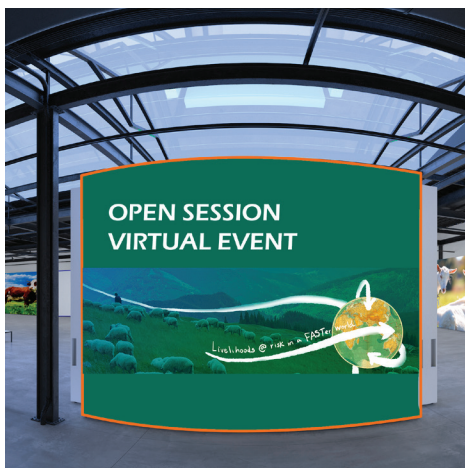




Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



VIRTUAL MEETING 21<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2020



# Report

## EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EUFMD COMMISSION

# Report

## EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EUFMD COMMISSION

---

# Contents

Item 1 - Opening and Agenda .....	6
Item 2 - Report on actions since the 99 <sup>th</sup> Session .....	6
Item 3 - FAO reorganization, EuFMD position and Constitution .....	7
Item 4 – FMD situation – Global and Regional .....	8
Item 5 – FMD activities update from EURL .....	9
Item 6 - First year of programme implementation: achievements, challenges, opportunities .....	10
Item 7 - Priorities and support to GF-TADs FMD Working Group .....	11
Item 8 - Report of the Standing Technical Committee (STC).....	12
Item 9 – General Session 2021 .....	13
Item 10 – Financial and administrative report .....	14
Conclusion .....	14

*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 21 October 2020. The three officers and six members of the Executive Committee, Observers, experts from the WRL-FMD and EU-RL, and members of the Secretariat participated. The meeting was convened online as extraordinary session of the Executive Committee.

Present: Martin Blake, Chairman; Jean-Luc Angot and Lajos Bogнар, Vice-Chairpersons; Hendrik-Jan Roest, Chysoula Dile, Nihat Pakdil, Zoran Atanasov, Valentin Almansa Lara; Alf-Eckbert Füssel, DG-SANTE; 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, David Mackay, Cecile Carraz and Nadia Rumich. Additionally, also present AbdulNaci Bulut. Apologies from Olev Kalda, for technical difficulties in connecting.

## Conclusions and action points

1. To proceed with the vacancy announcement for the Executive Secretary position and assist the President to address the request for additional representative of Executive Committee in the selection board (Action: Secretariat).
2. To follow up from previous recommendations issued at the 99<sup>th</sup> Executive committee meeting identified in (Action: Secretariat).
3. To develop a joint programme of training with the OIE, on risk analysis and international trade.
4. To engage other European countries in the use of EuFMDis to model FAST diseases.
5. To review the current diagnostic bank for the Balkans and how this model might be adapted for the needs of the wider Members at risk.
6. To extend studies on risk for vector-borne diseases.
7. To monitor the evolution of the FMD epidemiological situation in West Eurasia particularly related to Ind-2001e, through technical co-operation with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.
8. To review the constitution and develop the agenda and structure of the GS44. (Action: President, assisted by Secretariat).
9. To further develop the proposal for the establishment of a Standing committee for Pre-Qualification of Vaccines with Terms of Reference, to be discussed at the next Executive committee meeting and proposed at the General Session in April 2021 (Action: Secretariat).
10. To promote and sustain global surveillance through continued sample collection and shipment to WRL (Action: Secretariat and FMD-WG).
11. To proceed with a new call for proposals within the applied research programme focusing on Pillar I priorities (Action: Secretariat).
12. To proceed with the organization of the Open Session 2020 according the approved plan (Action: Secretariat).
13. It was recognized that the current position of EuFMD within FAO enables proper representation of EuFMD to highest level of the hierarchy.

## Item 1 - Opening and Agenda

Martin Blake, as Chairperson of the Commission, opened the meeting and welcomed the members, technical experts and Secretariat. He indicated that the meeting was convened online due to the Covid19 situation and that, according to the FAO rules, the session held in virtual format is considered valid if the report is approved by the quorum. The meeting was proposed as an extraordinary session, while waiting for the chance to hold the 100<sup>th</sup> session face-to-face. The Chairperson acknowledged the work done by the Secretariat during the last semester to adapt the activities to the Covid19 situation, which is challenging for many organizations and requires a change in the business model. He also congratulated Fabrizio Rosso on his official appointment to the position of Deputy Executive Secretary.

