



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



European Commission for the Control  
of Foot-and-Mouth disease

**Report**

**Standing  
Technical  
Committee**

of the European  
Commission for  
the control of foot-  
and-mouth disease  
(EuFMD)

15 February 2023  
Online



# The European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease Standing Technical Committee

15 February 2023

Report

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## Acronyms

ARP	Applied Research Programme
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EuFMD	European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease
EuFMDiS	European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Spread model
EURLs	European Union Reference Laboratories
FAR	Fund for Applied Research
FAST	Foot-and-mouth disease And Similar Transboundary animal diseases
FMD	Foot-and-Mouth Disease
GF-TADs	Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
LFD	Lateral Flow Devices
LSD	Lumpy Skin Disease
MN	Member Nations
PPR	Peste des petits Ruminants
RVF	Rift Valley Fever
SEEN	South East European Neighbourhood
STC	Standing Technical Committee
UN	United nations

## General information

The meeting was held online. Stéphan Zientara (SZ), Giancarlo Ferrari (GF), Sten Mortensen (SM), Katharina Staerk (KS), Germán Cáceres Garrido (GCG), Fabrizio Rosso (FR), Nadia Rumich (NR), Melissa McLaws (MML) and Étienne Chevanne (EC) participated in the meeting.

James Wood (JW) sent his apologies.

Stéphan Zientara chaired the meeting, which started at 02:00 p.m. and ended at 05:00 p.m.

## Agenda

Item	Content	Objectives
1	<b>Move FAST – GET prepared strategy</b> <i>02:00 - 03:00 p.m.</i>	To discuss MNs and EC priorities within strategy. To agree on technical items for General Session. To agree on Committees and their composition for next biennium.
2	<b>FAST prioritization</b> <i>03:00 - 03:30 p.m.</i>	To endorse the outcomes of the FAST prioritization exercise.
3	<b>Applied research</b> <i>03:30 - 04:00 p.m.</i>	To discuss the impact of Applied Research Programme (ARP).
4	<b>OS22 and OS24</b> <i>04:00 - 04:20 p.m.</i>	Feedback from OS22 and planning OS24.
5	<b>Next meeting</b> <i>04:20 - 04:30 p.m.</i>	To plan next meeting.

The chairperson, Stéphan Zientara, provided opening remarks and highlighted that this was the first meeting after the Opening Session 22 (OS22) held in Marseille. On 8 March 2023, the Executive Committee will meet and discuss the new strategy (Item 1 of the agenda) for the next four years.

## Item 1: Move FAST – GET prepared strategy

The Deputy Executive Secretary, Fabrizio Rosso, introduced item 1 of the agenda and reported he had met with the EuFMD contact points at the European Commission (DG-SANTE) in December 2022, to discuss the key seven areas that the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease is proposing. Fabrizio Rosso had been told of a potential budget cut and although a final decision has not been made, a 40 per cent reduction was envisaged, bringing the budget from 11 200 000 Euros (for the four-year programme) to 6 500 000 Euros.

The reduction could be linked to a general situation across of all veterinary programmes within Europe, partly related to the Avian Influenza and African Swine fever crisis. Germán Cáceres Garrido further confirmed there is an on-going process to re-prioritize all the veterinary programmes that will imply a budget reduction. In addition, and in relation to the network of the European Union Reference Laboratories (EURLs) for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Stéphan Zientara commented that he had received similar inputs, and the overall budget may not be decreased, but certainly not increased.

Fabrizio Rosso outlined the new strategy, which is based also on the review of the EuFMD Constitution that was approved in December 2022 and, is to be applied in all Member Nations (MNs). He explained the vision and mission of the EuFMD based on the amended constitution and mentioned that the EuFMD has to comply with the United Nations (UN) development goals and with the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) priorities.

The focus of the new strategy is on seven key areas framed into three major topics: prevention, preparedness and control.

Under *prevention*, the key areas/objectives to be improved include: (i) **Risk Monitoring** and (ii) **Risk mitigation** capacities. Specific outputs, and the related activities, are defined in the new strategy in terms of surveillance, early warning, biosecurity at farm level, confidence in disease freedom and bio-risk management.

Under *preparedness*, the key areas/objectives are identified with: (iii) **Capacity Development** and (iv) **Tools and Resources** to sustain capacity to assess the impact of Foot-and-mouth And Similar Transboundary (FAST) animal diseases incursions. The specific outputs (and related activities) contributing to the achievements of these key objectives span from upgrading and enhancing capacities of veterinary laboratories to increasing skills in terms of contingency planning and upgrading response tools for Member Nations (MNs). Fabrizio Rosso highlighted that applied research also falls under this topic and although funding may not come from the European Union (EU), this may be maintained in the strategy.

