



Controlling foot-and-mouth disease in Eurasia

WORKING FOR livestock farmers in 14 Eurasian countries

WORKING TO control foot-and-mouth disease in the region by 2020

WORKING WITH European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

WORKING THANKS TO funding from the European Commission and the Government of Italy

CONTROLLING FOOT-AND-MOUTH

They call it the ruminant road – a flow of animals along the roads that come out of Pakistan and Afghanistan, heading north towards Central Asia and west all the way to Turkey. The flow moves with great speed. A truck laden with animals for sale from Pakistan stops at a market in Iran, then moves on and within 24 hours, the livestock may be in Turkey, having illegally crossed several international borders. This is the world of informal trade, common in the drylands of Eurasia, and also one of the major contributors to the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. An innovative double-pronged FAO approach is tackling that problem, working both at national and regional level, for progressive control of the disease in the region by 2020, via its *West Eurasia Foot-and-Mouth Disease Roadmap*.

In the first years of their lives, half of the cattle, sheep and goats in large parts of Eurasia will contract foot-and-mouth disease – and many will suffer more than once. Although the disease itself is not necessarily fatal, some animals never recover completely leading to loss of productivity.

Because of the frequency and the speed at which epidemics of foot-and-mouth disease travel along the ruminant road, and the lack of veterinary infrastructure in some areas, FAO is working to support 14 Eurasian countries in developing a common blueprint for foot-and-mouth disease control for the region, providing a portfolio of processes and tools to

assist the countries so they can move ahead together.

Foot-and-mouth disease is the world's most damaging livestock disease in terms of both the number of animals it infects and its impact on national economies. Not only does it threaten the livelihoods of the farmers who own the infected livestock, it also affects a country's ability to trade.

The 14 Eurasian countries participating in the *West Eurasia Foot-and-Mouth Disease Roadmap* are home to over 100 million head of cattle and 200 million small ruminants. Given their current levels of disease, the scale of the challenge is enormous.



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Countries set common goals

The FAO programme, coordinated with the FAO-based European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Commission, began in 2009 by bringing the 14 most affected countries together to discuss how they could collectively reduce disease levels. By coming together, the countries were able to set a common goal – that by 2020 they will have progressed to the stage where foot-and-mouth disease is infrequent and outbreaks can be contained rapidly.

As a starting point, participants used an innovative assessment tool developed by FAO to clarify the level of disease presence and determine the stage of disease control in their countries. Known as the Progressive Control Pathway for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PCP-FMD), the tool enables FAO to help countries to set objectives and to determine actions needed for meeting those objectives and for improving regional communication and confidence.

With a transboundary disease as contagious as foot-and-mouth disease, each country's control programme is at risk from the situation in its neighboring countries and lack of progress in any one area can put the entire region's attempts to control the disease at risk. Thus, FAO meets annually with national veterinary officials where they assess progress, review the efforts of their neighbors, and support those whose unsuccessful efforts threaten to undermine progress.

Vaccination is the first line of control in this region, yet the ability of countries to support vaccination programmes varies. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey have the largest livestock sectors in the region. While Afghanistan and Pakistan only vaccinate five to ten percent of their livestock, Turkey vaccinates over 92 percent.



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Managing progress

The roadmap has stimulated countries to make accurate assessments of their foot-and-mouth disease situations and to factor in the options they have for controlling the disease. With these two initiatives, countries now can compare their activities and progress with other countries, their control programmes have measurable outcomes, and they also have the confidence that there is a common overall vision and objective across the region. FAO holds annual workshops to assess progress along the regional roadmap and determine if it is heading in the right direction, which also helps the countries form a more regional bond.

Although it is too early to see an appreciable reduction in the presence of the disease, the initial impacts of activities are very promising. Control measures have already resulted in early warnings of new epidemics. They also have spurred development of national task forces for monitoring internal progress with improved dialogue and decision-making on management of vaccination campaigns and animal movement risks.

Since FAO introduced the progressive control pathway concept in late 2008, it has become a joint tool of FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) with global applications. Due to the success in West Eurasia, FAO is working with OIE to establish subregional roadmaps in Africa and South Asia. The goal is to achieve a comprehensive set of regional long-term plans which, together, will form the building blocks of a Global Strategy for Foot-and-Mouth Disease Control.



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