the launch of a pilot phase.

3.4. The pilot phase aims to test different aspects of the development of the OIE Observatory, such as the methodological approach, data collection and data analysis. The preparation of Part III of the 2020 Technical Item on "Required competencies of Veterinary Services in the context of international trade: opportunities and challenges" served as the first prototype for the pilot phase of the OIE Observatory.

3.5. For more information, refer to the OIE website at: <https://www.oie.int/en/standard-setting/overview/oie-observatory/>.

4 THE OIE WORLD ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM (OIE-WAHIS)

4.1. The World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) is an intrinsic and fundamental part of the OIE's mandate and a vital tool for its 182 OIE members. WAHIS enables the collection and the dissemination of data on animal diseases of epidemiological significance in both domestic species of terrestrial and aquatic animals, and wildlife and is vital for the global dissemination of information on animal disease events, including zoonotic pathogens. Since 2016 the OIE has embarked on a ten-year process of modernising its existing animal health information system. The modernisation will constitute a complete redesign of the platform and will incorporate a transdisciplinary and holistic approach to data collection, analysis and dissemination – not only addressing animal diseases – but also public health. The new platform will be called OIE-WAHIS.

4.2. OIE-WAHIS will have a faster and more intuitive user-friendly system with new features, which will include extended data analytics, customisable data queries and enhanced mapping and data visualisation capabilities.

4.3. The new system will be launched in two releases. Release 1 will be delivered in October 2020, covering App configuration, immediate notification and follow up reports, user management, home page and online help, reports management, alerts App, dashboards, public interface, lifecycle, interoperability, six-monthly reports, GIS and mapping; Release 2 is anticipated for April 2021, covering annual report, wild annual report, local report, wild public interface and usage statistics.

4.4. For more information on the OIE-WAHIS Project see: <https://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/the-oie-wahis-project/>.

5 GLOBAL CONTROL OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

5.1. The OIE, in collaboration with the FAO, launched a joint initiative for the global control of African swine fever (ASF) on July 2020, as a call to countries and partners to join forces in controlling the disease. The initiative is part of the joint Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) and aims to foster national, regional and global partnerships to strengthen control measures and minimise the impact of the disease.

5.2. A GF-TADs ASF Working Group has been established to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the initiative, and to contribute to the development and support of ASF control strategies at the global and regional levels.

5.3. An important activity is the development of new Guidelines on compartmentalisation for ASF. These are based on the general principles of relevant OIE standards and will assist OIE members in the application and validation of compartmentalisation, to minimise the impact of ASF through ensuring business continuity.

5.4. Detailed information is available on the GF-TADs website (<http://www.gf-tads.org/asf/asf/en/>) and includes the operational plans listing the activities under this initiative.

6 OIE ENDORSEMENT OF OFFICIAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES FOR DOG-MEDIATED RABIES

6.1. The OIE endorsement of official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies is a new milestone in the journey towards the elimination of rabies-related human deaths. To support countries to compile documented evidence in a standard manner that demonstrate compliance with the requirements described Chapter 8.14, Infection with Rabies virus, in the Terrestrial Code, the OIE members, in 2019, adopted recommendations for the endorsement of national official control programme applications.

6.2. By compiling evidence that their national programmes comply with the requirements of OIE , it will be easier for national Veterinary Services to advocate for support from their governments and hence to progressively prevent and control the disease until they can eventually prove its absence from their territories.

6.3. The first programmes could be endorsed in 2021. Having OIE-endorsed control programmes will pave the way for countries to self-declare freedom from rabies (<https://www.oie.int/en/animal-health-in-the-world/rabies-portal/controlling-rabies/>).

7 INFECTION WITH AVIAN INFLUENZA

7.1. OIE is in the process of updating its on avian influenza in both the Terrestrial Code and Terrestrial Manual to reflect new scientific information. Revised disease-specific chapters in the Terrestrial Code and Terrestrial Manual will be circulated for member comment in the Code Commission and Biological Standards Commission September 2020 reports, respectively.

8 SWINE INFLUENZA

8.1. A recent report on the circulation of A(H1N1) subtype influenza viruses in the swine population in China with evidence of zoonotic potential has alerted the world to the pandemic risk associated with swine influenza viruses. Influenza in swine is not an OIE-listed disease, and thus does not require reporting to the OIE by members. However, due to the pandemic risk associated with animal influenza viruses, there is a need for continued surveillance and risk assessment of emerging strains in swine populations. It is important that new and updated swine influenza surveillance data collected by countries are rapidly analysed and risk-assessed on a global scale to enable tracking how endemic and novel viruses are spreading. With the aim of facilitating and supporting this, OFFLU (OIE-FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza) advocates timely sharing of swine surveillance data from all regions to ensure that a One Health approach is applied to emerging influenza A viruses and that diagnostic tools are regularly updated to detect a wide range of influenza viruses, including emergent strains. It is recommended that laboratories continue to conduct tests for swine influenza according to OIE international standards. Through the international partnership between OIE, FAO, WHO and contributing laboratories, emerging influenza variants that may be of public or animal health concern can be identified and flagged for further attention.

9 ZONOTIC TUBERCULOSIS

9.1. The OIE, together with the WHO, FAO and the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease is engaged in the fight against zoonotic tuberculosis (zTB). They have developed a Roadmap that outlines a plan for eliminating zTB in humans including the control of tuberculosis (TB) in livestock.

9.2. For further information on the zTB roadmap refer to:

https://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Our_scientific_expertise/docs/pdf/Tuberculosis/Roadmap_zoonotic_TB.pdf.

9.3. The reduction of TB in livestock, and consequently the reduction of zTB in humans, has been accomplished in economically developed countries through measures such as test-and-slaughter of infected animals. In this strategy, currently the only one accepted for international trade of live animals and animal products, livestock are periodically screened using the tuberculin skin test, and reactors are slaughtered. However, for cultural and socio-economic reasons, this strategy is not acceptable in rural India and Africa, where the greatest burden of zTB is borne by the least privileged.

9.4. The OIE convened an ad hoc Group who met in September 2020 to develop recommendations on TB control strategies in livestock other than test-and-slaughter, which could lead to a revision of international TB requirements for trading livestock in the future. The ad hoc Group also prepared an expert opinion on whether *M. tuberculosis* should be listed as a notifiable species of the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex in the OIE Terrestrial Code. The ad hoc Group's report will be considered by the Scientific and Code Commissions at their February 2021 meetings.

10 NEW OIE PUBLICATION

10.1. The OIE recently published a new volume of the OIE Scientific and Technical Review titled "Ensuring safe trade in animals and animal products" (2020, Vol. 39 (1) edited by WTO colleagues C. Wolff and A. Hamilton).

Trade always starts with a negotiation, and a negotiation proceeds best if both parties have a common framework through which to understand each other's expectations. The WTO–OIE framework of trade agreements and international standards serves as the basis for the exchange of information between exporting and importing countries. The intention of this issue is to present a series of articles that assist OIE and WTO Members and the international community interested in trade in animals and animal products to better understand the frameworks created by the WTO trade agreements and OIE international standards, both through the discussion of the theory underpinning these standards/agreements and by providing examples of their implementation.

http://web.oie.int/boutique/index.php?page=ficprod&id_produit=1797&fichrech=1&lang=en