Finally, under *control*, the key areas/objectives identified include: (v) **Global FMD Control**, (vi) **FAST control** (with the aim of providing also support on cost-benefit analysis for FAST diseases control) and (vii) **Vaccine security** (in this regard, the EuFMD is now in the position to receive the first dossiers and there are six manufacturers who have already expressed interest in this critical area of work). As far as *control* is concerned, the Deputy Executive Secretary mentioned the current criticality in the Middle East due to SAT 2 detection in Jordan and Iraq.

The specific outputs (and related activities) that will contribute to the achievements of these key areas/objectives span from sustaining the effective implementation of the Progressive Control Pathway for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PCP-FMD) to providing tailored assistance to priority FMD endemic settings, and to operationalize the prequalification system for vaccine security.

All the above is well outlined in the documentation provided to the Standing Technical Committee (STC) members prior to the meeting and, as Fabrizio Rosso explained, the new strategy is shifting from a three-pillar approach (geographically oriented) of the previous strategy to a more result-oriented approach while maintaining the flexibility necessary to support priority areas beyond the geographical coverage of the Member Nations.

The Deputy Executive Secretary highlighted the new elements of the strategy in terms of supporting strengthening of passive surveillance systems, improving the diagnostic reserve system and diagnostic

capacity, implementation of bio-risk standard (now compulsory for all Member Nations), investment plans and community of practices for emergency preparedness.

The new strategy will be presented at the next General Session (May 2023) for endorsement.

Stéphan Zientara expressed his appreciation to Fabrizio Rosso for the clear presentation and asked clarification concerning the activities that will be affected by the budget reduction. The Deputy Executive Secretary reiterated that applied research will remain in the strategy and the approach that will be followed, after the General Session endorsement, could be that of developing a work-plan based on the budget available. For the activities not supported by the European Union, other sources of funds will be sought. As an example, there is an on-going discussion with the US Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to possibly support projects on bio-threats issues.

Katharina Staerk asked a clarification regarding the overall budget reduction for the EuFMD. The Deputy Executive Secretary clarified that the budget is made up by 650 000 US dollars per year (as Member Nations contribution) and 11 200 000 US dollars (for the four-year programme) funded by the Commission. This latter component could be reduced by 40 per cent.

Sten Mortensen highlighted that the Member Nations contribution seems not to be a significant part of the overall budget. Fabrizio Rosso clarified that such contribution covers the position of the Executive Secretary staff plus additional key EuFMD positions under the Pillar I activities.

Stéphan Zientara raised concerns with regard to this significant budget cut and asked how activities such vaccine security will be covered. The Deputy Executive Secretary specified that a self-sustainable plan for the PQv system is under development but the system might need support for an additional year before implementing a cost-recovery based mechanisms. This has to be fully discussed within FAO because the mechanism may also work for other diseases as well (i.e. Avian Influenza) and other donors might be interested considering the possible positive impact on FMD control.

As far as applied research is concerned, Katharina Staerk highlighted the importance of this useful part of the activities of the EuFMD, which is not extremely costly but significantly effective, and sought clarification by the EU Commission on exclusion from the budget. Fabrizio Rosso explained that the Commission has a specific department on research which fund research programmes and it is not appropriate to have other projects that support research. Both Katharina Staerk and Stéphan Zientara recalled that this issue has already been raised and the STC had suggested to focus more on “technical development for field studies” rather than applied research.

The Deputy Executive Secretary accepted this terminology and, referring to the issue of the impact of such studies raised by Katharina Staerk, highlighted the importance of bringing all this to the attention of the Member Nations during the next General Session. In this regard, it will be extremely necessary to have the full support of the STC at the upcoming General Session highlighting that the STC was fully involved in following closely the whole issue of field studies both during the selection and implementation stages.

Focusing on the technical items to be proposed at the next General Session, the Deputy Executive Secretary drafted a list of items to be addressed: (i) optimization of surveillance for early detection and confidence of freedom; (ii) FAST horizon scanning (to assess and predict FAST threats for Europe); (iii) capacity development framework (linked with the training management system (TOM) developed by EuFMD); (iv) vaccine security and (v) the Nagoya protocol and its impact on vaccine development and research.

According to Sten Mortensen, an important topic to be discussed seems to be vaccine security (not only for FAST diseases) because of the implications this may have in the EU regulations on their use.

