

**CURRENT SPS MEASURES REGARDING THE
AVIAN INFLUENZA SITUATION**

Communication from Nigeria

The following communication, received on 21 February 2006, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Nigeria.

1. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria hereby notifies the WTO SPS Committee on the current measures being taken in response to the avian influenza situation in the country. The highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (H5N1) was diagnosed at Sambawa Farms, Kaduna, on 7 February 2006 as being responsible for the massive mortality of birds on the farm. The disease has also been confirmed in some poultry farms in Kano and Plateau States.
2. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is working very closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The UN agencies have called on Nigeria's neighbouring countries, namely, Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, as well as Ghana and Togo to immediately increase surveillance measures and stop trans-border movement and trade of poultry and poultry products, in order to contain the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has also mobilized veterinary staff to tighten border inspections and control.
3. On the advice of the FAO and OIE, the Nigerian veterinary authorities have, *inter alia*:
 - (a) immediately closed down all poultry markets in Kaduna and Kano States, including the neighbouring regions, to prevent further spread of the deadly bird flu virus;
 - (b) immediately stopped the movement of poultry in order to contain the disease, with people required not to import or trade livestock or livestock products, including poultry;
 - (c) commenced the use of only vaccines that fulfil OIE international quality standards;
 - (d) embarked on other priority measures, including appropriate culling respecting OIE standards in and around the outbreak zones, ring vaccination around infected areas, the control of people and livestock moving to and from the outbreak zones, thorough disinfection, hygiene and good farming practices; and
 - (e) initiated arrangements for compensation of farmers for livestock losses caused by the disease and culling, in order to encourage early disease reporting.

4. The FAO and OIE have welcomed the emergency measures being applied by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in and around the outbreak zones. However, they have stressed that the existing control measures need to be strengthened and intensified by applying standard FAO procedures and the recommended OIE international guidelines. In addition, veterinary staff and technicians working in outbreak areas and laboratories should wear protective clothing. A joint FAO/OIE mission is expected in Nigeria to reinforce the FAO veterinary team already on the ground. The World Health Organization (WHO) is also expected to determine the technical needs that could facilitate better health, particularly to prevent and avoid the transmission of the infection from animals to humans.

5. In the meantime, honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mallam Adamu Bello, has briefed the international community and donor agencies on the outbreak of avian influenza in the country. The FAO and the US Department of Agriculture are shipping over 1,000 sets of protective clothing to Nigeria. However, in view of Nigeria's focal position, with above 45 per cent of the total livestock population in West Africa, the disease could become a regional problem if it is not contained in the country. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, therefore, needs urgent financial and technical assistance to combat the problem. The specific areas of technical assistance may include, but are not limited to laboratories and equipment for veterinary evaluation, testing, certification and labelling, as well as protective clothing, animal and human vaccines, and curative medicines. Financial assistance should be in grant form rather than debt – creating assistance, more so as the country has just come out of a debt – rescheduling arrangement with the Paris Club of creditors. The financial support would largely be used to pay compensation to farms that have been affected by the disease.

6. In response to this notification to the SPS Committee, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria would be grateful for specific commitments of concrete financial and technical assistance, which would also be notified to all Members of the SPS Committee.

7. There are no reports yet of the transmission of the H5N1 virus to humans. The only complaint from a farmer regarding his children who are sick and coughing blood is being investigated. The children are to be examined to diagnose the nature of their ailment.

8. For further information, contact:

(i) The Honourable Minister
Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Area 11 Secretariat
Garki – Abuja
Nigeria
Tel: +234 9 314
Fax: +234 9 314

(ii) The Honourable Minister
Federal Ministry of Commerce
Area 1 Secretariat
Garki – Abuja
Tel: +234 9 234 1884
Fax: +234 9 234 1541
E-mail: OHMCommerce@naijanet.com

- (iii) The Ambassador to WTO
Permanent Mission of Nigeria
Nigeria Trade Office
Rue Richard Wagner 1
Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 733 1000
Fax: +41 22 733 1080
E-mail: nigtrudeoffice@naijanet.com
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