



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION

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COMMUNICATION FROM OIE

(REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELEVANT TO CODEX WORK)¹

1. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) thanks the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) for the invitation to participate in meetings of its Commission, Committees and expert groups during the past year and appreciates the opportunity for collaboration in the development of Codex standards and prevention of gaps, overlaps or potential contradictions in adopted standards.
2. The relationship between the OIE and the CAC is particularly important because risks to human health and food safety may arise at the farm or at any subsequent stage in the food production continuum. Therefore, risk management must be tailored to detect and address risks at the appropriate stage(s). For food safety and international trade, the standard setting activities of the OIE and the CAC are thus interdependent and complementary.
3. In the past year, OIE representatives have attended the following Codex meetings:
 - CAC 34th Session (July 2011);
 - CCFH Physical Working Group, Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella spiralis* and *Cysticercus bovis* (July, 2011);
 - 19th Session Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (October, 2011);
 - 43rd Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (December 2011);
 - Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding (February 2012);
 - electronic Working Group on Animal Feeding (2012);
 - 27th Session Codex Committee on General Principles (April, 2012);
 - 20th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food (May 2012).
4. In 2002, the OIE established the Animal Production Food Safety (APFS) Working Group with the view to improving the coordination and harmonisation of standard setting activities of OIE and CAC. The Secretary and, on an observer basis, the Chair of CAC, regularly attend the annual meeting of the APFS Working Group. Through this mechanism and through participation in each other's standard setting procedures, the OIE and CAC collaborate closely in the development of standards relevant to the whole

¹ This document has been prepared by and under the responsibility of the OIE.

food production continuum, taking care to avoid gaps, duplications and contradictions. OIE Members strongly support this collaboration.

Harmonisation of OIE and CAC approaches to standard setting in the food production continuum

5. At the 34th Session of the CAC (2011), the OIE Director General spoke about the desirability of further strengthening the relationship between the OIE and the CAC, including through the proposed joint development of standards on relevant topics, such as traceability, antimicrobial resistance, salmonellosis and certification of products of animal origin.
6. This matter was considered at the 25th, 26th and 27th Sessions of the Codex Committee on General Principles (CCGP). According to the outcomes of the consultations with at the 27th session of CCGP (April 2012), the OIE withdrew the original proposal regarding 'joint standards' and made a new proposal on means to further harmonise approaches to standard setting.
7. The CCGP agreed to establish an electronic working group (eWG), possibly to be chaired by Canada, to propose guidance for the OIE and CAC on making consistent cross references to standards and guidance of both organisations. The OIE offered to participate in the eWG and to host a meeting that might take place prior to the 28th session of CCGP (April 2014).

Collaboration

8. In addition to collaboration at the international level the OIE is taking steps to support collaboration at the national level, consistent with discussions within the SPS Committee. The list of OIE Permanent Delegates is available at: <http://www.oie.int/en/about-us/our-members/delegates/>
9. The OIE collaborated with the FAO and WHO in the production of the 'FAO-OIE-WHO Tripartite Concept Note', which was validated by the Directors General of these organisations and announced at the 7th International Ministerial Conference on 'Animal and Pandemic Influenza: The Way Forward' in Hanoi (April 2010). This document sets the strategic direction for FAO, OIE and WHO within a long term framework for international collaboration aimed at coordinating global activities to address health risks at the human-animal-ecosystem interfaces, including zoonotic diseases – see: http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Current_Scientific_Issues/docs/pdf/FINAL_CONCEPT_NOTE_Hanoi.pdf
10. This Tripartite Concept Note also establishes a complementary agenda with new synergies between FAO, OIE and WHO, which will include normative work, public communications, pathogen detection, risk assessment and management, technical capacity building and research development. The three organisations convened a High Level Technical Meeting to Address Health Risks at the Human-Animal-Ecosystems Interfaces (15-17 November 2011, Mexico City, Mexico). Among others, strong governance structures and aligned legal frameworks, including support to good governance quality standards (IHR, PVS and Codex) was identified as a key element necessary for effective inter-sectoral collaboration, and antimicrobial resistance one of the key issues to be addressed through such collaboration. A preliminary summary of the meeting is available at: http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Media_Center/docs/pdf/HLTm_post_meeting_summary_2_page_v11.pdf