Neo Mapitse, on behalf of the OIE, thanked the committee for allowing the OIE to participate, as an observer. He acknowledged the support provided by EuFMD to the FMD working group and indicated the commitment of OIE to continue strengthening relations with EuFMD in order to improve country preparedness in management of FAST diseases. He concluded by congratulating Fabrizio Rosso on his appointment.

The Agenda (**Appendix 1**) was agreed.

## Item 2 - Report on actions since the 99<sup>th</sup> Session

Deputy Executive Secretary Fabrizio Rosso provided the report (**Appendix 2**) of the last semester, indicating both the challenges due to the Covid19 crisis as well as the opportunities to identify new ways to deliver the expected activities. Virtual learning, virtual meetings, and virtual workshops ensured effective communication, continuous training with the involvement of a wider number of participants and some saving of resources. New staff was hired to deliver additional virtual events. The progressive implementation of the Training Quality Management System ensured improved quality and impact of trainings. The increased demand for delivery of v-trainings has been also addressed by the progressive establishment of Virtual Learning Centers in different regions.

The semester was characterized by an increased risk of FAST introduction and spread in Member countries. A survey conducted on the impact of Covid-19 on veterinary service activities, highlighted difficulties in the capacity to respond and to maintain adequate levels of surveillance and early detection in European neighbouring regions. The presence of various FAST outbreaks in European neighbouring countries with limited resources and/or security issues (e.g. PPR- RVF- FMD in Libya, LSD, BEF in Syria, and RVF in Mauritania) is a matter of concern for the threat to neighbouring countries and increased risk for EuFMD Members. The Secretariat is committed to continue the work to forecast changes and reduce risk from the EU neighbourhood.

Priority actions that need to follow-up from previous recommendations issued at the 99<sup>th</sup> Executive committee meeting were identified as: -training on risk analysis and international trade; -EuFMDiS model extension; -Review of the model of diagnostic bank to wider Member needs; -Extended studies on risk for vector-borne diseases.

The covid-19 situation is likely to remain unchanged for the next semester with its challenges and difficulties. There is a need to ensure improved management of the staff with the use of tools and technologies that can overcome the difficulties of working remotely, and facilitate regular monitoring of the programme implementation. Proper support should be ensured to the risk reduction

programme with the opportunity to use the services of national consultants and focal points, and develop tools to assist and inform risk assessors. The capacity to deliver virtual events should be developed further by defining new virtual learning opportunities and the capacity and skills development in the field of preparedness and TADs control should be assisted through the training management system.

### **Item 3 - FAO reorganization, EuFMD position and Constitution**

Keith Sumption presented a summary of the reorganization of FAO, highlighting in particular the establishment of the joint Center FAO-WHO for zoonotic diseases and AMR. It has been created to better promote the One Health programme, as requested by Member States, and will work in close collaboration with the OIE. The new centre is under the direction of the FAO CVO, who is also the lead of the animal health programme. The latter is in the Division for livestock (NSA) and includes EMPRES, ECTAD and support for GfTADs. With the new structure, the importance of animal health has been increasingly recognized and there is the opportunity to highlight that GF-TADs has a bilateral mechanism focusing on veterinary services to improve food security and one health. For ease of reference, the organizational structure of FAO is available <http://www.fao.org/about/org-chart/en/>.

Concerning the position of the EuFMD within the organization, discussed at previous Executive Committees and the possibility for EuFMD to report administratively to the animal production and health division (formerly AGA), the position of the NSA Director is currently vacant. It is covered ad-interim by the CVO and therefore there are no significant changes in the reporting line. The current situation allows for increased representation of EuFMD to highest level of the FAO hierarchy.

Keith Sumption indicated that the Executive Committee could propose an update to the EuFMD constitution, which had been amended in 2015. The amendments should ensure consistency in the text, could consider the new mandate of the EuFMD (hold-FAST strategy) and could be proposed to any part of the constitution: title, preamble (e.g. including other FAST diseases), membership (e.g. allowing other countries to join), obligation for Members (e.g. obligations related to control other diseases), headquarters of the organization, and general functions (e.g. relation with GF-TADs or special technical functions).

