

**FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of GF-TADs for SPC Region
in collaboration with SPC Secretariat
(25-26 June 2009)**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of GF-TADs for SPC Region in collaboration with SPC Secretariat held in Nadi, Fiji on 25-26 June 2009, recommended the following to support activities of animal disease prevention and control in the Secretariat for Pacific Community (SPC) region, particularly in conjunction with the Global Framework for progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs).

The following conclusions and recommendations were derived from the above meeting.

1. The member countries of the Pacific Region have agreed that Regional Support Unit (RSU) under the umbrella of GF-TADs for the Pacific region will be hosted by the Secretariat for Pacific Countries (SPC). The RSU will be based in Suva, Fiji and attached to the animal production and health team. It has also been agreed by the member nations that the Epidemiological Unit will be attached to the RSU in Suva and will have links with national focal points as well as to the epidemiological expertise in Australia, France, New Zealand and USA.
2. For the RSU to function efficiently, it is also recommended that it be strengthened, and training for the regional staff attached to the Unit be provided so they are able to manage regional coordination to support rapid responses to emerging disease problems and also develop and deliver training programmes of the region in various aspects of TADs control.
3. Based on the predominant livestock species in the 22 member countries, and almost no major problems with important transboundary animal diseases (TADs), the member countries have agreed to base their GF-TADs priority on disease prevention through early detection and response capabilities. In this regard the countries have identified the following two broad priorities:
 - a. Consolidating their preparedness plans for exotic diseases such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Newcastle Disease, Classical Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease, Bluetongue, Peste des Petit Ruminants and Rabies.
 - b. Continuing to address their immediate endemic zoonotic disease problems such as Brucellosis, Leptospirosis and Bovine Tuberculosis in ruminants.
4. Regional Coordination will be one of the most important functions of the RSU and in this regard it should play a major role in:
 - a. regional harmonization of various aspects of disease control including standardization of legislation and its application, and
 - b. resource mobilisation for the priority areas identified below.
5. SPC has identified three Sub-Regional laboratories to be based in Guam, Fiji and, Papua New Guinea. These are level 2 laboratories that will serve the three Pacific Island subregions; Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Level 2 laboratories are

defined as easily accessible to other Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs), have an appropriately established infrastructure to house serology equipment, have permanently employed, well trained laboratory veterinarians and technicians and countries hosting the laboratories can give duty tax exemption for imported laboratory equipment. These laboratories are currently focused on conducting serological tests for avian influenza, but will soon be upgraded to conduct PCR- based diagnostics. These laboratories are also expected to provide other diagnostic services, particularly for potential important exotic diseases (see above). The member nations recommend that the strengthening of these sub-regional laboratories is a priority in order to provide rapid regional diagnostic capacity, particularly as most of the countries in the region have inadequate national diagnostic capabilities.

6. The Pacific countries have agreed that given the current state of national and regional diagnostic capacity it is not realistic to consider building facilities that could provide regional reference level diagnostic facility. Thus the SPC members will continue to access services of the external Reference Laboratories through Australia, France, New Zealand and USA.
7. It was acknowledged that in the medium to long term national laboratory capacities will need to be built up to support surveillance programmes that will enable the countries and the region to detect infectious diseases early, and respond to them in a timely manner. In recommending enhancement of laboratory capacities in various countries of the Region the following important points need to be taken into consideration:
 - a. Laboratory capacity is still rudimentary in the region and majority of the countries do not even have basic national laboratory facilities.
 - b. In most countries the human health diagnostic capacity is at a higher level than veterinary laboratories, however currently, veterinary samples are not allowed to be tested in human laboratories.
 - c. The key areas for strengthening laboratory capacity include renovating existing rundown laboratory buildings or constructing completely new buildings, and procuring new laboratory equipment.
 - d. Multiple laboratory techniques should be progressively strengthened; starting with basic laboratory facilities to microscopy, serology and in some countries molecular diagnostics.
 - e. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for collection and shipping of samples and diagnosis need also to be developed for most countries.
8. The SPC also agreed that all countries should strengthen their surveillance capacity and develop programmes focusing on the two main activities below:
 - a. Conducting base line disease surveillance to better define the existing disease status in the countries.
 - b. Generating national and regional information on livestock sector (range of species, numbers, farming systems, etc), and their socio-economic relevance and importance.
9. The participants also strongly recommended training in a broad range of areas for infectious disease prevention and control. These included:

- a. Training of paravets, and institutionalization where possible. The training should include development of advanced para-vet modules and web-based training courses starting with introductory level training, and gradually moving into more specialised training to make diagnosis of exotic or unusual diseases possible.
 - b. Training should also be provided to build a strong cadre of laboratory technicians who should be able to make diagnosis of exotic diseases.
 - c. Field epidemiology training is also necessary in all countries of the Region.
 - d. Biosecurity training for quarantine officers
 - e. Communications training (for public awareness, risk communication and crisis communication, etc.) should also be included as part of the capacity building.
 - f. Good livestock production practices (including on farm biosecurity) and animal welfare
10. Policy and legislation should be strengthened particularly in the areas of compensation, border control (biosecurity), intersectoral coordination, emergency management and vaccination.
11. It is also recommended that for effective and efficient delivery of the above recommendations a monitoring and evaluation system of the GF-TADs regional programme be carried out every for 2 years.