During the FAO – OIE - WHO Tripartite meeting held at OIE Headquarters in Paris on 1-2 February 2012, FAO and WHO encouraged the OIE to invite OIE Member Countries to designate INFOSAN Focal Points from their Veterinary Services. The Tripartite recommended that the OIE invite WHO and FAO to nominate food safety experts from FAO and WHO Headquarters to participate at OIE regional seminars for national focal points on animal production food safety; and to invite OIE focal points to participate in INFOSAN activities.

Private standards

11. The OIE has continued working on the issue of private standards in international trade, with the objective of encouraging global private standard setting organisations (PSSOs) to respect the standards

the official sanitary standards of the OIE and the CAC, as the WTO reference organisations for animal health and food safety respectively, under the SPS Agreement.

12. The OIE has taken steps to establish closer relationships with relevant global PSSOs, specifically with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) and with GlobalG.A.P. The OIE objective is to establish mechanisms for collaboration with PSSOs to encourage these bodies to harmonise their approaches with the official standards for animal health and food safety.
13. Important progress was made with GFSI in 2011, when the OIE signed an official agreement, with GFSI and the Director General of the OIE was appointed to the GFSI Council, which advises the GFSI Board.
14. In 2011 the OIE and GlobalG.A.P. made an official exchange of letters setting out the future cooperation between the two organisations.
15. In May 2011, the OIE signed an official agreement with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
16. The OIE will continue to maintain a dialogue with the relevant global PSSOs to ensure they understand and respect the role of the international standard setting organisations for the mutual benefit of organisations and consumers. In addition, the OIE will continue to collaborate with the SPS Committee and the CAC on this issue.

OIE work programme on animal production food safety

17. The OIE Animal Production Food Safety (APFS) Working Group functions as a steering committee for the OIE's work programme on standards to protect consumers from food-borne hazards arising at the production phase of the food chain. Current and former high level officials of the FAO, WHO and Codex are members of the Working Group. The Working Group held its 11th meeting in November 2011. The report of this meeting is available on the OIE website at: http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Food_Safety/docs/pdf/A_Final_Working_Group_Report_November_2011.pdf
18. At the OIE 80th General Session in May 2012, the World Assembly of Delegates unanimously adopted Resolution No. 21 on APFS work priorities of the OIE (<http://www.oie.int/en/about-us/key-texts/resolutions-and-recommendations/resolutions-adopted-by-the-oie-international-committee/>).
19. In 2009, the APFS Working Group recommended the revision of Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code) chapters on *Trichinella* infection and echinococcosis/hydatidosis and the development of a new chapter on porcine cysticercosis. These 3 OIE listed diseases are significant to public health and the application of control measures at the on-farm level can help prevent food borne illness in humans.
20. In 2010, the OIE convened an expert *ad hoc* Group on Zoonotic Parasites, which included participation from the WHO, FAO and Codex. At its first meeting, the Group updated the Terrestrial Code Chapter 8.13. Trichinellosis. The revised text included recommendations for the safe importation of fresh meat or meat products of domestic and wild pigs and domestic equines.
21. The *ad hoc* Group held its second meeting in September 2011 and will hold a 3rd meeting in July 2012. The OIE hopes to adopt the revised chapter in May 2013.
22. The parallel work currently underway by the OIE and the CAC on trichinellosis has provided an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and coordination. The co-chairs of the Codex Working Group on *Trichinella* in meat were invited, in an observer capacity, to the next meeting of the OIE *ad hoc* Group. An OIE representative attended the Codex Physical Working Group meeting held in Ireland, in July 2011, to develop 'Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella spiralis* and *Cysticercus bovis*', and is a member of the relevant Codex eWG.