According to the current Constitution, the proposed amendments should be circulated to members 120 days ahead of the General Session (April 2021).

With reference to the vacant position of EuFMD Executive Secretary, Keith Sumption reported that the Terms of Reference have been shared with the Executive committee. The position has not been yet advertised due to an administrative issue, but this is expected to be solved in November. The interview panel for this position allows to have one external representative, which is normally the President of the Commission. As the Constitution states that the staff of the Commission is appointed by the Director General of FAO, with the approval of Executive Committee, adding another member of the executive committee to the panel would allow for increased involvement in the selection procedure.

#### *Discussion*

Martin Blake indicated that a small team of Executive committee members could work on proposed amendments to the constitution during the month of November and share them with the Executive Committee, and circulate among Members as required. He agreed to request additional

representation of the Executive Committee in the selection panel for the Executive Secretary position. He asked for guidance by the Secretariat to contact relevant offices in FAO.

#### **Item 4 – FMD situation – Global and Regional**

Don King, from the World Reference Laboratory, reported on the Global and Regional FMD situation (**Appendix 3**). He highlighted that sample submission was very low during 2020, dropping from an average of 400-700 sample from 20-25 countries, to less than 200 samples from five countries. The reduced activities in the field as well as the difficulties in shipment due to Covid19, have severely impacted the sample submission.

The sample batches received showed a high degree of diversity of viruses circulating at country level. Samples from Pakistan showed that lineage O/MESA/Ind-2001e detected for the first time in 2019, is now becoming more established with concerns for possible further spread in West Eurasia. The sample shipment showed also different lineages and sub-lineages co-circulating in the country.

Exchange of sequence data from the SAP Institute (Turkey) highlighted the presence of O/ME-SA/PanAsia-2QOM-15 and O/MESA/PanAsia-2ANT-10 from samples collected in two different regions of Turkey, indicating the possible new incursion from Iran following the previous incursion in 2017.

The situation in South-East Asia mirrors that seen in Pakistan, as Vietnamese samples showed remarkable diversity of lineages of serotype O and A circulating. O/MESA/Ind-2001 lineage as well as different virus lineage O/MESA toptotype with 92% homology with Indian sub-continent strains, was detected in Sri Lanka.

A new probe enrichment method was developed to increase sequencing opportunities of poor quality samples. The method demonstrated increased sensitivity compared to standard sequencing protocol and was tested with environmental samples.

The vaccination risk and vaccine selection options for vaccine banks (Pragmatist) showed that that the priorities for vaccine antigen are largely unchanged from what has been reported previously. The availability of some vaccine antigens from commercial companies was also mentioned, with particular reference to the vaccine antigen A/Eritrea-98 which is no longer supplied by BI and has been substituted by A/SAU-95. Vaccine matching results with African strains showed R values for some viruses which are not very encouraging, even if the heterologous neutralization titers gave increased confidence that the vaccines are suitable for African strains.

The Proficiency Testing Scheme (PTS) supported by EuFMD for the European neighbourhood and other countries, reported a number of countries that have received the shipment and completed the exercise, some in the process of organizing the shipment and others that cannot participate or did not provide a response.

The annual OIE/FAO FMD Laboratory network meeting will be held virtually before the end of the year, and a v-learning training course on FMD diagnostics will be delivered in collaboration between the EuFMD and the WRL in November.

To conclude, Don King mentioned recent FMD events in Libya (Serotype A) with the virus not yet isolated, outbreaks in Ruanda (Serotype SAT2), in Southern Africa countries (Serotype SAT2), in China



(Serotype O) and Russia.

#### *Discussion*

Neo Mapitse, OIE, highlighted the importance of the PTS for countries in the PCP as well for those having the officially FMD-free status. Don King indicated that countries currently not under the PTS scheme funded by EuFMD, and who have interest in participating, could possibly be supported through other modalities. He invited interested countries to communicate with the WRL. Answering Naci Bulut, he said that the risk in West Eurasia is considered high for O/MESA/Ind-2001 as it has been established in Pakistan for some time and, looking at previous patterns, it is likely that the virus could move then to Iran, thus putting Turkey at risk.

