

Background Paper

3.4 a Performance, Vision and Strategy: A tool for governance of Veterinary Services

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Summary

In this era of globalisation, the development and growth of many countries, as well as their ability to detect and respond to emerging disease threats, depend on the performance of their agricultural policies and economies, and this, in turn, directly relates to the quality of their *Veterinary Services (VS)*. According to the OIE, VS means the governmental and non-governmental organisations that implement animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certificates and other standards and guidelines in the *Terrestrial Code* in the whole country. The VS are under the overall control and direction of the *Veterinary Authority*. Efforts to strengthen VS and to support them to comply with OIE international standards on quality and evaluation of VS require the active participation and investment on the part of both the public and the private sectors. To assist in this effort, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) have joined forces to develop the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) tool. The PVS tool is designed to assist VS to establish their current level of performance, to identify gaps and weaknesses regarding their ability to comply with OIE international standards, to form a shared vision with stakeholders, and to establish priorities and carry out strategic initiatives.

In light of the growing international requirements and opportunities facing each country, it behoves VS to be more responsive and to adopt a broader mandate and vision, and provide new services to complement the portfolio of existing services. This will entail stronger alliances and closer cooperation with its stakeholders, trading partners and other countries, national VS counter parts and relevant intergovernmental organisations.

Experience has shown that countries, which are viewed as having more credible VS, in the eyes of its stakeholders, trading partners and other countries have developed their VS around four fundamental components: 1. human and financial resources; 2. technical capabilities; 3. interaction with stakeholders; and 4. access to markets. These four fundamental components comprise the basic structure of the PVS tool.

To establish the current level of performance, form a shared vision, establish priorities and carry out strategic initiatives, six to eight critical competencies have been elaborated for each of the above mentioned fundamental components, and for each critical competency, qualitative levels of advancement are described. Additional critical competencies might be added as the field application of the PVS tool progresses. For each critical competency a list of suggested indicators will be used by the assessors. In addition, an OIE Manual, including relevant information and procedures, will be provided.

The OIE has trained a cadre of veterinary experts who are prepared to assess VS from countries which have officially requested a PVS Evaluation from the OIE. To date, the VS of over 20 countries have been assessed.

More than a diagnostic instrument, the PVS tool promotes a culture of raising awareness and continual improvement, which can be used either passively or actively depending on the level of interest, priorities and commitment of the VS and its stakeholders. Continuity of this process requires a true partnership between the public and the private sectors. Leadership on the part of the public sector is a fundamental and critical determinant of success.

Introduction

In this era of globalisation, the development and growth of many countries depend on the performance of their agricultural policies and economies, and this, in turn, directly relates to the quality of their *Veterinary Services* (VS). According to the OIE, VS means the governmental and non-governmental organisations that implement animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certificates and other standards and guidelines in the *Terrestrial Code* in the whole country. The VS are under the overall control and direction of the *Veterinary Authority*. The Veterinary Authority may authorise or accredit private sector organisations to deliver functions on its behalf. Important roles for VS include veterinary public health – including on-farm intervention to prevent food-borne diseases – and regional and international market access for animals and animal products. To meet these new opportunities and challenges, VS need to operate on scientifically-based principles and be technically independent and immune from political pressures from all sources. Efforts to strengthen VS and to support them to comply with OIE international standards on quality and evaluation of VS require the active participation and investment on the part of both the public and the private sectors. To assist in this effort, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) have joined forces to develop the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) tool. The PVS tool is designed to assist VS to establish their current level of performance, to identify gaps and weaknesses regarding their ability to comply with OIE international standards, to form a shared vision with stakeholders. (including the private sector) and to establish priorities and carry out strategic initiatives.

In the international trade of animals and animal products, the OIE promotes animal health and public health (as it relates to the prevention and control of zoonoses including food-borne diseases of animal origin) by issuing harmonised sanitary standards for international trade and disease control methods, by working to improve the resources and legal framework of VS and by helping member countries comply with the OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations, and the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The traditional mission of VS has been to protect domestic agriculture. Over time, the majority of its resources were channelled towards the control of diseases that threatened primary production. Services provided began at the national borders and were focused inward. The credibility of these services, in the eyes of its users and of other countries, depended in large measure on the effectiveness of these domestic programmes, and response of VS to emergencies arising from the entry of foreign diseases.

In light of the growing international requirements and opportunities facing each country, it behoves VS to adopt a broader mandate and vision, and provide new services to complement the portfolio of existing services. This will entail stronger alliances and closer cooperation with its stakeholders, trading partners and other countries, national VS counterparts and relevant intergovernmental organisations (Codex Alimentarius Commission, OIE, WTO, etc.).