In relation to the proposed technical items for the General Session, Germán Cáceres Garrido raised an issue regarding the merge of passive surveillance with confidence of freedom. He highlighted the importance of passive surveillance and the need of linking it to contingency planning. In addition to that, he expressed the concern that the budget cut may have an impact on these activities and specified that not all Member Nations have the same level of preparedness.

Stéphan Zientara highlighted the relevance of linking passive surveillance with applied research. He mentioned that as per the recent detection of Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (EHDV) in Sicily and

Southern Spain, they had the opportunity to work closely with Tunisia. Having field research programmes already formulated was key to increase preparedness, and having all the tools available allowed a rapid diagnosis and characterization of the agent.

The Deputy Executive Secretary concluded that vaccine security and passive surveillance (and early detection) will be key items to be proposed to the General Session.

The discussion then shifted to the composition of the Committees within EuFMD and Fabrizio Rosso recalled that at the General Session, this topic should be discussed including the composition of the STC. He also proposed to maintain the composition of the vaccine security committee and the one on Bio-risk management as they are now, and asked STC members for their willingness to continue to be part of the STC. A slightly different issue is what concerns the Special Committee on Surveillance and Applied Research (SCSAR). The committee, which is composed of 22 members, should be reduced and renamed to include Risk monitoring in its title and get more engagement of the European Reference laboratories for each of the FAST diseases. In addition, the overall number of members should not exceed 10 to ensure active discussion and support f2f meetings.

Should there be a strong request from a representative of a Member Nation to be part of the committee, the number can be increased.

In relation to the composition of the SCSAR, Katharina Staerk highlighted that the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is a World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) collaborating centre for risk analysis and modelling, and it might be considered as a resource partner to be engaged.

The Deputy Executive Secretary explained that the need for re-shaping the composition of the Committee, and the importance of the endorsement of the STC in this respect, will be mentioned at the SCSAR meeting (23 February 2023).

In relation to the special committees aimed at supporting the work of the EuFMD, Giancarlo Ferrari raised the issue of having two out of four committees (namely SCSAR and PQV), which fall under items of the new strategy that the European Union has already expressed unwillingness to fund, and wondered if that may be an issue. Fabrizio Rosso explained that while this is true there is no prerequisite for specific funding in order for a committee to exist. Concerns the SCSAR, it will be renamed including risk monitoring and technical support in its title. As per the committee on PQV, and because of its responsibility in feeding the prequalification system, the Deputy Executive Secretary suggests the committee to be retained.

## Item 2: FAST prioritization

The Deputy Executive Secretary introduced Item 2 and Melissa McLaws, leading the technical team on this topic, made a presentation.

She explained that the scope of the exercise was dual: (i) to prioritize diseases according to the threat posed to Europe (not inclusive of FMD and Rinderpest) by looking at the specific FAST diseases of concern - Rift Valley Fever (RVF), sheep pox and goat pox, Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), and (ii) by looking at geographical areas. As per the first topic, they used the multi-criteria analysis approach through which six broad categories were identified, with three to five indicators criteria under each category. The criteria were then weighted for their importance, leading to a scoring system to identify priorities. The results were analyzed by taking into account both the score for each specific category and the weighting factors to obtain an overall normalized score for each disease.

The CVOs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Portugal, The Netherlands and Türkiye were involved in the exercise of weighting each category (likelihood of incursion, impact on animal health and production, impact on human health and wellbeing, indirect economic impact, current preparedness in EuFMD Member Nations and stakeholders' perception). The results showed some degree of variability reflecting what the CVOs considered as the most important ones.



The specific disease score against the four diseases of concern was conducted with the assistance of four experts. Melissa McLaws mentioned that whenever scoring criteria were already available from other sources (such as Discontools), these have been used.

Surprisingly, there was a non-negligible level of variability among experts probably due to the different level of expertise on specific diseases.

The overall results showed that RVF came out as the highest priority disease based on the impact on human health and the perceived low level of preparedness. The second most important disease was LSD followed by sheep pox, goat pox and, finally, PPR rated as the least priority. Melissa McLaws asked for suggestions from STC members on the criteria used, recalling that the next step would be to present the results at the 23 February SCSAR meeting and then to the General Session.

Stéphan Zientara commented that, in addition to the diseases already identified, it would be important to remain open to other diseases, such as the epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV), for which the current EU regulations seems to be difficult to be applied and, moreover, there are no vaccine currently available.

