From December 3rd to 6th 2014, Animal Health officials and professionals from Viet Nam and China have reunited in Guangxi Province, China at the 3rd China-Viet Nam cross border meeting to improve information sharing about the animal health situation on each side of the border and to discuss innovative ways to prevent diseases crossing the border with animals.

During the workshop, participants exchanged information on the disease status and risk pathways for Vietnam and Southern China focusing on Influenza A H5N1 & H7N9, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). Government counterparts shared experiences in enhancing biosecurity, surveillance, and value chain analysis as well as considering development of safer movement pathways between China and Viet Nam for livestock and livestock products.

“As Northern Viet Nam is bordering with China and active economic and social exchanges take place on a regular basis, it is important to build a collaborative cross-border prevention and response system in order to prevent disease transmission back and forth,” said Dr. Ken Inui, the laboratory expert of FAO ECTAD Viet Nam.

From the meeting two governments decided to establish a management steering committee to prepare and conduct a joint study on the biosecurity of imported chicks from Southern China to Viet Nam. They will also work on three potential joint activities including designing a safe movement pathway for day old chicks, advising on the feasibility of exporting of processed spent hens across the border, and managing the risk of FMD through livestock movements. Within the northern Viet Nam and southern China epizone, it is critical that both countries work together to control transboundary and emerging infectious diseases. This will prevent further spread of diseases and minimize the impacts of diseases if they are present.
Introducing ECTAD’s new project: EPT2+

To establish a longer term approach for risk reduction and risk management that lowers the threat of an emerging pandemic in Viet Nam, FAO ECTAD Viet Nam will continue its work under the funding of USAID’s global program Emerging Pandemic Threats 2 (EPT2). In Viet Nam, the FAO-MARD program entitled ‘Risk Mitigation and Management of Human Health Threats along Animal Value Chains’ will aim to minimize impacts of diseases on animals, people, livelihood, food safety and food security.

The EPT2 project will focus on four main components: 1) One health coordination; 2) Biosecurity along value chains from farms to chopsticks; 3) Epidemiology-based disease prevention and control; and 4) epizone cross-border collaboration in the lower Mekong and Red River Deltas.

To celebrate the closing of an eight year long project, “Immediate Technical Assistance to Strengthen Emergency Preparedness for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) to Viet Nam”, the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Disease (ECTAD) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Viet Nam co-organized a closing workshop with the Department of Animal Health (DAH) and the Department of Livestock Production (DLP) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). This event was an occasion to highlight the significant achievements of the project which started during the emergency phase of the HPAI H5N1 outbreaks in Viet Nam and has continued through to a more normative and routine period that supports animal health, disease prevention and control, livestock production & biosecurity, and safe food production activities. The closing workshop also provided insights into challenges encountered during the eight year project (2006-2014) through which the United States Agency of International Development (USAID), provided almost USD $17 million of support to Viet Nam.

The HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza) focused project aimed on combatting H5N1 HPAI and other zoonosis through technical and financial support to MARD primarily in areas of capacity development, coordination, surveillance, laboratory diagnostics, vaccination, biosecurity along value chains, improved animal production practices, and communication. With the number of human deaths from H5N1 HPAI falling from 39 in 2004 and 2005 before the project, to less than a handful in 2012-2013, international agencies and the global community refer to the response to H5N1 HPAI by the Government of Viet Nam as an example of the successes that can be achieved in controlling this disease.

The project has strongly supported initiatives of MARD and encouraged adaptation of technical elements into policy and legislation, but most importantly, FAO ECTAD worked closely with DAH and MARD to develop an influenza management plan to be implemented beyond the duration of the project.

“After the implementation of the HPAI project for eight years, we have witnessed a drastic reduction in the impacts of the HPAI H5N1 virus on poultry and people in Viet Nam, and the animal health systems have been significantly enhanced to detect and respond to avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases” said Dr. Scott Newman, Senior Technical Coordinator of the FAO ECTAD Viet Nam Program.
The Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Viet Nam and Department of Animal Health (DAH) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) organized a series of rabies training courses in Phu Tho and Thai Nguyen Provinces from 19 January - 5 February 2015. The training courses enhanced the local capacity of animal and public health experts in rabies prevention and management while ensuring the effectiveness of the rabies prevention and control program in the field.

