



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

**eofmd**  
european commission for the  
control of foot-and-mouth disease

VIRTUAL MEETING 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020



Report

99<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE EUFMD COMMISSION

# Report

99<sup>TH</sup> SESSION  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF THE EUFMD COMMISSION

---

# Contents

Summary.....	4
Conclusions and action points.....	5
Item 1 - Opening and Agenda.....	6
Item 2 - Report on actions since the 98 <sup>th</sup> Session .....	6
Item 3 - FAST disease - warning and forecasting.....	7
Item 4 - Emergency Preparedness of Member Countries .....	8
Item 5 - Vaccine Security- progress of the workplans.....	8
Item 6 - Training Quality and partnerships.....	9
Item 7 - Report of the Standing Technical Committee (STC).....	9
Open Session 2020 .....	10
Item 8 - EuFMD and FAO .....	11
Item 9 - Financial Report .....	11

*Please note the Report Appendices is available online and as a separate document on the EuFMD website.*

## Summary

A meeting of the Executive Committee was held online on the 8 April 2020, attended by the three officers and six members of the Executive, Observers, experts from the WRL-FMD and EU-RL, and members of the Secretariat.

Present: Martin Blake, Chairman; Jean-Luc Angot and Lajos Bogнар, Vice-Chairpersons; Hendrik-Jan Roest, Chysoula Dile, Nihat Pakdil, Zoran Atanasov, Valentin Almansa Lara, Olev Kalda; Alf-Eckbert Fuessel, DG-SANTE; Anriy Rozstalnyy, FAO; Neo Mapitse, OIE; Don King, WRL-FMD, Labib-Bakkali Kassimi, EU-RL FMD, and Stephan Zientara, Chair of the Standing Technical Committee (STC). Members of the Secretariat were Keith Sumption, Fabrizio Rosso, Maria DelaPuente Arévalo, Paolo Motta, Marcello Nardi, David Mackay, Cecile Carraz and Nadia Rumich. Additionally, also present AbdulNaci Bulut and Veli Gulaz.

## Conclusions and action points

1. To proceed with the vacancy announcement for the Lead technical Officer (P4), Deputy Secretary position (Action: Secretariat), with the Chairman representing the Commission in short-listing and interviews.
2. An urgent review of the impact of COVID19 upon preparedness for FMD epidemic response in Member Nations (MN) to be conducted (Action: Pillar I team, Secretariat).
3. To proceed with the development of a joint programme of training with the OIE, on risk analysis and international trade (Action: Secretariat).
4. There is a risk of further extension of the outbreaks of RVF and FMD in Libya, particularly to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Should RVF become established in the Mediterranean littoral, the risk of vector spread to EU countries is a possibility particularly in presence of vector abundance. Field studies to understand the risks of RVF establishment are needed and the proposed work with Libya was supported. The need for similar studies in the at-risk countries must be actively considered. (Action: Pillar II team /Secretariat with OIE and FAO sub regional offices).
5. The good progress of discussions with Iran and Iraq was noted. The need to re-inforce and re-invigorate work with Iran and Pakistan is recognized. The interest of GDFC, Turkey, to play a significant role in supporting technical co-operation was welcomed.
6. The need to engage further European countries in the use of EuFMDis for modelling of FAST diseases was agreed. The willingness of Estonia to join the programme was welcomed and the addition of Latvia and Lithuania would greatly assist with modelling cross-border spread in this region. (Action: Pillar I team, in close co-ordination with Olev Kalda).
7. The progress to deliver a greater proportion of field activities as virtual workshops and training was applauded as a way to maintain close contact and progress despite travel restrictions. The potential for greater use of virtual meetings and workshops in the GF-TADS actions at regional level was encouraged. (Action: Pillar III team with OIE and FAO (FMD-WG in GF-TADS)).
8. The plans for the Open Session 2020 were supported, with caution expressed relating to financial commitments at a time of travel restrictions.
9. The progress in discussions with FAO was noted and the administrative change to place the Commission at Division level (AGA) was supported.

## Item 1 - Opening and Agenda

Martin Blake, as Chairperson of the Commission, opened the meeting and welcomed the members, Observers, technical experts and Secretariat. He thanked Dr Roest for the efforts he had made to arrange hosting the Session in The Netherlands and expressed a wish to return to take up the offer at another opportunity. The Agenda (**Appendix 1**) was agreed and the following additional items were added to the discussions and taken first.