Katharina Staerk asked about the consequences of having such diseases listed in terms of priority and whether the EuFMD will not have any activity for those diseases, which ranked as least priority.

According to Fabrizio Rosso, it is difficult to provide a detailed answer as the budget available is still unknown. However, the exercise conducted might suggest that under the key area/objectives there will be a need to focus more on RVF, LSD, sheep pox and goat pox rather than PPR.

In relation to the ranking outlined in the presentation made by Melissa McLaws, the Deputy Executive Secretary highlighted that while for LSD there are several training initiatives already taken, even at regional level, few has been dedicated to sheep pox and goat pox. Contracting additional experts to provide feedback on scoring diseases might reduce this level of variability.

As far as risk from geographical areas is concerned, the tool used looked at regions, rather than at individual countries, and explored interlinkages across regions and with the EuFMD Member Nations. FMD was re-included in this assessment. In order to score the strength of connections across regions (in terms of contacts, imports, geographical proximity, way of connection and livestock density) data sources such as FAOSTAT and EUROSTAT were used.

In terms of scoring risks from the regions considered for Europe, the exercise was conducted through expert elicitation with the support of EU Reference Laboratories. The results showed that the Middle East and the South East European Neighbourhood (SEEN) were to be considered the priority regions followed by Northern Africa.

Melissa McLaws highlighted that RVF, which scored as a top priority disease, is actually not present in the SEEN region and this might require a re-weighting of the different diseases. The results obtained offer a good platform where to frame the new strategy.

The Deputy Executive Secretary suggested that the upcoming SCSAR meeting could also be an opportunity to gather additional opinions and considerations regarding both the diseases and geographical areas to prioritize.

Melissa McLaws highlighted that the establishment of agreed criteria (whether done through the CVOs or a restricted group of experts) is core. Giancarlo Ferrari added that it might also be important to look into the legal framework, should incursions of one of such disease occur, to verify the feasibility of the current regulations.

### Item 3: impact of the Applied Research Programme (ARP)

The topic was presented by Étienne Chevanne. He outlined that the Applied Research Programme (ARP) was first launched back in 2008 to produce tools/knowledge through the implementation of specific small projects that will have practical applications for the benefits of EU Member Nations in their preparedness against FAST diseases. The expected results at the end of phase V are to have 20 peer-reviewed publications with an average impact-score of 7 (on a scale from 0 to 10) assessed by an external technical panel.

The indicators chosen to monitor EuFMD efficacy in supporting the implementation of the applied research took into consideration how quickly EuFMD Secretariat was able to announce the results of the calls (the target was one month after the announcement) and how quickly the Letters of Agreements (LoAs) were signed with the service providers (with the target being within two months after the announcement of the results) in order to start implementation of the funded activities. All the targets were achieved and some criticalities were observed in terms of deliveries from the service providers which, in some cases, were beyond what originally established in the LoAs (it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic may have influenced such achievements). Moreover, the target of having two calls per year was not fully achieved.

Étienne Chevanne showed the full list of applied research themes (10) funded in the last calls between 2018-2022, highlighting that two out of ten were restricted to a specific region (See component 1.4), and that most of the applications were awarded to European countries.

An overview of the overall funds disbursed for applied research showed that, during phase V of the programme, 11 applications were funded under the *global calls* (for an overall amount of 325 000 Euros), seven applications were funded under *regional calls* (for an overall amount of 68 000 Euros). Additional funds were disbursed to: (i) support the implementation of two studies (through regular agreements that EuFMD has with the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and other institutions) and one ad-hoc support provided to the Reference Laboratory Network following the vaccine security meeting (VNT Study), (ii) three Master student internships and (iii) support provided to join the EuFMD open sessions of 2020 and 2022 respectively.

Currently, the activities supported through the Applied Research Programme (ARP) has led to five conference papers produced, three reports, two draft manuscripts under preparation and one publication. It seems that the target of having 20 peer-reviewed publications may not be achieved but projects are still on-going and by adding publications which may come from projects funded at the very end of phase IV, it might be possible to get close to the phase V target.

Étienne Chevanne stated shifts have taken place to fund applied research in order to include diseases other than FMD (specifically RVF and LSD) and highlighted that the call in 2020 was released, for the first time, in English and French (which has facilitated the participation of francophone scientists from Northern and West and Central Africa). The Fund for Applied Research (FAR) mechanism was used as well to support implementation of projects in a specific region such as South Eastern Europe.

