



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



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

102nd

Report

**Executive
Committee**

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

28 September 2023
Online



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the European Union



FAO four betters. Better life, better environment, better nutrition, better production.

EuFMD's programme, tools and initiatives

FAST

Foot-and-mouth And Similar Transboundary animal diseases

Dt

EuFMD digital transformation

Tom

EuFMD training management system

Microlearning

EuFMD micro learning

Vlearning

EuFMD virtual learning

SimExOn

Simulation exercises online

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

Vademos

FMD vaccine demand estimation model

GVS

Global vaccine security

PQv

Vaccine prequalification

PCP

Progressive control pathway

PSO

Pcp practitioner officers

PPP

Public private partnership

Report

102nd MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EuFMD COMMISSION

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Conclusions

1. The Executive Committee endorsed this report of the activities of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD) and expressed their appreciation for the level of achievement and successful completion of all the activities highlighted.
2. Insights will be gained from the evaluation of the Phase V work programme which would be helpful in the design and implementation of the work programme for the Phase VI grant agreement (2023–2027).
3. Field collection and international shipment of specimens for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) virus typing has become more costly and logistically difficult in recent years, reducing the number of submissions to reference laboratories.
4. The recent SAT1 incursion into Qatar highlights the need for further information on links between the horn of Africa and the Near East, on the current FMD situation and the viruses in circulation in the Arabian Peninsula, and on the utility of SAT1 vaccines.
5. Pillar I of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme improved the preparedness of Member Nations (MNs):
 - EuFMD training courses have assisted Member Nations in maintaining their capacity to prevent and control Foot-and-Mouth Disease And Similar Transboundary (FAST) animal diseases incursions;
 - The THRACE (Transboundary High-Risk Area Coordinated Epidemio-surveillance) programme continues to be a cost-effective mean of ensuring continued surveillance and awareness in a high-risk area and of improving coordination between neighbouring countries;
 - The European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Spread model (EuFMDiS) has proven useful for scenario-modelling, enabling Member Nations to better understand the effects of various control measures for FAST disease incursions;
 - The Get prepared wall provides key information to strengthen FAST disease preparedness and control, contributing significantly to more effective emergency preparedness and response plans;
 - An evaluation of the Fund for Applied Research (FAR) programme has shown that continued investment is warranted, to identify and address evidence gaps that impact on the assessment and management of FAST disease risk; and
 - FMD Quarterly Reports, Prioritization of Antigen Management with International Surveillance (PRAGMATIST) and the Risk Monitoring Tool (RMT-FAST) to support FAST disease risk assessment and monitoring by Member Nations.
6. Pillar II of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme reduced the risk of incursion of FAST diseases into MNs by improving the capacity of neighbouring countries with:
 - the early detection and control of FAST diseases;
 - the communication of risk information;
 - the understanding of the epidemiological situation;
 - the efficiency of vaccination (and with the efficacy of vaccines); and
 - mounting a rapid response to FAST disease incursion.
7. Pillar III of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme assisted countries outside the EuFMD neighbourhood to progress along the Progressive Control Pathway for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PCP-FMD), building national and regional capacity through:

- delivery of training;
 - improving diagnostic support to better understand the epidemiological situation; and
 - by providing tools and monitoring systems to ensure the efficacy of vaccines and the effectiveness of vaccination.
8. The Executive Committee acknowledged that almost all the funds granted by the European Commission (EC) in the Phase V grant agreement had been expended by the Secretariat in successfully completing the agreed work programme and that the Secretariat had provided a very detailed breakdown of this expenditure.
 9. The EuFMD work programme for 2023–2027 has been developed in line with the Move FAST Strategy, endorsed by the Member Nations at the 45th General Session (4–5 May 2023) and will be supported by EC grant funding (Phase VI). The new programme builds upon previous achievements and seeks greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and closer coordination with Global Framework for Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) partners and Reference Laboratories for FAST.
 10. The Phase VI (2023–2027) grant agreement with the EC has to be finalized but will provide less funding to support EuFMD activities than the Phase V (2019–2023) grant agreement.
 11. EuFMD Member Nations and the European Commission value the agility, efficiency, and achievements of the EuFMD Secretariat. In that context, the Executive Committee and the EC are concerned about the potential impact of proposed changes in the Animal Production and Health (NSA) Division on the future functioning of the Secretariat.
 12. Preliminary plans are being made to hold the Open Session 2024 (OS24) in Spain at end of October 2024.
 13. There are compelling reasons to think about the future development of the Commission and its Secretariat over a longer timeframe than biennial cycles and four-year grant agreements – to make sure it continues to meet the needs of Member Nations, to collaborate effectively with its partners, and to make a significant contribution to global animal health.

Recommendations

1. A detailed financial and technical closing report on the Phase V grant agreement with the EC should be submitted to the appropriate FAO offices. *ACTION: Secretariat to complete and submit as soon as possible.*
2. When the external evaluation of the technical implementation of the Phase V programme is completed, the report should be circulated to relevant stakeholders, including the Executive Committee, the European Commission and FAO Senior Management. *ACTION: Secretariat to circulate report within two weeks of completion.*
3. Assessment of other applications (FMD vaccines) for prequalification should be expedited in the expectation that several vaccines can then be listed on the EuFMD website as meeting the requirements for pre-qualification. *ACTION: prequalification scheme for FMD vaccines (PQv) team and Standing Committee on Prequalification of Vaccines (SCPQv).*
4. Exploratory discussions should be progressed with donors other than the EC (given reduced EC funding for the Phase VI programme), including to support continued work on PQv and with non-member countries that currently provide small contributions to access EuFMD training courses. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
5. A report should be published on a qualitative risk assessment exercise that involved EuFMD Member Nations in West Eurasia and the Near East – to assess the likelihood of introduction and spread of FMD virus (FMDv) SAT2 in countries bordering those that have already been affected. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with the organizers of the exercise.*
6. The factors contributing to reduced field collection and international shipment of samples from FMD endemic countries to reference laboratories should be explored and an attempt made to address them to increase submission rates. *ACTION: Secretariat with World reference Laboratory (WRL) and the European Union Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EURL).*
7. Background information on the recent outbreak in Qatar and information on the FMD situation in Saudi Arabia should be sought by FAO and the submission of further samples for virus typing should be encouraged (for example from Oman to the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES)). *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with FAO Regional Office, WRL and EURL.*
8. Some consideration should be given to how vaccination might be used to prevent or control FMD caused by SAT1 viruses. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with STC (?), WRL and EURL.*
9. Some consideration should be given to how proficiency test panels are to be provided to FMD laboratories in the European neighbourhood. *ACTION: Secretariat to agree with EURL and WRL.*
10. Support should be provided for on-site training on FMD diagnostics in Regional Laboratories. *ACTION: Secretariat to discuss with ANSES.*
11. FMD National Reference Laboratories should be encouraged to maintain a minimum stock of diagnostic reagents for emergency use. *ACTION: Secretariat to write to Member Nations.*
12. FMD Reference Laboratories should organize a workshop to evaluate the performance of commercially available enzyme-linked immunosorbent (ELISA) test methods when used for post-vaccination monitoring. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with FAO-WOAH FMD Reference Laboratory Network.*
13. Assisting Member Nations in developing and maintaining their emergency response capacity should remain the core activity of EuFMD, including the following:
 - Real-time training courses should continue to ensure a high level of preparedness of European veterinarians, specifically their ability to recognize and rapidly respond to an incursion of FMD;
 - The THRACE programme should be adapted for use in other areas that are considered at

high risk for FAST disease occurrence.