23. The ad hoc Group on Zoonotic Parasites also proposed a number of revisions to Chapter 8.4. Infection with *E. granulosus* and a proposed new chapter on *E. multilocularis*. These zoonotic parasites are associated with general hygiene practices, not specifically with food, but the transmission of infection to humans can be prevented and controlled at by measures implemented at the on-farm level.
24. In 2011, the OIE continued to refine a standard on hygiene and biosecurity practices in poultry farms to prevent food borne illness in humans. The revised Chapter 6.4. Biosecurity Procedures in Poultry was adopted by the OIE World Assembly of Delegates at the 79th General Session in May, 2011. (http://www.oie.int/index.php?id=169&L=0&htmfile=chapitre_1.6.4.htm).
25. The OIE noted that the Guidelines for the Control of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* spp. in Chicken Meat were adopted at the 34th Session of CAC, and wishes to acknowledge the effective collaboration, which has resulted in harmonised OIE and Codex standards on salmonellosis in poultry.
26. With respect to the prioritisation of future standard setting for bacterial diseases, the OIE is reviewing the scientific literature on *Salmonella* spp. in food producing animals other than poultry and on verotoxigenic *E. coli* (VTEC) in food-producing animals, with the objective of determining the usefulness and feasibility of developing OIE advice on the control of these pathogens in the production phase to prevent foodborne illness. The CAC will be kept informed of progress on this file.
27. In the important field of biotechnology, an OIE ad hoc Group has been actively reviewing a number of chapters in the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals. It proposed splitting Chapter 1.1.7. 'Biotechnology in the diagnosis of infectious diseases and vaccine development' into two chapters, one on new and emerging diagnostic technologies and one on vaccines. To this end, Chapter 1.1.7a. 'The application of biotechnology to the development of veterinary vaccines' was adopted by the OIE World Assembly in May 2010. A new chapter 1.1.7. 'Biotechnology in the diagnosis of infectious diseases' was adopted in May 2012. Chapter 1.1.8. 'Principles of veterinary vaccine production' will be revised to include information on benefit–risk assessment of veterinary vaccines, including biotechnology-derived vaccines and a specific section on safety.
28. The OIE participated as an observer to the Codex ad hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance and will actively participate in the follow up of the work in collaboration with WHO and FAO, in accordance with the mandate of each organisation. The OIE has convened a new ad hoc Group on Antimicrobial Resistance with the participation of WHO and FAO to update the existing chapters in the OIE Terrestrial Code and Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines in Terrestrial Animals related to antimicrobial resistance. The chapter on Risk Assessment arising from the use of antimicrobials in animals was updated, with the participation of the Codex secretariat to ensure consistency with the most recent work done by CAC. The updating of the OIE list of important veterinary antimicrobials, which is published on the OIE Website, will be undertaken in 2012.
29. On 7 April 2011 (World Health Day) the OIE Director General participated in the WHO High Level Panel on Antimicrobial Resistance, to express OIE's commitment to combating antimicrobial resistance. Following this event, the OIE has further strengthened its collaboration with WHO and FAO and the subject is now one of the priorities of the tripartite actions.
30. The OIE's scientific work is supported by its worldwide network of 265 OIE Reference Centres. In the area of veterinary medicinal products, the OIE collaborates with four Reference Centres. For contact details refer to: <http://www.oie.int/en/our-scientific-expertise/collaborating-centres/introduction/>
31. The OIE continued to actively assist Member Countries to build and implement effective legislation to assure the quality, safety and efficiency of veterinary medicinal products. The OIE is an associated Member of the VICH (International Co-operation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products) and is actively promoting the need for harmonisation in the approval and registration process for veterinary medicinal products and has implemented a programme for capacity building to enhance awareness and to improve the governance related to veterinary medicinal products covering registration, importation production, distribution, use and control methods adapted to the needs of Member Countries.

