



**The Inception Meeting for the OIE/Japan Trust Fund Programme
for Strengthening Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Control in Asia
Tokyo, Japan, 21-23 April 2008**

SUMMARY

(Background Information)

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) caused by the H5N1 strain, which was reported in Southeast Asia in 2003, has spread to East Asia including Japan, RO Korea, Mongolia and Russia, to Europe, Middle East and to Africa, posing serious negative impacts to the poultry sector and agriculture, and risks to human health with infection and deaths (as of 17 April 2008; 381 confirmed human cases and 240 confirmed human deaths, reported by WHO).

It is recognised that HPAI has spread as a transboundary disease from one place to another, mainly by animal movement, international trade and also migratory wild birds.

Early detection through effective disease surveillance systems of domestic poultry and rapid response of the disease at source are essential for disease control and prevention.

Under some epidemiological situation where stamping-out is not sufficient to control the disease, vaccines have been used for disease control in some countries and a regional vaccine bank for emergency has been developed to support vaccination in some region.

It is well-known that wild birds are involved in the spread of Avian Influenza (AI) to domestic poultry and geographically to various countries. And surveillance of wild birds as well as domestic poultry is crucial and increasingly important for AI control and prevention.

While the disease situation of the unprecedented cases has recently been improved to a certain extent with the every effort by all the stakeholders, HPAI still remains significant threat at a global level, as this dreadful disease is resurgent and repeatedly occurred in various regions including Asian countries and others even in late 2007 and early 2008. The disease gives significant problems in particular in Asia including Southeast Asian countries and South Asian countries, where HPAI has again occurred. The viruses are circulating and the disease is endemic in almost all the whole areas of some countries.

Thus the continuous assistance from such supporters as international organisations to

countries at risk is crucial and necessary for the effective disease control including the confinement of the disease to a minimum and disease prevention.

Under these current conditions, the Government of Japan through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has decided to further cooperate with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE, with Headquarters in Paris and Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific in Tokyo) in controlling HPAI at source in countries of Asia, for the coming five (5) years.

The Inception Meeting for the OIE/Japan Trust Fund (JTF) Programme for Strengthening Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Control in Asia was held jointly by the OIE and the Government of Japan (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) at Toranomom Pastoral Hotel in Tokyo, Japan, on 21-22 April 2008.

The meeting was attended by about 80 participants from Australia, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China (P.R.), India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam, and international and regional organisations including Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), South Asian Association for Regional Coordination (SAARC), United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC) and World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

H. E. Mr Masatoshi Wakabayashi, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, presided at the Opening Session of the Inception Meeting and delivered the opening address, and the meeting was opened.

This Inception Meeting was followed by another important individual meeting with selected countries in East Asia and South Asia for consultation on laboratory diagnostic capacity building and procurement of laboratory equipment and materials for HPAI diagnosis and surveillance (This is the second phase of OIE cooperation to Members, following the first case in Southeast Asia in 2006-2007), which was organised at the same hotel on 23 April.

It is essentially important to take all necessary measures for containing and controlling HPAI at source without delay, based on early detection of the disease and on transparent and timely notification of the disease to government authorities. For this purpose, important are appropriate measures including the strengthening of regional animal health information networks by Veterinary Services, the improvement and upgrade of the diagnosis and surveillance level, the strengthening and upgrading of capacity of Veterinary administrations

including legislation, and surveillance on the disease in domestic animals and study on migratory flyways and on interaction of epidemiology with wild birds and domestic animals.

(Project components)

This OIE/Japan Trust Fund Project supported by the Government of Japan through its Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will be expected to continue for the coming five (5) years, with the budget plan of JPY 71,000,000 (approximately USD 630,000 for the first year and JPY 355,000,000 for 5 years, equivalent to approximately USD 3,142,000) and will follow up the previous HPAI Project implemented in Southeast Asian countries in the 2006-2007 fiscal years. This new Project will be extended to Asian countries, not only for Southeast Asian Countries but also for East and South Asian countries.