- A business model should be developed for PQv and, in the interim, alternative sources of funding should be sought to ensure that this work can continue; AND
- The Risk Monitoring Tool should be promoted with all MNs (training and guidance) and risk information should be constantly updated.

ACTION: Secretariat with Member Nations.

14. EuFMD should maintain a high level of support for activities in North African, Near Eastern and South-eastern European countries to anticipate virus incursion and prevent its spread towards Europe, by:
- facilitating engagement between neighbouring countries, especially in sharing information on risk;
 - supporting implementation of risk-based surveillance and developing qualitative risk-mapping;
 - progressing studies on vaccine efficacy and vaccination effectiveness;
 - establishing systems to assess progress of North African countries along the PCP-FMD and promoting FMD roadmap meetings in North Africa in coordination with GF-TADs FMD-WG;
 - guiding countries in the use of tools that have already been developed, for example the Self-Assessment Tool, to assess their progression along the FMD control pathway; and
 - continuing to design and deliver innovative training schemes that enhance capacity of laboratories and veterinary services for FAST disease control, especially in emergency situations.

ACTION: Secretariat with Neighbouring Countries.

15. EuFMD should continue to support Global FMD Control by:
- investing in the sustainable expansion of the PCP Support Officer network with GF-TADs partners;
 - assisting in the development of surveillance systems for FMD and continuing to provide targeted support for virus-typing - addressing technical, logistical, and capacity hurdles to the submission of samples to reference laboratories;
 - supporting vaccine matching tests and post-vaccination monitoring;
 - collaborating with Virtual Learning Centres to increase the global reach of EuFMD training programmes and other capacity development activities; and
 - continuing the consultative and research work to quantify the un-met demand and predicted growth for FAST vaccines and maintain the Private Sector Platform (PPSP) initiative.

ACTION: Secretariat with GF-TADs FMD Working Group and relevant countries.

16. EuFMD should continue to be fully transparent regarding expenditure by activity and in reporting its accounts at each Executive Committee meeting. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
17. EuFMD should prioritize Member Nations needs and allocate resources accordingly when finalizing the design and beginning to plan the implementation of the 2023–2027 Work Programme. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
18. EuFMD should encourage greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and closer coordination with GF-TADs partners and Reference Laboratories for FAST. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
19. EuFMD should build upon and optimize existing training initiatives and digital resources, ensuring that they are tailored to end-user needs. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
20. EuFMD should finalize the Phase VI grant agreement with the EC as soon as possible. *ACTION: Secretariat and EC.*
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21. Any proposed changes in working arrangements or structures of FAO, and specifically within NSA Division, that may impact on how EuFMD functions should be discussed and agreed with the Executive Committee prior to implementation. *ACTION: Secretariat to arrange discussion between Director of NSA Division (FAO) and Chair of Executive Committee.*
22. EuFMD should issue a save the date notification for the Open Session 2024 before end October 2023, should explore the possibility of establishing a “FAST diseases awareness day” and should progress discussions with the Global Foot-and-Mouth Research Alliance (GFRA) on co-hosting a joint meeting in tandem with OS24. *ACTION: Secretariat.*
23. EuFMD should develop a long-term strategy for the Commission and its Secretariat, to be published in 2024 - marking its 70th anniversary by preparing for the future. *ACTION: Secretariat and Executive Committee.*

REPORT OF THE 102 SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Session was opened by Lajos Bognár, Chairperson of the Commission, who welcomed all the participants¹.

Officers of the Commission present at the Session were: Lajos Bognár (LB, Hungary, Chairperson), Emmanuelle Soubeyran (ES, France, first Vice-Chairperson) and Hendrik-Jan Roest (HJR, Netherlands, second Vice-Chairperson).

Executive Committee members present were Hele-Mai Sammel (HMS, Estonia), Taina Aaltonen (TA, Finland), Matjaž Guček (MG, Slovenia), and Gonzalo Sanchez Cabezudo representing Christine Middlemiss (CVO UK). Christodoulos Pipis (CVO Cyprus) connected later to the meeting.

Executive Committee member not present was Ahmet Gumen (CVO Türkiye), and he had delegated Dr Bulut.

Executive Committee observers present Cristina Bungardean-Armas (CBA, Romania). Saša Bošković (SB, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Spiridon Doudounakis (SD, Greece) were absent.

International organizations observers were Francisco Reviriego Gordejo and Francesco Berlingieri (FB, DG SANTE, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission), Thanawat Tiensin (TT, FAO NSA Director), Keith Sumption (KS, CVO FAO), Néo Mapitse (NM, The World Organisation for Animal Health, WOAHP). The official observer organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was not present. Reference Centres were represented by Donald King for the World Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (DK, WRL-FMD) at The Pirbright Institute (TPI), Labib Bakkali-Kassimi, Guillaume Girault (LBK and GG, ANSES) and Nick De Regge and David Lefebvre (NdR, DL, SCIENSANO) for the European Union Reference Laboratories for Foot-and-Mouth disease (EURL-FMD); Stéphan Zientara (SZ), participated as Chair of the Standing Technical Committee.

Secretariat for the 102nd Session of the Executive Committee comprised, Dónal Sammin (DS, EuFMD Executive Secretary), Fabrizio Rosso (FR, Deputy Executive Secretary), Tsviatko Alexandrov (TA, Pillar I coordinator), Francesca Ambrosini (FA, Pillar II coordinator), Wilmot Chikurunhe (WC, Pillar III co-coordinator), Cornelis Van Maanen (CvM, Pillar III co-coordinator), Marcello Nardi (MN, Programme Learning Manager), Etienne Chevanne (EC, Technical specialist). Cécile Carraz (CC, Budget and Procurement) and Nadia Rumich (NR, Programme Implementation Manager).

Abdulnaci Bulut (AB, Türkiye) and Corallina Basili (CB, FAO Programme and Operations Hub) also participated.

¹ Underlined names were present physically.

Item 1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chairperson opened the meeting, and welcomed Dónal Sammin, the newly appointed EuFMD Executive Secretary, and asked for a minute of silence in memory of Christianne Brusckke, CVO Netherlands, former member of the EuFMD Executive Committee and WOAHC Council. He gave the floor to Dónal Sammin who shared the agenda, which was adopted without changes (**Appendix 1**).

Item 2. Six-monthly report of actions and significant achievements

Presenter: Fabrizio Rosso, Deputy Executive Secretary, Appendices 2, 3a and 3b

Key messages

- The EuFMD Executive Secretary was appointed by the FAO Director General during the reporting period (the position had been vacant since July 2020).
- The 45 General Session of the EuFMD was concluded successfully with the endorsement of the new strategy, elections of the new Executive Committee and specialized Committees, and agreement on Member Nations (MN) contributions for the next biennium 2023–2024.
- The 2019–2023 work programme funded by the European Commission will end on 30 September 2023.
- A detailed financial and technical report for the closure of Phase V is under development and will be submitted by the end of November 2023 to the appropriate FAO and financial offices.
- An external evaluation of the Phase V implementation is ongoing, as agreed at the 101st Executive Committee, and focuses on specific areas of the work programme: capacity development for Member Nations preparedness, tools and systems to improve Member Nations emergency preparedness, activities in European neighbourhood and the programme to support the Global FMD control Strategy. The report is expected in the first half of October 2023. It was emphasized that this is not a financial evaluation but instead focuses on uptake, impact and usefulness of tools developed and training implemented, as well as on collaborations within FAO and with external public and private partners. Three evaluators were appointed: Alejandra Capozzo, CEO of the Global Foot-and-Mouth Research Alliance (GFRA) and a researcher with the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), as lead evaluator; Mirzet Sabirovic, Animal Health management expert at the FAO Emergency Management centre (EMC), and Antony Mabvirakare, expert in Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) systems. This team was assisted by an expert, Roger Miranda, suggested by the FAO office of evaluation, to provide back-stopping support.
- The training programme courses for Member Nations were delivered, resulting in intense activity as numerous Training Credits were unspent due to COVID-19 pandemic during first biennium of the current work programme.
- A number of job aid documents were produced and translated into eleven languages – given the SAT2 situation in the Southeast European neighbourhood, for EU neighbouring countries considered most at risk, with support of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission (DG SANTE).
- A training menu has recently been developed, based on a training needs assessment and this has been shared with training focal points of MNs.
- The “Get prepared wall” has progressed, with 12 bricks including new resources.

