

**Conference on Environmental Animal Health Management Initiative
18 -19 September 2013, Manila, Philippines**

Opening Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Warmest greetings on behalf of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

I wish to welcome you all, on behalf of FAO Regional office, to the culmination of our work under the project, Environmental Animal Health Management Initiative for enhanced smallholder production in Southeast Asia or EAHMI for short. Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director-general and the Regional Representative of FAO has asked me to convey his greetings to all of you here today. I am sure that we all have learned a lot from the use of environmental animal health management as an important tool for veterinary services planning and implementation and it is just fitting to share the lessons learned today in this gathering.

At a macro level, growing populations, income gains and urbanization have made livestock one of the fastest growing sub-sectors of agriculture. Past sector expansion in developed countries and more recently in emerging nations, has been impressive and has been associated with a widespread transformation of the livestock sector.

However, as a result of globalisation and climate change the world is currently facing an unprecedented increase of emerging and re-emerging animal diseases and zoonoses (animal diseases transmissible to humans). Environmental conditions have profound influences on animal productivity and production, and the distribution of many endemic animal diseases, especially those transmitted by biological vectors (e.g. insects and snails), and up surge of emerging diseases. As you all are aware, livestock are important in supporting the livelihoods of poor livestock keepers, traders and labourers throughout the developing world. Hence, diseases affecting livestock can have a devastating impact on animal productivity and production, on trade in live animals, meat and other animal products, on human health and, consequently, on the overall process of economic development.

Better understanding and wider appreciation of the diverse interactions between livestock and the environment is, therefore, essential for effective disease control and sustainable development.

It was based from these developments that FAO advocated the use and application of the Environmental Animal Health Management Initiative, first as a country project initiative and for which the expansion to other countries was anchored on.

The FAO project “Environmental Animal Health Management Initiative for Enhanced Smallholder Production in Southeast Asia” (GCP/RAS/244/ITA) is an institutional strengthening and capacity building project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines and Vietnam with funding from the Government of Italy.

Environmental animal health management (EAHM) is a holistic approach to disease control and environmental protection where many interactions between farm animals and the environment are studied and analyzed, mapped, and addressed with unprecedented coordination and collective action. It refers to the theory and practice of assessing, correcting, controlling and preventing those factors that may have adverse effects on the health of animal and human populations, and the wider environment. And this is what the EAHMI project have endeavored to do.

After 8 years of doing EAHM interventions, first in the Philippines in 2006, then expanded to include Cambodia and Lao PDR in 2009-2010 and expanded again in Myanmar and Vietnam in 2011 -2013, this conference aims to showcase what the countries have done in the areas of capacity building, data management and analysis, application of EAHM strategies to animal production and health and networking.

I encourage all stakeholders to share the EAHM best practices on animal production and health, the lessons learned, and discuss what more is needed to fully integrate EAHM into the veterinary services planning and implementation.

May I at this point recognize the cooperation of the participating countries under this project and urge you to continue the EAHM work.

I also greatly acknowledge the contribution of the Government of Italy for supporting an initiative that combines integrated animal disease management, improved animal husbandry and farm management practices, and better use of natural resources, all based on coordinated geographic information. Your support (addressed to Italian Embassy Representative) has truly helped in

defining the emerging field of environmental animal health management. And FAO wishes to continue this collaboration with you as it explores expanding the work throughout the region.

In closing, I thank the Lead Country, Philippines for steadfastly advocating the use of EAHM in the region and for hosting this conference.

I wish you all a successful outcome from this conference.