The WTO Members are also bound by the provisions of the SPS Agreement. The SPS Agreement reaffirms the right of each member country to protect plant, animal and human life or health, but the Agreement requires countries to base these actions on scientific principles. For animal health and zoonoses, the OIE is cited as the reference organisation for standards, guidelines and recommendations covering international trade in animals and animal products. This approach of implementing international standards, guidelines and recommendations developed through the OIE, including standards on quality and evaluation of VS, aims to ensure that international trade is free of discrimination and scientifically unjustified restrictions. All references in this document to WTO SPS obligations apply only to WTO Members. Experience has shown that those countries, the VS of which are viewed as more credible in the eyes of its stakeholders, trading partners and other countries have developed their VS around four fundamental components:

- 1) the **human and financial resources** to attract resources and retain professionals with technical and leadership skills;
- 2) the **technical capability** to address current and new issues based on scientific principles;

- 3) the sustained **interaction with stakeholders** in order to stay on course and carry out relevant joint programmes and services; and
- 4) the ability to **access markets** through compliance with existing standards and the implementation of new disciplines such as the harmonisation of standards, equivalence and zoning.

These four fundamental components comprise the basic structure of the PVS tool.

Applying the PVS tool

To establish the current level of performance, form a shared vision, establish priorities and carry out strategic initiatives, six to eight critical competencies have been elaborated for each of the four fundamental components. For each critical competency, qualitative levels of advancement are described. A higher level of advancement assumes that the VS are complying with the preceding (non 1) levels (i.e. level 3 assumes compliance with level 2 criteria; level 5 assumes compliance with level 4 and preceding criteria; etc.). Additional critical competencies might be added as the field application of the PVS tool progresses.

For each critical competency a list of suggested indicators will be used by the assessors. In addition, an OIE Manual, including relevant information and procedures, will be provided.

In addition to the qualitative levels, provision has been made in each critical competency to expand upon or clarify responses, if so desired.

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Using the results

More than a diagnostic instrument, the PVS tool promotes a culture of raising awareness and continual improvement, which can be used either passively or actively depending on the level of interest, priorities and commitment of the VS and its stakeholders. In the passive mode, the PVS tool helps to raise awareness and improve the understanding of all sectors including other administrations regarding the fundamental components and critical competencies VS must have in order to function effectively. The tool helps establish a shared vision, foster dialogue and provide a common language for exploring different viewpoints.

The active mode is where the maximum outcomes are realised but this mode requires a sustained commitment on the part of both the public and private sectors, that is, all relevant stakeholders. In this mode, performance is assessed, differences are explored and priorities are established. This mode is where strategic actions are outlined, investments are evaluated and agreed to, and commitments made and implemented. Continuity of this process requires a true partnership between the public and the private sectors. Leadership on the part of the public sector is a fundamental and critical determinant of success.

The provisions of two important chapters in the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* help to clarify the criteria for advancement described in the critical competencies of this tool: Chapter 1.3.3. on the Evaluation of Veterinary Services and Chapter 1.3.4. on the Guidelines for the Evaluation of Veterinary Services. The most important *Terrestrial Code* references are quoted under each critical competency.

In addition, the relevant definitions are contained in Chapter 1.1.1. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The benefits and outcomes of using the PVS tool include:

- An indication of overall performance for each of the four components
- A relative performance rating within each of the critical competencies

- A basis for comparing the performance of the VS with that of other veterinary services in the region or globally, in order to explore areas for cooperation or negotiation
- Identifying differences in the responses of stakeholders in order to arrive at shared points of view
- Fostering a common understanding in order to achieve greater levels of advancement
- Helping to determine the benefits and costs of investing in VS and, when necessary, obtaining assistance from government and financial and technical cooperation agencies
- Providing a basis for establishing a routine monitoring and follow up mechanism on the overall level of performance of the VS over time
- Helping to identify and present justifications and specific needs when applying for national and/or international financial support (loans and/or grants)
- Providing the basis for carrying out a process of verifying compliance with the OIE standards and assessments of VS by external or independent bodies under the guidelines and auspices of the OIE.

Critical competencies according to the four fundamental components

HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Professional and technical competence of the personnel of the Veterinary Services

Continuing education

Technical independence

Stability of policies and programmes

Coordination capability of the sectors and institutions of the Veterinary Services

Funding

Contingency funding

Capability to invest and develop

TECHNICAL AUTHORITY AND CAPABILITY

Laboratory disease diagnosis

Risk analysis

Quarantine and border security

Epidemiological surveillance

Early detection and emergency response

Emerging issues

Technical innovation

Veterinary medicines and veterinary biologicals

INTERACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Communication

Consultation with stakeholders

Official representation

Accreditation/Authorisation/Delegation

Veterinary Statutory Body

Implementation of joint programmes

ACCESS TO MARKETS

Preparation of legislation and regulations, and implementation of regulations

Stakeholder compliance with legislation and regulations

International harmonisation

International certification

Equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements

Traceability

Transparency

Zoning

Compartmentalisation