INTRODUCTION

A group of international animal health scientists met on Plum Island May 2008 to define the purpose and goals of the Global Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research Alliance (GFRA). The group agreed that the purpose of the GFRA should be to establish a coordinated global alliance of scientists to produce evidence and innovation that will enable the progressive control and eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (FMD). The group also agreed that the following five strategic goals should drive the work of the GFRA: 1) Facilitate research collaborations; 2) Conduct strategic research to better understand FMD; 3) Development of the next generation of control measures and strategies for their application; 4) Determine social and economic impacts of new generation of improved FMD control and 5) Provide evidence to inform development of policies for safe trade of animals and animal products in FMD endemic areas.

DISCUSSION

There are currently no research laboratories with the necessary critical mass and support structures to achieve the GFRA strategic goals. It is therefore imperative that laboratories worldwide with active FMD research programs work together to reach the critical mass needed to achieve the GFRA goals. Critical will be to establish research programs that will meet the needs of countries that are endemic for FMD and that are the most affected by the devastating economic impact of this disease. The current members of the GFRA have therefore agreed to the following action plan: 1) Identify partnership opportunities and promote funding of collaborative research projects; 2) Expand and coordinate the alliance; 3) Promote mechanisms and bring together the necessary experts to do gap analysis and set research priorities; 4) Organize and manage GFRA and related meetings including issues of sponsorship and 5) Seek funding for GFRA coordination activities.

NEXT STEPS

The GFRA will hold a workshop on the last day of the FAO/EU-FMD Erice conference to recruit new members, review current FMD research projects, solicit input on research priorities, and establish new strategic research collaborations to advance the progressive control and eradication of FMD.