- The EuFMDiS model is operational in 14 countries and will be extended to four additional ones. The model was also used for in-country workshops and with the private sector to prompt discussions on resources required for emergency response and modelling of post-vaccination surveillance strategies.
- The third meeting of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform on vaccine security was held in March 2023 to discuss the challenges that have arisen since the implementation of the Nagoya protocol, a problem statement and assessment of options for possible solutions have been published. A position paper is being developed, under the leadership of the World Reference Laboratory for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (WRLFMD).
- The Vaccine Prequalification (PQv) scheme has moved to the operational phase, with six expressions of interest (EOI) received from FMD vaccine manufacturers based in South and North America, Africa, and Asia, showing a global interest in the scheme; one application is already listed as prequalified product.
- The Surveillance for confidence of FAST freedom is ongoing in Southeast Europe and the THRACE programme contributed to the early detection of the recent sheep pox outbreak in Bulgaria in a farm that was included in the active surveillance programme. The EuFMD facilitated a virtual meeting on 26 September with Greece, Türkiye, and Bulgaria to discuss opportunities to revise FAST surveillance (risk areas considered) and improve sensitivity of FAST surveillance.
- A qualitative risk assessment to assess the likelihood of introduction and spread of FMDv SAT2 in countries bordering those that have already been affected, in West Eurasia and the Near East was carried out in collaboration with WRLFMD and FAO-EMPRES. EuFMD Member Nations such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Israel and Türkiye were included in this exercise. The report has not yet been published at the time of the meeting.
- The Statement of intention (SOI) agreement in Transcaucasus and the associated risk information sharing platform has proven its value during the SAT2 epizootic, by facilitating sharing of information and clinical samples. The effort and collaborative approach of the SAP Institute in Türkiye was acknowledged. There was a meeting of CVOs involved in the SOI agreement in the margins of the WOAHA General Session in May 2023.
- The Spatial risk assessment courses for the EU neighbourhood were implemented from May 2023, through a new collaboration agreement with AviaGIS.
- A new approach for FAST early detection in the EU neighbourhood was introduced in the EuFMD work programme through syndromic surveillance workshops led by SAFOSO.
- Libya was assisted in the identification of FMDv O-EA 3 topotype by sample shipment to IZSLT.
- Rift Valley Fever workshops were planned with IZS Teramo and started on 25 September 2023. These considered surveillance and response capacities in Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania and Morocco.
- Three in-person FMD laboratory training workshops were organized for nine countries of the EU neighbourhood in collaboration with ANSES and Experimental Zooprohylactic Institute of Lazio and Tuscany (IZSLT).
- Post-Vaccination Monitoring (PVM) studies were supported in Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon and Palestine.
- The EuFMD continues its collaboration with FAO Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES) and the virtual learning centers (VLCs); Progressive Control Pathway Support Officers (PSO) virtual

induction training (in English and French) and short open-access virtual courses have been recently developed and translated.

- Collaborations with the WRLFMD have continued and include the quarterly publication of FMDv global laboratory reports, and the development of genomic and surveillance dashboards.
- Issues with the shipment of samples to reference laboratories for FMD still persist, and relate to field sample collection, in-country transport, maintenance of cold chain, high costs of international shipment, and local availability of dry ice among others.
- The support for the establishment of three VLCs in Southern Africa, Asia and Eastern Africa was successful. These VLCs are now fully self-funded (no longer funded through the EC budget). The VLCs have facilitated delivery of EuFMD training in regions Europe.

Fabrizio Rosso commended the level of commitment of the entire team.

Actions taken to follow-up the recommendations of the previous Executive Committee meeting were presented, highlighting the following:

- Most recommendations have been addressed, or work has already started or in some cases they have been included in the next work programme.
- The identification of separate funding for the PQv scheme has not yet been addressed and will not be supported through the grant agreement with the EC. Preliminary discussions with possible external donors started.
- Recommendations that require further actions include the research priorities identified by the technical committees and the establishment a P3 staff position in the EuFMD Secretariat.

FR concluded by reminding the committee of small ongoing projects that are not funded by the EC; these relate to training to Canada, the virtual real time training (vRTT) for United States (US) veterinarians, the Prequalification of medicines (PQm) and the Virtual Learning for Australia, with the suggestion to maintain such collaborations with other funds and hopefully increase funding from these sources during the course of the next work programme.

Discussion

Francesco Berlingieri (FB, DG SANTE) welcomed DS in his new position, the appointment of an Executive Secretary is a welcome reinforcement of EuFMD Secretariat capacities. FB took note that the closing reports for the current activities will be submitted by the end of November 2023, and these efforts are acknowledged. FB asked if all Training Credits (TCs) have been used and FR responded that – at the time of the meeting – circa 90 percent of TC are spent. FR highlighted that national training / activities were delayed for Cyprus and Ireland but have been rearranged for the end of the year. FR recalled that training to Member Nations remains the core activity of the EuFMD, and that particular attention has been and will be given to the delivery of these activities.

Conclusions

The Executive Committee endorsed this report of EuFMD's activities and expressed their appreciation for the level of achievement and successful completion of all the activities highlighted.

Insights will be gained from the evaluation of the Phase V work programme which would be helpful in the design and implementation of the work programme for the Phase VI grant agreement (2023–2027).

Recommendations

A detailed financial and technical closing report on the Phase V grant agreement with the EC should be submitted to the appropriate FAO offices. *ACTION: Secretariat to complete and submit as soon as possible.*

When the external evaluation of the technical implementation of the Phase V program is completed, the report should be circulated to relevant stakeholders, including the Executive Committee, the European Commission and FAO Senior Management. *ACTION: Secretariat to circulate report within two weeks of completion.*

Assessment of other applications (FMD vaccines) for pre-qualification should be expedited in the expectation that several vaccines can then be listed on the EuFMD website as meeting the requirements for pre-qualification. *ACTION: PQv team and SCPQv.*

Exploratory discussions should be progressed with donors other than the EC (given reduced EC funding for the Phase VI programme), including to support continued work on PQv and with non-member countries that currently provide small contributions to access EuFMD training courses. *ACTION: Secretariat.*

A report should be published on a qualitative risk assessment exercise that involved EuFMD Member Nations in West Eurasia and the Near East - to assess the likelihood of introduction and spread of FMDv SAT2 in countries bordering those that have already been affected. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with the organizers of the exercise.*

Item 3. FMD global and regional situation and risk for Europe

Presenter: Donald King (WRL-FMD), Appendix 4

Don King provided a brief overview to cover headline events relating to FMD outbreaks in the European neighbourhood and beyond, from the World Reference Laboratory for FMD (WRLFMD).