In terms of achievements, Étienne Chevanne highlighted the new features in the European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Spread model (EuFMDiS) to support contingency planning in EU Member Nations, the use of inactivated Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) to support surveillance in low-resource settings and studies conducted to assess the performance of environmental sampling to detect FMDV, PPRV, GPPV, GTPV, LSDV and generate sequences.

Currently, the achievements of the ARP are being reviewed with the aim of having a full list of areas and studies funded under the FAR mechanism. As part of this process, on-line surveys might be conducted to explore further use of research outputs by the applicants that were awarded.

The objective of this review is to increase technical material available and advocate the importance of the ARP continuity in phase VI.

Étienne Chevanne concluded his presentation by seeking opinion of the STC on how to continue the ARP with the specific focus on two topics: (i) choice of informative indicators to assess the impact of publications and reports (an external panel was tentatively proposed joined by two STC members and three from the SCSAR);

(ii) how the ARP contributes to build and establish research networks, and how the outcomes of the ARP could be better brought to the attention of risk managers.

The Deputy Executive Secretary highlighted the importance of having such studies reviewed to show the Member Nations the relevance of the results obtained. The criteria for such review should take into consideration three main aspects: (i) relevance, (ii) good value for money and (iii) the transformative nature of the study proposed. In conclusion, Fabrizio Rosso asked the STC chairperson the availability of two members to assist in this exercise. Katharina Staerk and Stéphan Zientara were proposed as STC members to support the EuFMD Secretariat.

#### Item 4: feedback from Open Session 22 and planning for Open Session 2024

The Deputy Executive Secretary introduced Item 4 and highlighted the effectiveness of the format used in Marseille. He presented a few slides with a tentative title (“Horizon scanning – Get prepared and move fast”) for discussion in view of the Open Session 24. In the past the Open Session was a very technical meeting of reference laboratories, throughout the years it has become a much broader event and there might be a need for some discussion on future format of the meeting. The proposed title could include more specific items such as risk forecast and disease spread, change in perception, awareness and communication, new risks and vaccine availability, planning resources to control/eradicate, training needs and modalities. The tentative dates for the Open Session are from 23 to 25 October 2024 and the suggested location is Greece. The agenda may include two days to be dedicated to FMD, one day on FAST diseases (inclusive of workshops as side events) and a closed session of the STC. In the last Open Session, the themes of each session were generic topics under which FMD and other FAST diseases were addressed. For this reason, a need to have more dedicated focus on FMD (day 1 and 2) and to FAST diseases on the day 3 should be considered.

The tentative number of participants might be up to max 250, self-paying with registration fees.

The Deputy Executive Secretary anticipated also that the Marseille format (with two keynote speakers for each session) might be difficult to replicate.

Stéphan Zientara, in relation to the feedback on the Open Session 22, received very good comments from colleagues. There was only one minor issue regarding the poster session which seemed to have been a little constrained in one side of the conference room. It may be worth to have a poster session in a separate area where people might feel more free to have discussion on the topics displayed.

#### Item 5: planning next meeting

The General Session will be held on 4-5 May 2023

Stéphan Zientara proposed as a tentative date for the next STC meeting the end of June.

The meeting closed at 05:00 p.m.



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## EuFMD's programme, tools and initiatives

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### **FAST**

Foot-and-mouth And  
Similar Transboundary  
animal diseases

### **Dt**

EuFMD digital  
transformation

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### **Tom**

EuFMD training  
management system

### **Micro learning**

EuFMD micro learning

### **Vlearning**

EuFMD virtual learning

### **SimExOn**

Simulation exercises  
online

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### **Get prepared**

Emergency preparedness toolbox

### **Risk Comms**

EuFMD risk communications

### **RMT-FAST**

Risk monitoring tool for foot-and-mouth  
and similar transboundary animal diseases

### **Pragmatist**

Prioritization of antigen management  
with international surveillance tool

### **EuFMDiS**

European foot-and-mouth disease  
spread model

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### **Vademos**

FMD vaccine demand  
estimation model

### **GVS**

Global vaccine  
security

### **PQv**

Vaccine  
prequalification

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### **PCP**

Progressive control  
pathway

### **PSO**

Pcp practitioner  
officers

### **PPP**

Public private  
partnership

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# PROTECT RESPOND CONTROL

## MOVE FAST

FAST, Foot-mouth  
And Similar Transboundary  
animal diseases.

## EuFMD Committees

Executive Committee, Standing Technical  
Committee (STC), Special Committee for  
Surveillance and Applied Research (SCSAR),  
Special Committee on Biorisk Management  
(SCBRM), Tripartite Groups.

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