Regional meeting to handover the coordination of the animal health networks of Western and Central Africa (RESEPI/RESOLAB) to regional coordinators

12 to 14 November 2013

Regional Animal Health Centre in Bamako (Mali)

Since 2005, FAO - ECTAD Regional Unit for West Africa and Central based in Bamako has been providing support on the prevention and control of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and other transboundary animal diseases (TADs), including building capacities in preparedness, early warning, response and monitoring of veterinary services to countries in the region. FAO ECTAD Bamako Unit assistance has been instrumental to strengthen veterinary services capacities through organization of training activities (epidemiologists and laboratory experts, on-site trainings etc.), provision of epidemiological and laboratory equipment and reagents, the support of regional experts to participate in international conferences, the organization of regional annual coordination meetings, and the improvement of information sharing, etc.

These activities were mainly carried out through regional networks from which the most active to date are the laboratory network (RESOLAB) and the epidemiological surveillance network (RESEPI). Finally, they are fostering technical collaboration between the epidemiological surveillance networks and the laboratory networks, including regional support laboratories (RSLs). It is now admitted that both networks gather animal health experts that contribute effectively to the preparation and the implementation of regional control strategies for major animal diseases (HPAI, PPR, PPA, rabies, FMD, etc.) in the region.

FAO/ECTAD Bamako has been coordinating the two networks since their inception by establishing a multidisciplinary platform and a functional framework which has been taken an active stance in the prevention and control of TADs in West and Central Africa. For instance, the FAO/ECTAD website (www.fao-ectad-bamako.org) is an interactive and user-friendly tool that provides visitors with key information.

Despite these achievements, challenges for the prevention and control of TADs are still countless, including an effective and collective ownership of the networks by Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to which they belong, namely ECOWAS for West Africa and ECCAS for Central Africa. This ownership relies on the capacity of RESOLAB/RESEPI members to take over the coordination of the networks and the anchorage of these networks within the RECs.

1 RESOLAB/RESEPI networks are composed of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Bissau Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tomé et Principe, The Gambia, Togo

2 Almost 1.2 million visitors to date
In SADC area, such anchorage has helped to achieve results such as (1) the development of a sub-regional strategy for the control of PPR, (2) the adoption of a common protocol for monitoring post vaccination against FMD, (3) the ongoing development of a sub-regional strategy against rabies and Rift Valley fever.

An evaluation carried out in 2008 by the ALIVE platform confirmed the aforementioned challenges. Furthermore, GF-TADs Africa supports the endorsement of the networks by the RECs and the promotion and strengthening of thematic groups. In this regards, the RESOLAB established five disease-centered sub networks (e.g. PR, rage, ASF, CBPP and FMD) and two working groups on Quality Assurance and sustainability.

Also, the technical meeting on the institutionalization of sub-Saharan Africa regional support laboratories that are already operational within their respective laboratory networks has simultaneously recommended their anchorage within the RECs.

In 2012, ECOWAS took the decision whereby the Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) of Bamako becomes its specialized institution on animal health issues. This major institutional change opens up not only a favorable institutional context which offers the opportunity to capitalize achievements within the ECOWAS, but also offers the opportunity to implement a similar approach within the ECCAS.

On these bases, the latest RESEPI and RESOLAB coordination workshops held respectively from 10 to 13 September 2012 in Accra and from 3 to 7 December 2012 in Dakar agreed on the need to speed up the transfer of coordination of the networks to member states and strengthen their functioning. The main conclusions of these two meetings include:

- The establishment of two RESOLAB/RESEPI network for each REC (RESOLAB/RESEPI West Africa and RESOLAB/RESEPI Central Africa) in order to facilitate their institutional anchorage within ECOWAS and ECCAS;
- The appointment of regional coordinators for each network.

Therefore, the upcoming handover meeting is a concrete follow up of the recommendation formulated by RESOLAB/RESEPI member countries to put in practice the transmission of the coordination of the networks to the appointed coordinators.

Objective of the meeting

The workshop aims at identifying and implementing institutional and operational arrangements modalities for the handover of the coordination of the networks (including the activities of the sub-networks) to countries in line with the conclusions of the Accra and Dakar meetings. It is expected that the outcomes of the workshop will be presented at the next annual RESEPI/RESOLAB coordination meetings of West Africa and Central Africa.

Expected results

- The architecture (purpose and type of sub-networks) of the RESOLAB/RESEPI networks and interfaces for collaboration between RESEPI and RESOLAB networks are approved for each sub region
- Chains of commands and decision-making bodies are defined
- Terms of reference of RESOLAB and RESEPI coordinators are approved
- Roles of the partners are specified
- A RESOLAB/RESEPI networks meeting scheduling is adopted for each sub-region
- A multi-year RESOLAB/RESEPI networks action plan (activities, outcomes, completion dates and intermediate budget) is developed for each sub region;
- A roadmap for the recognition of RESOLAB/RESEPI by the competent authority of each RESEPI/RESOLAB member is developed;
- The procedures for appointing regional support laboratories in ECCAS region are explored

**Work Methodology**

- Presentations
- Plenary discussion
- Working groups

**Participants**

1) RESEPI/RESOLAB Networks (8 participants)

- RESOLAB and RESEPI Coordinators/West Africa: 4 participants
  - RESOLAB-WA: Drs Joseph Awuni (Ghana) and Mamadou Niang (Mali)
  - RESEPI-WA: Drs Dooshima Kwange (Nigeria) and Baba Sall (Senegal)

- RESOLAB and RESEPI Coordinators/Central Africa: 4 participants
  - RESOLAB-CA: Prof. Idriss Al Faroukh (Chad) and Dr Morgan Bignoumba (Gabon)
  - RESEPI-AC: Drs Frank Bruno (Gabon) and Amadou Nchare (Cameroon)

2) FAO (6 participants)

- ECTAD Bamako: 3
- FAO HQ: 1
- SFC: 1
- SFW/RAF: 1

3) OIE - Regional Office Bamako (2 participants)

4) AU/IBAR focal points at ECOWAS and ECCAS (2 participants, 1 of each sub region)

5) ECOWAS + WAEMU (2 participants)
6) ECCAS + CEBEVHIRA (2 participants)

7) APHIS / USDA - Regional Office in Dakar (2 participants)

8) Regional Support Laboratories – RSL - (2 participants, one representative from each RSL)

9) One animal expert from Interstate Veterinary School in Dakar – 1 participant

Total: 27 participants

Dates and Venue

From 12 to 14 November 2013 at the Regional Animal Health Centre in Bamako (Mali)

Working Papers

• Reports of the RESEPI/RESOLAB annual coordination meetings in 2012

• RESOLAB/RESEPI annual Work Plans for 2013

• Draft of terms of reference of RESOLAB/RESEPI coordinators

• Organization chart of animal health networks in Eastern and Southern Africa

• ECOWAS statement on the RAHC in Bamako

• Final Communiqué of the second coordination meeting of the FAO/IDENTIFY project in the Congo Basin, Douala, June 2012

• FAO concept note on the institutionalization of regional support laboratories

• Final Communiqué of the meeting on the institutionalization of the regional support laboratories, Addis Ababa, July 2012

• GF-TADs Africa - elements of the Action Plan in 2013

• Evaluation report of the epidemiological and laboratories surveillance networks by ALIVE

• Documents on H7N9 (for information)