Key messages

- Since the last Executive Committee in March 2023, the WRLFMD has issued reports for samples received from Bahrain, Jordan, Nepal, Nigeria, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Uganda.
- Seven batches of sequence data have also been analyzed from Comoros (via ANSES), Ethiopia (via BVI), Libya (via IZSLER - Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna "Bruno Ubertini"), Oman (via ANSES - French), Palestine (via KVI- Kimron Veterinary Institute), Republic of Korea (via Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency of Korea, APQA), and Tunisia (via ANSES).
- Costs and logistics associated with international shipments continue to be challenging – and it is estimated that IATA shipments to-and-from Pirbright are two or three times more expensive now than before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The presentation highlighted recent events that impact on FMD risks for EuFMD Member Nations including:
 - The further spread of the SAT2/XIV topotype (a virus lineage with an origin in East Africa) in Near East countries. Complete viral genome sequencing has been undertaken at the WRLFMD to show that the sequences for virus collected in Bahrain represent a separate genetic clade to those found in Iraq and Jordan, suggesting that there have been separate incursions of the SAT2/XIV lineage into the region. Vaccine matching data shows that field

isolates are well matched to two vaccines produced by Boehringer Ingelheim (SAT2/Eritrea-98 and SAT2/ZIM/83). However, these data conflict with reports of severe FMD and even deaths in cattle that have received the SAT2-Eritrea-98 vaccine. Therefore, the WRLFMD will conduct a vaccine potency study in December 2023 to assess the protective effects of both vaccines against a SAT2/XIV field isolate.

- The unexpected detection of SAT1/I in Qatar (April/May 2023) provided further evidence for the epidemiological connectivity of Gulf States in the Near East with East Africa. Although sequences from these cases are not closely related to SAT1/I viruses that were recovered recently from the Comoros, these findings may indicate a general upsurge in SAT 1 in East Africa.
- There were new FMD outbreaks due to the O/ME-SA/Ind-2001e lineage in Republic of Korea in May 2023. This lineage is widely distributed throughout Pools 1 and 2 and is also present in Pool 3.
- The WRLFMD has recently concluded a proficiency testing scheme (Phase XXXIV) that involved 33 laboratories in 28 countries, including those funded under the Letter of Agreement (LoA) with the EuFMD. Two laboratories had a performance score of 2 (out of 4) prompting detailed follow-up and further guidance from the WRLFMD. Sample panels for Phase XXXV (covered under the current LoA) are being dispatched.
- The Annual Meeting of the WOA/FAO Reference Laboratory Network will be hosted by the National Centre for Foreign Animal Disease (NCFAD), Canada in October 2023.
- New Open-FMD dashboards for FMD information (developed in partnership and support from EuFMD) will be demonstrated at the Network meeting and will be hosted on a new website.

Item 4. EURL-FMD activities and priorities identified

Presenter: Labib Bakkali-Kassimi (ANSES, on behalf of EURL-FMD), Appendix 5

LBK provided an overview of the EURL-FMD activities for FMDv and swine vesicular disease virus (SVDV).

Key messages

- Proficiency Tests in 2023: 41 laboratories were invited from 40 countries; 39 laboratories participated including 33 supported by the EC, and six by EuFMD through a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with ANSES. Overall, laboratories are performing well. There has been a clear increase in laboratory capacity.
- The EURL workshop will be held in person in Ghent, Belgium on 24–25 October 2023; 49 participants from 40 countries will attend the meeting.
- Significant work has been done to characterize FMDv in the Sultanate of Oman, in collaboration with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) student. Analysis of 67 samples collected between February 2022 and February 2023 have shown the circulation of three lineages: O/ME-SA/PanAsia2/ANT¹⁰, O/ME-SA/SA-2018 and SAT2/XIV.
- ANSES has hosted three in-person workshops on molecular diagnosis of FMD (detection, sequencing and sequence analysis) were provided for North African countries (June 2023), for Near East countries (June 2023) and for South East European Neighbourhood (SEEN) countries (July 2023). Online training in emergency diagnosis and Post-Vaccination monitoring was provided for the Near East in May 2023 (12 participants from six countries). In June 2023, a training workshop was provided to French regional coordinators as part of emergency response preparedness. A face-to-face training

on FMD diagnosis will be provided in November 2023 at ANSES to trainees from Czech Republic, Iceland, Latvia, Slovenia, Serbia and Madagascar.

- The EURL identified the following priorities that should be addressed:
 - Improve sample collection, storage and shipment: provide training on procedures, encourage countries to find a way to have quick access to dry ice and packaging at all times, and to establish an agreement with a carrier in advance, promote the use of lateral flow devices (LFDs) on which virus can be inactivated.
 - Conduct training in countries at regional level: laboratories receiving the training could transfer knowledge to local laboratories. Training on-site by experts will be a training in real conditions for the laboratory personnel, with reagents provided. This would lead to more people from the local laboratory who could be trained in FMD diagnosis. Encourage national reference/official laboratories to maintain a minimum stock of diagnostic reagents for emergency use.
 - Evaluate the performance of ELISA kits used for post-vaccination monitoring (PVM).

Joint discussion for item 3 and 4

Dónal Sammin brought the attention of the Executive Committee to two FMD updates for August 2023 provided by Georgia and Türkiye, and available on the EuFMD Event App.

Abdulnaci Bulut requested additional information on SAT1 detection in Qatar as it may be considered a threat for the SEEN region based on lessons learned from the SAT2 epizootic. DK emphasized that there is no further information on the exact locations of SAT1 outbreaks in Qatar and (or the extent to which there might be opportunities for the virus to spread beyond Qatar), whether the virus is now circulating in resident susceptible animal populations. DK suggested that animals appear to be coming in from the Horn of Africa, going through quarantine and then go directly to slaughter. Previous events such as occurred in Bahrain indicate that FMDv virus importation from Eastern Africa to Gulf States is likely to occur sporadically. DK asked that FAO colleagues try to find more background information on animals in which FMDv SAT1 has been detected, in Qatar. LBK informed that following the WRLFMD report on SAT1 detection in Qatar, ANSES requested colleagues in Oman to ship samples from recent FMD outbreaks to ANSES to look for SAT1 viruses, as samples from Oman showed a wide diversity of FMDv isolates.

Hendrik Jan Roest asked about the costs of international shipment as this is mentioned at every Executive Committee meeting and wondered if there were any possible solutions. DK identified two challenges (i) the recent increase in costs of international sample shipments (up to four times the pre-Covid cost) and acknowledged the support of EuFMD in organizing sample shipments from endemic countries; and (ii) the paperwork is getting increasingly complicated (perhaps more so in the UK because of Brexit). In endemic settings, access to appropriate packaging material and dry ice are additional issues. LBK commented that costs of international shipment are the main issue and added that for some countries there is also no budget available for field collection of samples. NB added that for some countries such as Iraq and Iran (I. R. of), there are no international courier services available.

David Lefebvre asked whether vaccine matching data is available at the WRLFMD for the SAT1 detected in Qatar. DK replied that the SAT1 vaccine antigen from Boehringer Ingelheim appeared to be well matched but stressed that the selection of vaccines for SAT1 is limited, and called for reflection on how SAT1 vaccines could be deployed in case of further spread of SAT1.

FR commended the WRLFMD and the EURL for their collaboration with EuFMD over the years. FR thanked DK for the update on the planned SAT2 *in vivo* study; this had been mentioned at the 45th General Session but EuFMD could not allocate funding to support. FR added that Saudia Arabia is not sharing updates on the FMD situation there, despite the significance of Saudi Arabia in the epidemiology of FMD in that region. He

wondered whether EuFMD should look at possibilities to increase liaison with FAO office and the national laboratory. The WOAHA conference in Saudi Arabia in early October 2023 will be an opportunity to discuss this issue with the CVO of Saudi Arabia and other stakeholders. FR encouraged WRLFMD and EURL to reflect on the support provided for the delivery of proficiency testing (PT), particularly in the EU neighbourhood, and assess how best EuFMD could support laboratories during the next Phase.