Naci Bulut provided additional information on the situation in Turkey, with a reduced outbreaks detected in Anatolia in 2020 up to August, but with reappearance of outbreaks from the second half of August with a new incursion of O/MESA/PanAsia-2ANT-10 in two outbreaks. The vaccine matching results indicated that a match but there is concern for the incursion of new viruses from Iran.

Alf Füssel requested a short summary of all data available for vaccine matching for A/Eritrea-98 and A/SAU-95 and noted that, according to the Pragmatist, the vaccine lineage coverage score of A-Saudi 95 is less than the coverage score of A/ Malaysia97.

Keith Sumption mentioned that the risk of low sample submission and consequent reduced ability to survey the dynamic and spread of different viruses could be perceived as reduced virus circulation and reduced risk. The Roadmap meetings are the proper fora to stimulate regular sample collection and submission to WRL.

### **Item 5 – FMD activities update from EURL**

Labib-Bakkali Kassimi, Anses, presented the activities conducted by the EURL (Anses and Sciensano) (**Appendix 4**). He reported the organization of FMD/SVD Proficiency Tests in 2019 & 2020 for 38 countries of which 31 were supported by EURL and seven by EuFMD. A workshop for the European Reference Laboratories on Foot-and-mouth disease & Vesicular Stomatitis was organized in Maisons-Alfort with 56 participants from 35 countries attending.

Research was conducted on isolation and characterization of FMDV O/EA-3 in Maghreb identifying more than 99% homology with O/EA-3 reported in West African countries. The molecular epidemiology conducted for FMDV O/EA-3 detected in North Africa showed its spread from East Africa to Nigeria, following the Djibouti-Ndjamena highway. The spread followed further the Ndjamena-Dakar highway, reaching Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast and then Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, probably following the transhumance.

The OIE Laboratory Twinning program on capacity building between Sciensano (Belgium) and the National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI) in Nigeria from 2014-2019, showed complex circulation of FMD viruses in cattle in the country with isolation of 5 topotypes of 4 serotypes (O, A, SAT1 and SAT2).

The field validation of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) inactivation protocol was conducted on seven LFDs

inactivated via citric acid, collected in Niger and 12 collected in Burkina Faso.

Concerning the implementation of diagnostic tests, a triplex one-step real time RT-PCR has been developed for the detection of FMDV and it will be provided as a ready-to-use kit. Furthermore, validation tests were conducted for ID-Vet ID-Screen FMD NSP competition ELISA kit.

He further outlined the support provided to the EuFMD for the assessment of capacities of laboratories for the diagnosis of FAST diseases in European neighbouring countries, and the technical assistance for the meeting of North Africa networks RIPEVET & RELBSA held in Morocco, aimed at improving surveillance and early detection of FAST diseases.

### *Discussion*

Fabrizio Rosso mentioned that the inactivation protocol has been submitted to the Special Committee for Biorisk Management (SCBRM) for review concerning the possibility for country verification that the protocol is correctly adopted before shipment of the LFD. This is considered relevant as companies are working on new LFDs and pH-indicator in the LFD can provide evidence of the inactivation process.

Alf Füssel, DG-SANTE, stated the need of organizing provisional services for Member Nations (MN) that cannot handle live virus. Numerous EU MNs have agreements with the Pirbright Institute, (former EU reference laboratory). However, considering that the transitional period connected to Brexit is nearly over, new agreements should be established, and the MS must notify the Commission about the arrangements for services in place. He suggested that the EURL could possibly request this to MNs and the issue can be also raised at the PAFF committee.

Don King concluded by mentioning the need for a follow-up for the situation in Libya, through the assistance of ANSES, IZSLER and EuFMD, to have samples submitted.

## **Item 6 - First year of programme implementation: achievements, challenges, opportunities**

Maria de la Puente, David Mackay, Nick Lyons and Paolo Motta presented the progress made for each Pillar and the next steps for the main activities carried under the three Pillars of the programme. Highlights and issues for the particular attention of the Executive Committee members were presented (**Appendix 5 -6 -7**).