- Recruitment of Animal Health Officer (Lead Technical Officer for Phase V programme and Deputy Secretary). It was agreed to proceed with the vacancy announcement and as per past procedures, the TORs would be agreed with the Chair, who would also be invited to participate in the interviews in order to represent the view of the Commission on the selection.
- COVID19 and impact upon capacity to manage FAST disease incursions to the Member Nations. Given the multiplicity of ways in which critical resources, human and material, are affected by lockdowns and demand for COVID19 laboratory testing, concerns were discussed. It was agreed there is an urgent need to identify where vulnerabilities may exist or develop in management of FMD incursion. It was agreed the EuFMD should seek opinions from MN on this and, in relation to diagnostic requirements, review the current diagnostic bank for the Balkans and how this model might be adapted for the needs of the wider MN at risk.
- Joint Training Programmes with the OIE on Risk and International Trade. The Executive Secretary briefed the Executive on discussions with the OIE to extend the training provide on safe trade and containment zones. Agreement was given to continue the joint development with a view to having course contents to establish the OIE training portal and act as baseline for tutored courses offered by EuFMD and OIE on joint basis.

## Item 2 - Report on actions since the 98<sup>th</sup> Session

The Executive Secretary provided the report (**Appendix 2**), indicating how the last quarter of 2019 was occupied with the closure of Phase IV and the initial needs assessments, risk assessment frameworks and planning for Phase V programme, with the implementation of field activities and missions from the first quarter of 2020. These had initiated well but were overtaken by COVID19 movement restrictions, with almost all missions ceasing after mid-February. After this point, when evident postponement would delay needed action, the team had re-organized the programme to arrange delivery by virtual workshops and online training, in all three Pillars. This had necessitated internal re-organization, team training and development of new tools and approaches, which were applied from mid-March across the programme, and would be covered in Items to follow. He summarized follow-up actions to the 98<sup>th</sup> Session and discussion on a few of these ensued.

In relation to the action point on PPR (supporting surveillance for official disease free status), Dr Mapitse (OIE) indicated how the GF-TADs management committee would be meeting to discuss the general issue of working relations between work of Secretariats, in order to encourage such practical use of synergies and common interests.

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the report and applauded the transition of the programme to a fully online set of actions without significant loss of momentum or support to the MN.

### Item 3 - FAST disease - warning and forecasting

The Deputy and Pillar II Manager, Dr Rosso, presented the FAST disease risk situation (**Appendix 3**), after first highlighting progress in the components of FAST disease risk analysis, and risk management (surveillance and vaccination programmes) in REMESA and SEEN (South-East European Neighbourhood) countries. A system had been developed to integrate data from multiple sources, with consideration of the risk pathways and likelihood of entry in order to quantify better levels of FAST disease risk, as a baseline for Phase V and to communicate changes over time. The work is not yet complete but a first quarter report on FAST disease risk will be released soon. In the SEEN countries, good progress has been made with Iran and Iraq on data-sharing to extend the current sharing (four countries), and obtain regular reporting from these. Online meetings with Pakistan, Iran and Turkey will take place later in April to improve the flow of information and samples that are vital to understanding changing risks in the “West Eurasia” ruminant road. A productive meeting was held in North Africa, on strengthening surveillance for detection of FAST diseases. Significant information was shared relevant to understanding changing vaccination use and agreements made on areas to address to achieve confidence in results from passive surveillance in the three countries. A similar workshop was planned for the Middle-East countries in March, but was converted into a virtual workshop spread over a month.

An online survey was undertaken to better understand the risks from bovine ephemeral fever (BEF), using the extensive network of trainees in 21 neighbourhood and West African countries. BEF seasonal dynamics differed markedly between regions but, overall, a surprisingly high level of experience of clinical disease and major gaps in understanding of risks and epidemiology.

Dr Rosso also reported upon follow-up to two major events in Libya of relevance to the region, of RVF and FMD type-A outbreaks. EuFMD had worked closely with FAO (in risk assessment) and the sub-regional offices and with Libyan experts to develop a five-point plan of activities to improve detection of RVF in the coastal area and understand risks of RVF establishment (vector dynamics and suitability). The rapid work on this also assisted with understanding the development and spread of FMD serotype in outbreaks close to Tripoli. In the absence of virus typing and vaccine matching, and with the help of the WRL-FMD a prediction of vaccine suitability based on sampling from putative sources in Sudan and West Africa was made.

#### **Discussion**

Dr Füssel (DG-SANTE) indicated that following the recent outbreaks of FMD, the cleansing and disinfection of boats and trucks that have delivered animals in Northern Africa will be extended to all the Mediterranean countries. Dr Almansa (Spain) appreciated the work and the report and commented upon the export of sheep to Libya and other countries. For Spain, the most important issue is to involve countries in Northern Africa in the risk assessment model. Dr Rosso replied that regular involvement of the countries in workshops and capacity development initiatives is a key way to gather risk information and better inform the risk analysis model. Their engagement is stronger when information proves important and valuable also for these “source countries”.