Conclusions

Field collection and international shipment of specimens for FMD virus typing has become more costly and logistically difficult in recent years, reducing the number of submissions to reference laboratories.

The recent SAT1 incursion into Qatar highlights the need for further information on links between the horn of Africa and the Near East, on the current FMD situation and the viruses in circulation in the Arabian Peninsula, and on the utility of SAT1 vaccines.

Recommendations

The factors contributing to reduced field collection and international shipment of samples from FMD endemic countries to reference laboratories should be explored and an attempt made to address them to increase submission rates. *ACTION: Secretariat with WRL and EURL.*

Background information on the recent outbreak in Qatar and information on the FMD situation in Saudi Arabia should be sought by FAO and the submission of further samples for virus typing should be encouraged (for example from Oman to ANSES). *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with FAO Regional Office, WRL and EURL.*

Some consideration should be given to how vaccination might be used to prevent or control FMD caused by SAT1 viruses. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with STC, WRL and EURL.*

Some consideration should be given to how proficiency test panels are to be provided to FMD laboratories in the European neighbourhood. *ACTION: Secretariat to agree with EURL and WRL.*

Support should be provided for on-site training on FMD diagnostics in Regional Laboratories. *ACTION: Secretariat to discuss with ANSES.*

FMD National Reference Laboratories should be encouraged to maintain a minimum stock of diagnostic reagents for emergency use. *ACTION: Secretariat to write to Member Nations.*

FMD Reference Laboratories should organize a workshop to evaluate the performance of commercially available ELISA test methods when used for post-vaccination monitoring. *ACTION: Secretariat to follow up with FAO-WOAH FMD Reference Laboratory Network.*

Item 5. Phase V (2019–2023) achievements

FR introduced the item the Secretariat had prepared, explaining there would be three short videos summarizing progress in each of the three Pillars. After each video clip, the respective pillar managers provided some further highlights and clarification.

Pillar I - Improved Preparedness of EuFMD Member Nations

The Pillar Manager is Tsviatko Alexandrov.

The highlights for Pillar I during Phase V were presented, along with conclusions and recommendations for consideration during Phase VI, **Appendix 6**

Key Messages

- EuFMD continues to deliver high-quality training based on Member Nation needs.
- The Real-time training courses started again in December 2022 (after being discontinued during Covid).
- The Get prepared wall is active with 12 bricks available.
- The THRACE programme (Transboundary High-Risk Area Coordinated Epidemio-surveillance) supported by EuFMD, has proven to be a successful project that can be adapted for other risk areas for FAST diseases.
- The European Foot-and-Mouth Disease Spread model (EuFMDiS) has been used to enable scenario-based workshops for contingency planners and the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative, contributes to enhanced emergency preparedness and the updating of contingency plans.
- Eight projects have been funded and successfully completed under the Fund for Applied Research (FAR). The research calls targeted Southeastern Europe, to promote the creation of networks and ensure transfer of knowledge between Veterinary Services, and scientific institutions, industry, and other involved stakeholders (i.e. veterinary practitioners, farmers, and associations).
- A diagnostic reagents bank was established for Southeastern Europe to ensure continuous availability of essential materials for laboratory diagnosis of FMD and allowed for increased and continuous participation in the EURL proficiency testing for FMD. It also facilitated the regional harmonization of diagnostic testing for FMD.
- A risk monitoring tool for FAST diseases has been developed to assist EuFMD Member Nations in regular monitoring the risk of incursion of FAST diseases.

FMD surveillance information was made readily available through the Global Quarterly report and via a prototype surveillance dashboard developed under FAR funding with the World Reference Laboratory for FMD.

Discussion

Tsviatko Alexandrov acknowledged the technical and operational team that contributed to Pillar I achievements. He stressed that for some countries, poor completion rates for training courses had been identified, and this suggested a need for improved internal communication with nominated trainees. The emergency preparedness network exists but needs to be tailored to the needs of the Member Nations. The PQv scheme procedures have been published and expressions of interest have been received from manufacturers, but a business model to ensure long-term sustainability of PQv should be identified.

In Southeast Europe, risk-based surveillance is fully operational with new functionalities added to the database. There is high confidence in FAST disease freedom and the recent sheep pox outbreak in Bulgaria demonstrated the high probability of early detection of FAST introduction into the Thrace region. The THRACE programme contributed to raising awareness and improving passive surveillance in the region. The diagnostic bank ensures the continuous availability of standard FMD laboratory diagnostics methods in the region.

FB echoed that THRACE programme activities fostered increased awareness and passive surveillance for the timely detection of sheep pox in Bulgaria. On behalf of DG SANTE, he stressed again the value of the THRACE programme, and welcomed its review to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose. FR added that the programme had helped the Secretariat build strong and regular connections with countries involved, and that discussions are ongoing with DG SANTE to adapt and adopt this same methodology to other risk areas of the EU neighbourhood.

KS commended the EuFMD achievements over Phase V and noted the efficient delivery of all these activities despite the COVID-19 episode. KS highlighted that the 14 countries using EuFMDiS represent a significant portion of the livestock biomass of Europe, such that the model may have reached a tipping point and may actually be able to model FMD spread across Member Nations. The THRACE model, and the voluntary basis on which it operates could be promoted to the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (MAHN-REMESA) by Thrace countries themselves.

Conclusion

Pillar I of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme improved the preparedness of member nations:

- EuFMD training courses have assisted Member Nations in maintaining their capacity to prevent and control FAST disease incursions;
- The THRACE programme continues to be a cost-effective means of ensuring continued surveillance and awareness in a high-risk area and of improving coordination between neighbouring countries;
- EuFMDiS has proven useful for scenario-modelling, enabling Member Nations to better understand the effects of various control measures for FAST disease incursions;
- The Get prepared wall provides key information to strengthen FAST disease preparedness and control, contributing significantly to more effective emergency preparedness and response plans;
- An evaluation of the FAR programme has shown that continued investment is warranted, to identify and address evidence gaps that impact on the assessment and management of FAST disease risk; and
- FMD Quarterly Reports, PRAGMATIST and the RMT-FAST support FAST disease risk assessment and monitoring by Member Nations.

Recommendation

Assisting Member Nations in developing and maintaining their emergency response capacity should remain the core activity of EuFMD, including the following:

- Real-time training courses should continue to ensure a high level of preparedness of European veterinarians, specifically their ability to recognize and rapidly respond to an incursion of FMD;
- The THRACE programme should be adapted for use in other areas that are considered at high risk for FAST disease occurrence.
- A business model should be developed for PQv and in the interim, alternative sources of funding should be sought to ensure that this work can continue; and

- The Risk Monitoring Tool should be promoted with all MNs (training and guidance) and risk information should be constantly updated.

ACTION: Secretariat with Member Nations.

Pillar II - Risk Reduction Programme in the European neighbouring countries.

The Pillar Manager is Francesca Ambrosini.

The highlights for Pillar II during Phase V were presented, along with conclusions and recommendations for consideration during Phase VI, **Appendix 7**

Key Messages

Engagement with countries was reinforced and risk information was shared with MNs.