Specific attention was dedicated to the pre-qualification procedure for vaccines against FAST diseases. The technical Advisory Group on Pre-Qualification of Vaccines against FAST diseases (PQTAG) held four meetings and a 'Proposal on the Technical Requirements for Submission and Evaluation of Applications for Pre-qualification' was published for consultation, with broad level of support received. The final proposal will be presented at a workshop in January as part of the Open Session 2020. A Standing committee for pre-qualification has been proposed, with specific tasks to assist the pre-qualification mechanism.

### *Discussion*

David Mackay asked for a specific item to be included in the agenda of the next Executive committee meeting, to discuss the pre-qualification procedures, the technical requirements, the expected achievements, the cost-benefit model and sustainability to guarantee funding cost recovery and ensure adequate procedures to guarantee availability of quality of vaccines.

Keith Sumption acknowledged the work done on pre-qualification, which has obtained significant consensus from stakeholders through a series of consultations. The sustainability of the system is based on the long-term value of having vaccine quality.

It is important to recognize that there is a missing mechanism which should be relevant for FAO and OIE to consider.

A Standing committee for pre-qualification could ensure the system has good guidance. Further discussion should be held at the next Executive committee meeting and at the General Session in April 2021.

Alf Füssel reminded the committee that African Swine Fever (ASF) is not included in the FAST diseases mandate and that, should the EuFMD support ASF or similar trainings, adequate labelling should be used. The Executive Secretary and the Deputy clarified that the EuFMD has been involved in ASF trainings supporting the Gf-TADs Secretariat and FAO office in Budapest (FAO REU). The course was clearly labelled as under the Gf-TADs umbrella and was delivered in different languages with the assistance of EuFMD and with dedicated funding. FAO REU fully funded the costs of the development and delivery of these courses and the role of EuFMD was limited to course adaptation to an online format and the technical support for the delivery.

Considering the request for additional trainings on ASF and other diseases, it was agreed that EuFMD could assist the delivery of additional trainings if there is a guarantee that the activity does not affect the delivery of EuFMD workplan, is supported by dedicated funding and courses are delivered with limited visibility for the EuFMD.

## **Item 7 - Priorities and support to GF-TADs FMD Working Group**

The report (**Appendix 8**) was provided by Neo Mapitse, OIE, co-Chair of the GF-TADs FMD Working Group. He outlined the objectives of the Global FMD Control Strategy and highlighted the priority areas of collaboration for the GF-TADs FMD WG in the past semester as (i) revising and updating the Roadmap Meeting and Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) Meetings format into virtual events, to further assist and guide advancement of countries along the PCP and towards eradication and OIE status recognition; (ii) progress in optimizing the system for reviewing national plans, including the adoption of a document management tool for tracking of country plans and provide feedback and recommendations; (iii) further improve the PCP Toolkit and country support documents.

The areas for strengthening future collaboration and support were then emphasized, including the need to improve the PCP Support Officers (PSO) system for supporting countries especially those in

PCP Stages 0 and 1 and those who are showing interest in PCP progress, and the need for strengthening advocacy of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) initiatives into the national FMD control strategies.

He stressed the importance of developing an evaluation framework of the progress in the implementation of the Global Strategy (GS), since 2012, in order to support the development of a 5-year action plan for the GS implementation. Neo mentioned that an external evaluation is being planned. Furthermore, the FMD WG is also aiming to establish a global coordination committee for FMD control with major regional and global organizations involved, including EuFMD.

The importance of synergy of the GS with other regional control programs was underlined, and will be discussed during the upcoming GF-TADs Global Steering Committee in November 2020.

He then concluded reporting the specific contribution of EuFMD to the activities of the FMD WG, among other the support to (i) the finalization of socioeconomic impact studies guidelines, (ii) risk mapping to improve surveillance and identification of hotspots, (iii) and through WRL, supporting diagnostic services to countries and participation to Proficiency Test Schemes for reference laboratories in FMD virus pools 3-5, and the organization of the OIE-FAO FMD Reference Laboratory Network annual meeting.

#### *Discussion*

Keith Sumption congratulated the group for their work. He indicated that as the Gf-TADs strategy will be discussed at the global steering committee, it is important to reflect on how well the partnerships are working, how other partners can be included and what is the contribution of the private sectors.