District and Commune level courses were conducted in 6 districts (Cam Khe, Lam Thao, and Phu Ninh districts in Phu Tho Province, and Pho Yen, Phu Binh, and Dong Hy districts in Thai Nguyen Province). The course for district level staff focused on rabies case reporting and management while the commune level training aimed to teach dog catching and vaccination techniques. Both District and Commune level trainings also engaged public health counterparts as ECTAD emphasized that a good rabies prevention and control program is a One Health program involving both animal and public health sectors. As a result of the Commune level training, animal health workers were able to vaccinate in total 570 dogs in 6 districts during the training.

The District and Commune level courses were developed based on the “training for trainers” program that was held 3-14 September 2014 for the Provincial animal and public health staff. ECTAD Viet Nam and DAH-MARD invited technical experts and training specialists from FAO ECTAD Indonesia and the Indonesia Animal Health and Livestock Services from Gianyar District, Bali. The training of trainers program emphasized principles of rabies prevention, control and management, equipped field professionals with dog capture and vaccination skills, and highlighted the importance of a joint outbreak response and an integrated (animal and public health) bite case management system to properly manage human or animal rabies cases. A main focus of the training was to improve participant’s technical understanding about rabies and emphasize the importance of vaccinating at least 70% of all dogs in a community to ensure that the number human rabies cases decreases.

During the “Training for Trainers” by the FAO ECTAD Indonesian team, a training film ‘Eradication of Rabies in Viet Nam’ and one advocacy film “Towards Zero Rabies in Viet Nam” on rabies prevention and control were developed as a part of FAO ECTAD Viet Nam’s communication plan. The training films were more recently used in a District level refresher training, and is a resource for the ASEAN regional rabies strategy. The rabies training films will be utilized in future trainings and the videos will also soon be available on FAO Viet Nam’s website.
Southern Viet Nam’s wildlife farm census results were recently published on February 6th, 2015 by the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry (VN Forest) within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and the Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Viet Nam. Financed by the USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats (EPT) Program, this census helped strengthen wildlife farm management and provided important insights into aspects of animal husbandry and biosecurity, production practices, conservation issues, food safety, and health issues that could be addressed by authorities in the future.

The census found that approximately 1,555,000 animals from 185 wildlife species are being farmed within the 12 southern Viet Nam Provinces studied. The most common types of farms were rearing porcupines, oriental rat-snake and deer while the highest number of individuals were animals that have historically been associated with zoonotic diseases of concern including crocodile & Chinese softshell turtles (Salmonella sp.), civets (Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)), primates (hepatitis, herpes B, monkey pox & HIV/AIDS), and wild boar (influenza A viruses). Attention to food safety issues were also noted as many farmed wildlife are raised for consumption. The census included results from 4,099 operational wildlife farms and 1,907 wildlife farms that recently stopped rearing animals in Ba Ria - Vung Tau, Ben Tre, Binh Duong, Binh Phuoc, Binh Thuan, Dong Nai, Dong Thap, Lam Dong, Long An, Tay Ninh, Tien Giang and Ho Chi Minh City.

Updated farmed wildlife distribution maps derived from this census will help management authorities understand, quantify, and qualify the wildlife farming systems in the 12 pilot Provinces. Main recommendations from this pilot project include: 1) Regularly conducting the wildlife farm baseline census to maintain an updated wildlife farm database; 2) conducting a similar wildlife farm baseline census in the 10 remaining Provinces in the South of Viet Nam; 3) developing a software package and database for managing and regularly updating the wildlife farm baseline census information; and 4) to use the results from this census to address wildlife farming management issues, including but not limited to conservation, production practices, food safety, and zoonotic disease prevention and control.
Poultry at Ha Vy Wholesale Market, the biggest poultry supplier for Ha Noi, getting ready to get transported.