- Strategic multi-country agreements were established, including a tripartite agreement in the Near East, and a quadripartite agreement in SEEN region.
- Assistance promptly provided during animal disease outbreaks.
- Laboratory capacity was reinforced and studies on vaccine efficacy and effectiveness were complimented by an improved understanding of the epidemiological situation in the neighbourhood.
- Enhanced early warning in the neighbourhood: identification of risk hot spots, risk mapping and risk-based surveillance.

Discussion

Following the presentation of the Pillar II video clip, FA took the opportunity to thank FR and NR for the continuous support, guidance, and facilitation in liaising with FAO units; she also thanked the technical and operations colleagues for their teamwork in implementing the programme. Abdalnaci Bulut was singled out for specific thanks due to his cooperation during the SAT2 emergency including regular sharing of information from the Republic of Türkiye.

FA pointed out the importance of meetings with the evaluators and the interesting exchange of ideas she had with them.

In addition, FA highlighted two activities that reinforced the early warning and surveillance in the neighbourhood at the end of the Phase V programme. First was a Syndromic Surveillance Model that was being developed for Jordan as pilot country, for possible extension in the neighbourhood; Second was capacity-development for Rift Valley Fever (RVF), a small project on spatial analysis and geographic information system (GIS) in North Africa, as follow-up to the recent training workshop carried out with the *Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale* of Teramo (IZSAM). This activity will allow a major involvement of the North African countries in sharing information for the identification of risk hotspots in the region through GIS mapping and to establish a system to assess regular improvements along FMD-PCP in the region, promoting FMD roadmap meetings in North Africa in coordination with GF-TADs and FMD-WG.

Conclusion

Pillar II of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme reduced the risk of incursion of FAST diseases into MNs by improving the capacity of neighbouring countries with:

- the early detection and control of FAST diseases;
- the communication of risk information;
- understanding the epidemiological situation;

- the efficiency of vaccination (and with the efficacy of vaccines); and
- mounting a rapid response to FAST disease incursion.

Recommendation

EuFMD should maintain a high level of support for activities in North African, Near East and South-eastern European countries to anticipate virus incursion and prevent its spread towards Europe, by:

- facilitating engagement between neighbouring countries, especially in sharing information on risk;
- supporting implementation of risk-based surveillance and developing qualitative risk mapping;
- progressing studies on vaccine efficacy and vaccination effectiveness;
- establishing systems to assess progress of North African countries along the PCP-FMD and promoting FMD roadmap meetings in North Africa in coordination with GF-TADs and FMD-WG;
- guiding countries in the use of tools that have already been developed, for example the Self-Assessment Tool, to assess their progression along the FMD control pathway; and
- continuing to design and deliver innovative training schemes that enhance capacity of laboratories and veterinary services for FAST disease control, especially in emergency situations.

ACTION: Secretariat with Neighbouring Countries.

Pillar III - Supporting the Global Strategy for FMD Control

The Pillar co-managers are Wilmot Chikurunhe and Cornelis Van Maanen.

The highlights for Pillar III during Phase V were presented, along with conclusions and recommendations for consideration during Phase VI, **Appendix 8**

Key Messages

- The PCP Support Officers (PSO) system will be further developed with GF-TADs partners, to support junior PSOs through mentoring schemes and to expand the PSO roster in areas where PCP-FMD progression is not optimal.
- To improve global virological surveillance, further investigation is required to better characterize the types of technical, logistical, capacity hurdles currently limiting the surveillance and diagnostics capacities in endemic pools.
- A suite of FMD dashboards has been developed or is under development and will be made available to the wider FMD community through an “Open-FMD Portal” in collaboration with the World Reference Laboratory for FMD.
- Adaptation of face-to-face training to remote delivery has brought benefits such as increasing the number of participants enrolled in activities. Remote delivery should be further encouraged and collaboration with Virtual Learning Centers (VLCs) maintained to improve delivery options.
- The Vaccine Demand Estimation Model (VADEMOS) should be made available for all interested countries and expanded to other FAST diseases.
- The established multi-stakeholder platform on vaccine security has provided good results to address critical issues affecting control of FAST diseases and should be maintained.

Discussion

FR thanked the pillar coordinators and stressed that EuFMD ensured collaboration and coordination with GF-TADs partners. However, as a Regional Commission, the EuFMD Secretariat was always primarily focused in delivering the work programme, on the needs of Member Nations. Some EuFMD activities can be extended to the global level within FAO (PSO system, risk monitoring tool, VLC, dashboards etc.) and EuFMD can facilitate this process, at relatively little additional cost.

KS commended the level of achievement and on behalf of FAO thanked the EuFMD for its contributions to global FMD control. He encouraged the Executive Committee to consider how EuFMD/EU expertise may be relevant for areas outside the EU neighbourhood.

Neo Mapiitse, on behalf of World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), congratulated the Pillar III team for the excellent work and emphasized that the continued collaboration with EuFMD and its Support Unit within the GF-TADs is very useful.

LB congratulated the pillar managers and Secretariat and noted that this summary of activities demonstrated that the Commission is fully capable of delivering real support to Member Nations on knowledge transfer, risk assessment and risk management in the next Strategy.

Conclusion

Pillar III of the Phase V (2019–2023) work programme assisted countries outside the EuFMD neighbourhood to progress along the PCP-FMD pathway, building national and regional capacity through:

- delivery of training;
- improving diagnostic support to better understand the epidemiological situation; and
- by providing tools and monitoring systems to ensure the efficacy of vaccines and the effectiveness of vaccination.

Recommendation

EuFMD should continue to support Global FMD Control by:

- investing in the sustainable expansion of the PCP Support Officer network with GF-TADs partners;
- assisting in the development of surveillance systems for FMD and continuing to provide targeted support for virus-typing - addressing technical, logistical, and capacity hurdles to the submission of samples to reference laboratories;
- supporting vaccine matching tests and post-vaccination monitoring;
- collaborating with Virtual Learning Centres to increase the global reach of EuFMD training programmes and other capacity development activities; and
- continuing the consultative and research work to quantify the un-met demand and predicted growth for FAST vaccines and maintain the PPSP initiative.

ACTION: Secretariat with GF-TADs FMD Working Group and relevant countries.

Item 6. Financial report and closure of Phase V

Presenter: Cécile Carraz (CC), Programme Operations Lead, Appendix 9

Key Messages

The Administrative Fund (MTF/INT/011/MUL) outstanding contributions from the EuFMD Member Nations to be received for 2023, at the date of the Executive Committee meeting, is USD 125 530.

The EuFMD will aim to provide the final financial and narrative report to donors before the end of the year, as per rules and regulations (report to be submitted within six months from the end of the project), and the final instalment should not exceed EUR 200 000.

The report of the evaluation of the EU funded activities Phase V 2019–2023 will be presented with the Project closure. The highlights of this report will be applied in the workprogramme for Phase VI.

The Administrative Fund (MTF/INT/011/MUL) will be used as a reserve budget for the continuation of activities before the finalization of the EU Grant Agreement as endorsed by the 45th General Session.

The Member Nations Contributions for 2024 will be USD 731 393, as endorsed by 45th General Session in May 2023.

Summary

CC presented the administrative summary and financial position of the Trust Funds operated by the Commission.

The position of EuFMD Member Nations contribution report showed no outstanding contribution for year 2022.

For 2023, contributions received were USD 531 071 out of a total expected contribution of USD 656 601. Reminder letters are sent to Member Nations for 2023 outstanding contributions (Czech Republic, Greece; Hungary; Italy, Montenegro and Sweden) to be received by year end totaling USD 125 530.

