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THE GLOBAL **FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE** CONTROL STRATEGY

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is one of the most contagious transboundary animal diseases (TADs). Livestock movements and trade play a key role in the spread of the disease.

FMD is still widespread throughout the world. It still occurs in large parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia and the countries that are free of FMD today remains under constant threat of an incursion.

The disease is well-known for its ability to severely affect and indeed disrupt regional and international trade in animals

and animal products. It is also notorious for the enormous financial damage it can cause in FMD-free countries hit by an outbreak.

However, the burden of FMD on developing countries, involving the loss of animals and biological diversity and the lowering of production efficiency, is generally much less well known or is underestimated.

In FMD-endemic countries, usually developing countries, the disease threatens food security and the livelihoods

of smallholders and prevents animal husbandry sectors from developing their economic potential.

With a fast moving infection, surveillance is essential and building up national and regional epidemio-surveillance capacities is a priority activity.

FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) developed a 15-year global control strategy in 2012 to reduce the burden of FMD in endemic countries and maintain the status of FMD-free countries.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FMD

In regions where FMD is endemic (in most parts of Asia, West Eurasia, the Middle East and Africa), the presence of the disease undermines not only food security but also economic development at all levels of the production system, from village smallholders to more organised livestock production systems.

The direct economic impact of the disease is seen in a drop in milk production, abortions and deaths (mainly of young livestock) and the indirect effects include the loss of draught

power for crop production, transportation, and the costs of implementing FMD control measures.

In other parts of the world, FMD has either been eradicated (Oceania, Western Europe and North and Central America), or has been controlled (South America). In FMD-free countries, the cost of the incursion of FMD is estimated to be significantly high (due to the implementation of control measures and restrictions or bans on trade in agricultural products), which justifies the use of strong measures to prevent the introduction of the FMD virus and to control the disease at source.

KEY FACTS

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

FMD HAS A HIGH BIO-THREAT POTENTIAL BECAUSE OF ITS EXCEPTIONAL INFECTIVITY, THE POTENTIAL FOR DELIBERATE INTRODUCTION, AND THE DAMAGING CONSEQUENCES OF INTRODUCTIONS TO FREE COUNTRIES

SINCE 2012, THE FAO/OIE GLOBAL FMD CONTROL STRATEGY HAS BEEN ENGAGING COUNTRIES IN PROGRESSIVE FMD CONTROL IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE RISK AT SOURCE

IN THE PAST 5 YEARS, MULTIPLE, UNEXPLAINED JUMPS OF FMDV INFECTION HAVE OCCURRED, RESULTING IN REGIONAL EPIDEMICS AFFECTING MILLIONS OF ANIMALS

MITIGATION MEASURES HAVE LARGELY FOCUSED ON PREVENTION OF VIRUS ENTRY INTO COUNTRIES THROUGH TRADE

AS OF JANUARY 2017, 68 MEMBER COUNTRIES HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED BY THE OIE AS BEING FREE FROM FMD, AND 15 OTHER COUNTRIES ARE OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED AS HAVING FMD-FREE ZONES

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FMD outbreaks in countries where the disease had previously been eradicated cause losses of approximately USD 1.5 billion per year. Although more difficult to estimate, the cost burden in endemic regions is roughly estimated to be more than USD 6.5 billion a year.

Thus, reducing FMD in endemic countries by a coordinated control strategy at the global and regional level is of shared interest and should be considered a global public good.

THE GLOBAL FMD CONTROL STRATEGY

Control strategy was developed based on biodefense approach to strengthen mechanisms to detect and report outbreaks internationally in real-time, harmonized control measures across borders, manage risks in virus spread and prevent its escape from laboratories. Countries where the disease is endemic or sporadic are sub-divided into seven regional pools following the genetic and antigenic analyses of the FMDV.

The specific goal of this strategy is not only to reduce the impact of FMD on animal production in developing countries, but also to maintain the official FMD-free status of countries that have already eradicated the disease.

The strategy includes three components:

- improving global FMD control;
- the strengthening of Veterinary Services;
- the control of other TADs.

Strengthening Veterinary Services is an important component of the Global Strategy and serves as a link with the two other components. Strong Veterinary Services will improve effective implementation of the strategy and represent an opportunity to enhance Veterinary Services' capacity to fight other high-impact livestock diseases.

Based on the result of national, regional and international efforts, FMD control has progressed following the implementation of the Global FMD Control Strategy.

The strategy thus far has been successfully implemented in 72 of 79 affected countries where the majority of countries advanced in the Progressive Control Pathway, a structured 5-stage approach, from stages 1 and 2 and few countries to stage 3 and beyond 5 (official recognition of FMD free status without vaccination by the OIE) while limited countries remained in stage 0 during the first 5 years of the global strategy. The added value is that these monitoring programs assist with generating the regional and global surveillance results needed to inform biothreat assessment.

CONCLUSION

Controlling FMD and reducing its impact would have a hugely positive economic impact on both FMD-infected and FMD-free countries. However, this achievement demands that global, regional and national partners work closely together and that the appropriate resources be mobilised.