New OIE standards on antimicrobial resistance in the context of aquatic animals and their products

32. In 2009, the mandate of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission was expanded to address animal production food safety. Currently, the Commission is engaged in the development of chapters for the Aquatic Animal Health Code (*Aquatic Code*) on antimicrobial resistance. In 2011, the World Assembly of Delegates adopted Chapter 6.3 in the Aquatic Code (Aquatic Code) ‘Principles for responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals’ -see http://www.oie.int/index.php?id=171&L=0&htmfile=chapitre_1.6.3.htm. This chapter provides guidance with the aim of protecting both animal and human health.
33. In May 2012, the World Assembly of Delegates adopted two new Chapters in the Aquatic Code, Chapter 6.4. ‘Monitoring of the quantities and usage patterns of antimicrobial agents used in aquatic animals’ and Chapter 6.5. ‘Development and harmonisation of national antimicrobial resistance surveillance and monitoring programmes for aquatic animals’.

CAC Guidelines for National Food Control Systems

34. The OIE follows, with interest, the CAC’s work on Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems, under the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) and will attend the next meeting of the Codex physical Working Group (July 2012, Grange, Ireland).
35. The OIE standards provide the legal basis for the quality of veterinary services and aquatic animal health services, and these address animal production food safety and related activities, including the legislative framework. OIE Members and donors have strongly supported the OIE PVS Pathway, a global initiative to strengthen veterinary services and aquatic animal health services, based on the use of the OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services (OIE PVS Tool). PVS assessment addresses food safety, including veterinary inspection at abattoirs and food processing facilities and the certification of animal products for trade.
36. Given the strong support of OIE Members for the OIE PVS Pathway in the strengthening of national infrastructures, the OIE has appreciated the positive response of CCFICS in taking account of this initiative in its work.

CAC work on Animal Feed

37. The OIE was pleased to attend the Codex ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Animal Feeding in Berne, Switzerland in February 2012 and endorsed the Task Force decision that ‘agents in animal feed which may adversely affect animal health but which have no impact on food safety’ not be considered in the documents under development, being outside the CAC scope. This is consistent with the respective roles and responsibilities of the OIE and Codex. The OIE will continue to contribute to the work of Codex in the area of animal feed.

SPS Capacity Building for OIE Members

The OIE PVS Pathway

38. As part of the OIE global initiative for Good Governance of National Veterinary Services, and at specific Member’s request, the OIE conducts assessments of the quality of Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services using the OIE PVS Tool. Subsequent steps in the PVS Pathway include PVS Gap Analysis, Veterinary Legislation missions and PVS follow up missions, to help improve compliance of the veterinary infrastructure with the OIE quality standards set out in the Terrestrial Code. To date the OIE has received 116 national requests and 109 missions have been completed. Relevant information may be found at: <http://www.oie.int/support-to-oie-members/pvs-pathway/>

39. In the face of increasing global trade, climate change and the emergence and re-emergence of diseases that can rapidly spread across international borders, Veterinary Services need an effective legislative framework to fulfil their key functions. The OIE is aware that in many developing countries the veterinary legislation is inadequate to address the challenges of today and of the future. To address this gap, the OIE World Assembly of Delegates adopted a new chapter in the Terrestrial Code, Chapter 3.4. 'Veterinary legislation'.
40. OIE Members that have received an OIE PVS Evaluation may benefit from a follow-up mission to provide advice and assistance in modernising the national veterinary legislation. To date the OIE has received 36 official requests for missions and 25 have been completed.

National focal points

41. The OIE encourages all Member countries to nominate National Focal Points, under the authority of the OIE Delegate, for seven strategic issues, including animal production food safety and veterinary products. The creation of these OIE National Focal Points aims to improve communication between the OIE, its Members and agencies responsible for food safety, veterinary products and SPS at the national level on these important topics.
42. Specific training for OIE National Focal Points for 178 Member Countries in APFS and veterinary products is underway worldwide, on a region by region basis. To date, APFS Focal Point seminars have been held in all OIE regions of the world (Europe, the Middle East, Africa and South America, and Asia). Training workshops for Focal Points on veterinary products have been held in Europe the Americas, Africa and in the Asia-Pacific. In line with the 'One Health' concept, the WHO has been invited to participate in these training activities and will also be involved in the second cycle of training that is currently underway.