The Financial report on the EuFMD Emergencies and Training Funds, for the provision of virtual and Real-Time Trainings to non-EuFMD members and support to FAO Regional Offices, was presented. It indicated that the project closure by 31 December 2023 will be extended in alignment with Administrative Fund MUL011 up to not-to-exceed date of 31 December 2025, as endorsed by 45th General Session, to facilitate the transition before opening of a new multidonor trust fund, as per FAO financial regulations. The EuFMD is to work on the opening of a new multidonor trust fund, aligned with the new FAO policies, for use in activities within the new EuFMD Strategic Plan, including response to FMD emergency situations or to support capacity-development programmes.

The financial position of EU Funded Activities (Phase V 2019–2023) was reported, showing the level of expenditures by Pillar on 31 August 2023 after 47 months of activities, representing the 93 percent of the programme implementation.

The EuFMD is to prepare and send the final financial report to the donors before end year 2023, to allocate the EU final instalment which should not exceed EUR 200 000. (The final financial and narrative reports, as per Contribution agreement, shall be submitted at the latest six months after the project's operational closure on 30 September 2023).

The report of the evaluation of the EU funded activities Phase V 2019–2023 will be presented with the Project closure. The highlights of this report will be applied in the workprogramme for Phase VI.

The EC Phase VI agreement should be signed by FAO/DG SANTE before the end of the year. The Administrative Fund (MTF/INT/011/MUL) will be used as a reserve budget for the continuation of activities before the finalization of the EU Grant Agreement as endorsed by the 45th General Session.

Discussion

FR indicated that the Secretariat was very satisfied to have utilized so much of the Phase V funds and completed most of the agreed work programme, notwithstanding all the challenges faced over the past four years. FR thanked the EuFMD financial unit for their assistance with budgetary matters and thanked CC for the financial update, noting the extra efforts to close the report of the current exercise by the end of November 2023. LB asked if the outstanding contributions from Member Nations were higher than usual at this time of the year. CC said that this figure is in line and to be noted no outstanding contributions from previous year. KS acknowledged the clarity and the detail of the financial report, noting that the EuFMD financial report will be presented at the FAO finance committee in November 2023. He also emphasized that

the EuFMD provides a very detailed breakdown of expenditures by activity and is fully transparent - making these accounts available to the Executive Committee every six months and at any other time upon request. Gonzalo Sanchez, attending on behalf of CVO UK, thanked the EuFMD for the transparency in the financial reporting for Phase V.

Conclusion

The Executive Committee acknowledged that almost all the funds granted by the EC in the Phase V grant agreement had been expended by the Secretariat in successfully completing the agreed work programme and that the Secretariat had provided a very detailed breakdown of this expenditure.

Recommendation:

EuFMD should continue to be fully transparent regarding expenditure by activity and in reporting its accounts at each Executive Committee meeting. *ACTION: Secretariat.*

Item 7. Workprogramme 2023–2027 (an outline)

Presenter: Fabrizio Rosso, DES, Appendix 10 (part 1)

Key messages

FR indicated that the EuFMD work programme for Phase VI of the EC funded project has been developed in line with the Move FAST Strategy presented, discussed with and endorsed by the EuFMD Member Nations at the 45th General Session (4–5 May 2023). The EuFMD Secretariat has met with DG SANTE on several occasions since, to define the programme, the budget allocation and to draft the documents required to finalize the EC grant agreement.

The new programme seeks greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and closer coordination with GF-TADs partners and Reference Laboratories for FAST.

The programme builds upon - among others - the successful EuFMD training initiatives and the established virtual learning platform; the availability of adaptable systems/tools to improve preparedness; the Early Warning systems established in high risk hot-spots; and the established network with experts, reference centers, regional and international organizations and neighbouring countries. The programme will follow the outcomes of the Open Session 2022, focused on digitalization and innovation applied to the control of FAST diseases, and will ensure the optimization of digital solutions that have been already developed and new solutions when necessary and tailored to the end-user needs.

The programme will have the overall expected **impact** to *strengthen and improve national and international integrated One Health systems, enhancing disease prevention, early warning and management of national and global risks* and will therefore contribute in this way to the FAO Programme Priority Area BP3 - One-Health of the FAO Strategic Framework [2022 - 2031](#). This programme should reduce FAST disease risk in the European neighbourhood and provide better preparedness for MN stakeholders in the livestock sector and improve food security for all citizens.

The programme will rally on three focus objectives (outputs), achieved through the implementation of seven action areas, as prioritized at the 45th EuFMD General Session. For each action area, expected results, tactics, detailed activities and key performance indicators are defined.

The main beneficiaries of **Output 1** (improved protection of the livestock sector in EuFMD Member Nations from FAST disease introduction and spread) will be the 39 Member Nations but also neighbourhood countries where activities will be implemented to monitor the risk for Europe.

Action area 1 on **risk monitoring** will ensure FAST global surveillance and virus intelligence is regularly collected and made available to Member Nations, through continued support of the Reference Laboratory network and support for the collection and shipment of samples, diagnostic services and reporting of risk information; Risk monitoring will be improved by using various tools and through agreements on risk-information sharing across the neighbourhood and FAST early warning will be strengthened through risk mapping activities and improved passive and active surveillance in high-risk areas of the neighbourhood.

Action area 2 on **risk mitigation** will enhance prevention measures, provide confidence in disease freedom, improve laboratory biosafety, and will contribute to enhancing livestock biosecurity through targeted communication to stakeholders on FAST disease awareness. Evidence of disease freedom and improved early detection in high-risk areas of the European neighbourhood will be provided through the adoption of the THRACE model in these areas. FMD virus laboratory biosafety standards will be improved through the application of EuFMD's Minimum Standards for Biorisk Management (MSBRM) and the establishment of a community of practice for biorisk officers.

The main beneficiaries of **Output II** (adequate capacities to respond to crises and improved resilience of the livestock sector to FAST diseases in Member Nations) will be the 39 Member Nations plus the European countries sharing a land border with EuFMD Member Nations such as Ukraine and Moldova, which are at risk for FAST disease introduction.

Action area 3 on **capacity development** aims to improve the skills and response capacity of Member Nations through a tailored training programme (including specific training for the Balkans), to manage skills and capacities of Veterinary Services and laboratories through the further implementation of the Training Management System, and to facilitate the sharing of emergency management practices through technical networking.

Action area 4 on **tools and resources** aims to enhance prevention, confidence of freedom and laboratory biosafety through upgrading of decision-support tools available to Member Nations (EuFMDiS, PRAGMATIST, Get prepared wall), the assessment of contingency planning capacities with the use of Simulation exercise, modelling tools and greater involvement of the private sector, and the improvement of laboratory capacities in Member Nations through training, the establishment of a diagnostic reserve system and mutual cooperation between laboratories.

The main beneficiaries of **Output III** (greater control of FAST diseases in risk areas to reduce the impact of spread of diseases and their impact on livestock sector) will be those priority countries for progression through the Progressive Control Pathway for FMD, as indicated in the GF-TADs Global Strategy that are also considered to pose a risk for Europe.

Action area 5 on **Global FMD control** aims to enrich the PCP-FMD toolkit with further development of existing systems (VADEMOS, M&E), roll-out of training to Veterinary Services and Laboratories and the provision of technical and operational systems for the GF-TADs FMD Working Group.

Action area 6 on **FAST control** aims to develop similar capacity for RVF and sheep pox and goat pox (both of which were prioritized at the 45th General Session) to reduce the risks for Member Nations from the neighbourhood and to improve capacity for FAST disease prioritization and investment through support to socioeconomic impact assessment and assessment of cost-benefit of FAST control strategies in association with the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBAD) initiative.