Dr Pakdil (Turkey) drew attention to the need for more attention to manage the risks associated with FMD in its eastern neighbours, particularly Iran and Pakistan. The risks of other FAST diseases were also not to be forgotten. Dr Rosso indicated how a meeting had been planned in Ankara with Pakistan, Iran and

Turkey for coordination and training, but was affected by COVID19 restrictions and would now be held online later in April. A workshop had also been planned with Pakistan to conduct a training in surveillance and control. Dr Sumption added that Iran indicated their desire for assistance to send samples to the WRL, and that it being more than 20 months since the last shipment.

#### **Item 4 - Emergency Preparedness of Member Countries**

Maria de la Puente, manager for Pillar I, presented progress in the areas of emergency preparedness (**Appendix 4**), with the exception of the vaccine security and research components [covered under Items 5 and 7]. Progress was on track in each of the Components despite the COVID19 impacts on travel. Training on simulation exercises planned for March had been shifted to an online workshop with the advantage that all MN could participate. A novel “simulation environment” system for managing simulation exercises was demonstrated to MN. There was a high interest and it could be offered as a service to assist them deliver a “full experience” exercise without need for them to purchase the system (an additional training and post-training support service offered by EuFMD).

Of the issues reported, the EuFMDis (model) now has ten countries using or in pipeline, but there is a need to speed up engagement and commitment of other countries. Gaps of importance are the eastern EU countries with borders to RF, Ukraine and Belarus, as well as major exporters. In the Balkans, the COVID19 impact on surveillance was being closely monitored but, to date, activities were being maintained. There is some concern over the lack of dispersal of scheduled diagnostics from the vaccine bank were reported as a result of IZSLER (Brescia) being heavily engaged in COVID19 testing. The planned exercises in Balkans would proceed (with delays).

#### **Discussion**

Olev Kalda indicated that Estonia was interested to adopt EuFMDis and considered Lithuania and Latvia might be a group to prioritize for the next phase. He offered support to mediate in this matter. Lajos Bogнар welcomed this and re-iterated the need for the Executive Committee to assist in CVO contacts to encourage other countries to participate.

The suggestion from some MN that EuFMD offer the ASF e-learning course (developed with FAO) through the training credits system. As the provision of ASF training is not included in Phase V it was agreed that should MN provide sufficient funding for national level courses to FAO or EuFMD, there would be no objection. On the access to anonymized TRACES data for the EuFMDis, Alf Füssel indicated that re-organisation in DG-SANTE had occurred and he would ensure a response be made by the responsible Unit.

#### **Item 5 - Vaccine Security- progress of the workplans**

David Mackay and Keith Sumption reported upon the new cluster of actions (**Appendix 5**) to improve preparedness for use of emergency vaccination in MN. The progress was on track with a significant meeting in January held with around 70 participants mainly from global industry stakeholders but also EC, OIE, WHO, EMA and USDA. The participants supported establishment of two working groups, one on the pre-qualification (PQ) process for FAST vaccines and the other on estimating vaccine demand. A PQ technical advisory group, to review the PQ principles, procedures and feasibility issues, will meet every month with an expectation to finalize the proposal for the system by the OS20 (Open Session). A parallel



study on preparedness issues will be taken forward as a survey and report to the OS20. In his report, Dr Mackay summarized that the biggest challenge is to put in place something proportional to the technical complexity and scale of veterinary vaccine procurements, in relation to the WHO scale of resources applied to manage their PQ system. In this regard, the close involvement of OIE in the discussions to develop the system is important since a PQ system is likely to need a combined effort.

#### *Discussion*

Alf Füssel thanked the Commission for the meeting which he considered was very relevant, effective and timely. Hendrik-Jan Roest asked for a follow-up on the AgResults East Africa vaccine challenge and its implications for new vaccines against African FMDV risks, and this was provided by David Mackay.

### **Item 6 - Training Quality and partnerships**

Marcello Nardi, Maria de la Puente and Paolo Motta reviewed the progress (**Appendix 6**) to put in place a training quality management system to better control the quality of each step in the training development, delivery and as a system to capture the impact of training. This system is already being applied in new developments including the Virtual Learning Centre (VLC) for Southern Africa, established with the FAO sub regional office in support of SADC countries. Dr Motta illustrated how the VLC and the virtual platform can assist GF-TADS Regional efforts, providing a means to make Roadmap meetings more effective and he indicated that EuFMD would propose virtual Roadmap meetings for Southern Africa and SAARC (South Asia) to replace physical meetings.