### **Item 8 - Report of the Standing Technical Committee (STC)**

Stephan Zientara (Chairperson of the STC) reported on this item (**Appendix 9**). The STC met twice between June and September 2020, and has a schedule of regular meetings (next STC meetings in 2021: 4th of Feb, 28th of Apr, 13th of June, 16th of Sept). The Secretariat reported regularly to the STC on the activities implemented and planned and received STC guidance with particular reference to the OS20 organization, priorities for applied research, priorities and opportunities emerging from COVID19 situation, vaccine pre-qualification system, evaluation of impact of PII workplan, collection and analysis of risk information for risk scoring system.

Stephan presented the programme of the upcoming Open Session 2020, which will be organized virtually. The focus will be on FMD, but risks relevant to similar TADs will be considered. The Open Ceremony will be on the 8<sup>th</sup> December and four key sessions will be held in December: 1- animal mobility for FAST risk mapping, 2- addressing risk change and forecast, 3- vaccine security and critical resources for emergency management, 4- resilience to long-term FAST crises. Five workshops will also be organized and linked with the topics addressed in the four main sessions, with one workshop in December 2020 and four held in January 2021. Stephan provided an update on the status of the organization, reporting over 500 registered participants at the time of the meeting. A dedicated communication campaign is still ongoing for submission of abstracts and registration to the conference. Details of the Conference sessions and Keynotes Speakers identified and confirmed so far, were given, and the virtual conference space planned was shown including virtual rooms dedicated to

the main EuFMD projects, partners, e-posters and info desks.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Call of the EuFMD Fund for Applied Research was discussed. The topic of the call was “to evaluate the performance of surveillance for clinical FMD among small ruminants in European Neighborhood countries (MENA Region, and the SE European Neighborhood)”. Twenty-one applications from 14 countries were received and reviewed by two technical expert panels and three projects funded from Cameroon, Nigeria and Egypt.

A new call will be launched in December 2020 focusing on Pillar I priorities: a) to improve policy support with the objective of identifying control options guaranteeing business continuity b) the identification of guidance criteria on when to implement preventive vaccination against FMD, LSD, SGP and PPR; and Pillar II and Pillar III priority areas:

a) improvement of surveillance systems for FAST disease with a major output being new or adapted tools for managers b) the optimization of environmental sampling with a major output being its application to routine or early detection of FMD in settings like animal markets.

#### *Discussion*

Martin Blake acknowledged the great work done by the Committee.

### **Item 9 – General Session 2021**

Fabrizio Rosso introduced the item indicating that the General Session would be held in spring 2021. Considering the Easter festivities, the possible date for the session is proposed to be towards the end of April. The GS44 will be held in virtual format. The FAO legal department indicated that for sessions held online, there is the possibility to suspend the rules that are in opposition to holding virtual sessions and virtual voting. The 2/3 majority should accept the suspension of rules that are incompatible with the holding of a virtual session. Therefore, such request will be sent to members together with the invitation to the GS44 that should be sent 50 days ahead of the Session.

#### *Discussion*

Keith Sumption mentioned that the background documents and material (including e.g. pre-recorded presentation or short podcasts) could be provided in advance of the Session to allow increased participation and discussions during the Session. He suggested that the Executive Committee members involved in the revision of the Constitution could also indicate the length, structure and agenda of the GS44.

Martin Blake underlined there are challenges in organizing the session virtually and agreed on the opportunity to find solutions to engage and interact more with the participants. He agreed on the proposal to work on the structure and agenda of the GS44.

## Item 10 – Financial and administrative report

Cecile Carraz presented the financial position of the Trust Funds (**Appendix 10**) operated by EuFMD. The position of EuFMD Members contribution report showed received and outstanding contributions. There are savings on salaries for P (professional) staff positions which can be reallocated on consultancy line.

Concerning the financial position related to Phase IV (2015-2019), FAO has received a final balance payment and the Secretariat will proceed with financial closure of the project. Concerning the position for phase V, a contribution for Year 1 was received in advance in 2019 and a request for pre-financing of Year 2 will be issued by the Secretariat in the upcoming weeks.

### Conclusion

Martin Blake congratulated the entire EuFMD team for the organization of the meeting, as well as for the work done in the last six months.

The dates for the next Executive Committee will be agreed upon shortly.



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