This Project aims at further strengthening disease control in Asia by setting up or improving mechanisms of animal health information networking by veterinary officers in Asian countries, for improving and upgrading capacity of Veterinary Services; using OIE PVS tool: Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services and through PVS gap analysis, by epidemiological studies on wild birds and domestic animals including poultry and others for analysis of their involvement of infection and spread of the disease, for analysis on characteristics of Avian Influenza viruses, and establishing and maintaining at the OIE Reference Laboratory a data-base of viruses accessible by OIE Members.

Another new related but different Project (with the budget of 503,000,000 JPY or equivalent to approximately USD 4,340,000) is to support the above components of the 5 year project in strengthening capacity of laboratory diagnosis and surveillance on HPAI through training of laboratory staff members and through procurement and provision of laboratory diagnostic equipment and materials to the selected and designated national laboratories in East Asia and South Asia. This is the extended cooperation of the similar OIE/Japan Special Trust Fund Project for HPAI control in Southeast Asia which was implemented in the participating countries in Southeast Asia in the 2006-2007 fiscal years.

(Discussions during the Meeting)

The Inception Meeting discussed the current situation on disease occurrences, control and prevention measures of HPAI, their constraints against the effective disease control and prevention in major countries in Asia, future regional cooperation and alliance for the disease control as well as development and effective implementation of the new Project.

The above mentioned 5 year Project components were explained and discussed, and an expert group to be organised will further clarify soon professional activities for their implementation.

The following conclusions and recommendations were provided by the Inception Meeting on 21-22 April 2008.

(Conclusions and Recommendations)

1. The participating Members well recognised that this new Project is an opportune and timely measure, taking into account the current epidemiological situation of HPAI in the world and especially resurgences in Asia, and agreed upon the necessity of an early start of project implementation in the Region.
2. The Inception Meeting exchanged various information and views, based on the reports of the disease from the resource persons and OIE Members, and noted that the effective control and prevention measures of the disease need to be further supported in the Region.
3. It was strongly expressed during the Inception Meeting that the further strengthening of HPAI control in Asia to a minimum level of infection is essential for reducing risks of spreading the disease from the Asian Region to other Regions, for sustainable supply of animal protein food by minimizing risks to Agriculture and for reducing risks to human health and thus for contributing to human livelihood in the Region.
4. It was recommended that broader areas for strengthening the legal framework for disease control and prevention and the capacity level of diagnosis, should be taken into consideration in respective countries in Asia. In this context, the Inception Meeting recognised the importance of strengthening disease control measures in respective countries and also of the regional cooperation on generic information exchange on animal health and regional cooperation and alliance by national Veterinary Services and their officials, to tackle HPAI which cannot be controlled by a single country due to its transboundary nature.
5. The Inception meeting noted that strengthening measures through this Project would contribute to disease control in Asia and consequently to reduce risks of the disease spreading from the Region to other Regions.
6. The Inception Meeting recommended that the first phase of the OIE/JSTF Project for HPAI control in Southeast Asia in the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years should be closely linked with the new 5 year Project in order to increase the effectiveness of project cooperation and alliance, for HPAI control in Asia.

7. The Meeting also recommended that the first phase Project implemented in the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years and the new second phase Project starting in 2008 for capacity building of laboratory diagnosis and surveillance and for procurement and provision of laboratory equipment and materials, should be connected in the countries concerned with the new 5 year Project so that the control and prevention measures of HPAI will be much more strengthened and effectively implemented.
8. It was recommended that the Project should be effectively implemented through regional cooperation extended from the relevant Members and organisations, in particular for surveillance and collection of Avian Influenza viruses in conjunction with the OIE/FAO worldwide scientific network for the control of avian influenza (OFFLU) so that Members in Asia can access to and use the data base of AI viruses.
9. OIE should start, as soon as possible, studies and coordination for the Project with the participating Members in Asia for early and effective implementation of the Project.
10. It was recommended that flexibility of Project implementation within the project framework should be taken into consideration for meeting requirements in and increasing the effectiveness of disease control and prevention in the Region.
11. The Inception Meeting recommended that consideration may be taken for cooperation and coordination with intergovernmental organisations at the Regional level, in order to increase the effectiveness of the Project.
12. The participating Members and organisations expressed their great appreciation to the Government of Japan, particularly for the Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, for its continuous cooperation, strong initiatives and generous contribution to HPAI control and prevention in Asia.