The Chairman recognized the good use being made of the experience developed in e-learning and distance learning to support other areas of work and our partners at this time. Dr Mapitse, for the OIE, took up this theme with an appreciation of the work done together with EuFMD. The OIE was looking forward to maintaining this collaboration in particular in areas of PPP and for GF-TADS Roadmap Meetings, and welcomed the new proposals for 2020-21.

### **Item 7 - Report of the Standing Technical Committee (STC)**

The report was provided by Stephan Zientara, Chairman of the STC (**Appendix 7**). The STC had met twice in this period, and has kept to a schedule of regular meetings. The meetings focused on defining the risk indicators for use in quantifying the impact of Phase V, and on reviewing proposed Applied Research projects. On the second, proposals received had been reviewed and decisions taken on which of these could be immediately supported and for which a call is needed to ensure best value to undertake the work (studies to estimate passive surveillance performance in sheep). Less than 25% of the funds available were committed with 75% reserved for a call for proposals, to be made after the STC had agreed on the priorities, at its next meeting.

Drs Blake and Füssel both highlighted the importance of the research that is funded under the work plan and the modest amount of funds used for significant achievements. The Chair thanked Dr Zientara for his commitment and industry in leading the STC.

## Open Session 2020

Dr Sumption presented the theme and day-by-day plans for the Session, the selection and advantages of the venue and the issues relating to planning a face-to-face (F2F) conference at a time when travel restrictions in October can still be expected. In his view, it was essential that technical meetings relating to managing epidemic viral infections were needed more than ever, as COVID would have impacts and bring new insights and options relevant to the nearest equivalent animal disease, FMD. Cecile Carraz demonstrated how EuFMD were building up experience and tools for virtual conferencing, from e-posters, virtual breakout rooms, and working to use the new advantages of a virtual format (the parts of a session may be held over a longer time frame, e.g. half days). EuFMD has also been in touch with the OIE, offering the chance to utilise the same conference booking. Flexibility is essential and the offer to participants is to guarantee a Session that is a blend (F2F and virtual) or fully virtual. The latter may be driven by circumstances and restrictions placed on travel. The cut-off date to proceed with the F2F event has not been set but will be part of the contract with the venue which is on hold until the authorities in France agree venues may re-open.

### *Discussion*

Dr Blake supported the proposal to proceed with due caution and with care over the financial risks. He was confident the team would find a way to offer a fully virtual conference, if needed, as the recent ones were streamed online.

Dr Füssel asked for clarification on the financial risks and this was provided. Dr Angot appreciated the good choice of venue and with the CVO he is trying to bring representative of Ministers and experts in infectious diseases (prof. Didier Raoult). He suggested under the FAST disease part to include elements that are also One Health related, such as RVF. Dr Roest appreciated the efforts of finding new ways to organize the meetings in particular the move to reduce travel, considering the environmental footprint.

## Item 8 - EuFMD and FAO

The Chairperson briefed the meeting on the exchange of letters with the DG FAO. The FAO response suggested meetings to discuss movement to report at Division level, following the EuFMD proposal to open discussion on administrative movement of EuFMD from the animal health service to a position reporting at Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department level (similar to IPPC and Codex Alimentarius) or to a new Department for Innovation. Dr Blake reported on a positive meeting with Berhe Tekola (Director, AGA) and agreement on the move being implemented, with the expectation that representation of FAO at the Executive Sessions would be at Director level. The Executive Secretary added that since FAO does not yet have a replacement CVO in place after Juan Lubroth's retirement, the change had not been made out of respect for colleagues in AGAH since senior officers had been rotating as acting CVO.

In closing this item, the Chairman reminded of the necessity to come back to the issue of updating the Constitution, for which time had not allowed a discussion at this meeting.

## Item 9 - Financial Report

Dr Sumption briefed the meeting on the financial position of the three Trust Funds (**Appendix 8**) operated by EuFMD. The financial position is sound, although the delay experienced by FAO in sending out the membership contribution requests to MN, is having an impact on the rate that the Administrative Fund returns to a positive balance. It had been overdrawn as a result of its acting as bridging finance for maintaining operations in the interregnum before the 1<sup>st</sup> instalment of funds for the EC Action, Phase V. Current projection is that it will return to a positive balance in July 2020.



[www.fao.org/eufmd.html](http://www.fao.org/eufmd.html)