Action area 7 on **Vaccine Security** will largely be confined to the multi-stakeholder platform on vaccine security as this remains one of the major barriers to FMD global control. Also under this action area, a

methodology will be developed to evaluate and improve the quality of the vaccine supply chain, possibly resulting in a decision-support tool to be added to the PCP-FMD toolkit.

FR concluded that the programme is expected to maintain an effective risk monitoring capability, ensure a good level of preparation and prevention for FAST incursion, reinforce early warning systems in FAST risk areas within Member Nations and other regions, improve the efficiency of surveillance and control programmes and enhance vaccine security through multi-stakeholder collaborations.

Item 8. Phase VI budget and EC grant agreement

Presenter: Fabrizio Rosso and Cécile Carraz, Appendix 10 (part 2)

Key message

FR and CC presented the estimated budget for Phase VI (2023–2027) by action area as per recent discussions with the EC. FR highlighted that those action areas and activities specifically targeted at supporting Member Nations, are expected to receive the highest share of the EC budget. The percentages of the budget by category for Phase V and the draft programme for Phase VI have been compared, highlighting that both budgets will be closely aligned; there will be a slight reduction in the budget for training due to scope for cost savings and a corresponding slight increase in Contracts, including Letters of Agreement.

Joint discussion for Item 7 and Item 8

LB stated that the activities presented by FR are aligned with the Strategy endorsed by MNs at the 45th EuFMD General Session.

FB (DG SANTE) commended the whole EuFMD team for facilitating the discussions around the next Phase of the EuFMD work programme and conveyed the European Commission's appreciation for the efforts to reflect the EC suggestions in finalizing the next work programme. He welcomed the fact that the biggest share of the budget for Phase VI will be devoted to capacity development for Member Nations. The EC is discussing with the Secretariat a draft grant agreement that should be finalized by the end of 2023. Fabrizio Rosso indicated that while the current work programme will end on 30 September 2023, EuFMD activities will not stop as the Secretariat has the flexibility to use Member Nations contributions to fill the gap before the next grant agreement becomes operational. The Chair concluded by thanking the EC for their support for EuFMD activities and expects that the final agreement and final work programme will be presented at the 103rd meeting of the EuFMD Executive Committee.

Conclusions

The EuFMD work programme for 2023–2027 has been developed in line with the Move FAST Strategy, endorsed by the Member Nations at the 45 General Session (4–5 May 2023) and will be supported by EC grant funding (Phase VI). The new programme builds upon previous achievements and seeks greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and closer coordination with GF-TADs partners and Reference Laboratories for FAST.

The Phase VI (2023–2027) grant agreement with the EC has to be finalized but will provide less funding to support EuFMD activities than the Phase V (2019–2023) grant agreement.

Recommendations

EuFMD should prioritize Member Nations needs and allocate resources accordingly when finalizing the design and beginning to plan the implementation of the 2023–2027 Work Programme.

EuFMD should encourage greater collaboration with partners and stakeholders, and closer coordination with GF-TADs partners and Reference Laboratories for FAST.

EuFMD should build upon and optimize existing training initiatives and digital resources, ensuring that they are tailored to end-user needs.

EuFMD should finalize the Phase VI grant agreement with the EC as soon as possible.

ACTIONS: Secretariat.

Item 9. Structure of the team and position of EuFMD within NSA (reporting lines, project management, internal collaboration)

Thanawat Tiensin (TT), the Director of NSA Division which hosts the EuFMD Secretariat at FAO and Coralina Basili (CB) the Programme Manager for NSA Division joined the meeting for this item.

TT introduced his presentation on the future organization of the NSA Division, underlining how FAO wanted to provide better support for EuFMD and that all the changes he wants to implement are aimed at achieving better results, more impact and improved collaboration. He then presented the new structure of NSA Division and highlighted some of the more salient changes that he is aiming to implement. The Director of NSA Division (TT) will become the CVO in early 2024; the Executive Secretary of EuFMD (DS) will continue to directly report to the Director. The new structure will continue to comprise three separate services each led by a Chief, a few separate entities such as EuFMD that report directly to the Director and Divisional “Hubs”. The four services Hubs have been developed to provide support to the entire Division on programme and operations, communications, monitoring and evaluation, and administration. In addition, TT indicated that budget holder responsibilities for all FAO regular programme and extrabudgetary resources operated by NSA will be under the Director of the Division. The Programme and Operations Hub provides full support to budget holder (BH) functions and overall programme/project management in improving effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation.

Lajos Bognar (Chair, Executive Committee) requested clarification about budget holder responsibilities under the new NSA structure and asked about accountability for expenditure of EuFMD funds if the Director was to be budget holder for EuFMD trust funds rather than the Executive Secretary as heretofore. Paco Reviriego on behalf of the European Commission (an observer), highlighted the excellent relationship that has been developed between the EC and EuFMD in respect of successive grant agreements that have supported EuFMD work programmes, emphasizing that the EC values the agility and operational efficiency of EuFMD. In that context, he expressed concern about the proposed changes, and he also sought clarification on who would be responsible and accountable for the expenditure of any future grant monies. Hendrik-Jan Roest (Vice-chair, Executive Committee) questioned how the status of EuFMD as an Article XIV body within FAO would be impacted by these changes. Emmanuelle Soubeyran (Vice-chair, Executive Committee) highlighted that Member Nations were unanimous in their appreciation of the work of the Commission at the EuFMD General Session in May 2023, and suggested that any changes in the working arrangements of EuFMD be brought before a General Session of all Member Nations for their consideration.

TT emphasized that no changes had yet been made to the working arrangements for EuFMD including the budget-holder function and he agreed that any proposed changes would be discussed and agreed with the Executive Committee before they would be implemented. LB thanked TT for this clarification and reassurance on behalf of the Executive Committee. In conclusion, DS proposed to arrange an online meeting between the

Director, the Chair (and Vice-chairs) of the Executive Committee and the Executive Secretary to allow for further consideration of these matters.

Conclusion

EuFMD Member Nations and the European Commission value the agility, efficiency, and achievements of the EuFMD Secretariat. In that context the Executive Committee and the EC are concerned about the potential impact of proposed changes in NSA Division on the future functioning of the Secretariat.

Recommendation

Any proposed changes in working arrangements or structures of FAO, and specifically within NSA Division, that may impact on how EuFMD functions should be discussed and agreed with the Executive Committee prior to implementation. *ACTION: Secretariat to arrange discussion between Director of NSA Division (FAO) and Chair of Executive Committee.*

Item 10. The EuFMD Open Session 2024

Presenter: Nadia Rumich, Implementation manager and Communication Officer, Appendix 11

Key messages

NR updated the Executive committee on planning for the Open Session 2024 (OS24), as already discussed with the EuFMD Standing Technical Committee. It is proposed to hold OS24 in Spain (although no precise location has yet been defined) between Tuesday 29 October and Thursday 31 October 2024. The registration fee will be increased to EUR 460 (which is EUR 100 more than for previous Open Sessions) considering that corporate sponsorship will not be availed of to the same extent as previously, and that similar scientific conferences charge more than this amount for registration. The proposed theme for OS24 is ‘From Megatrends² to Microlearning - how to mitigate livestock disease risks in a changing world’. This will include topics such as horizon scanning, risk (perception, assessment, action), and big data. While the primary focus of OS24 will remain on FMD, there will be side events on other FAST diseases. The program will include a few full-length workshops on specific topics alongside “FAST Pills” - brief sessions of no more than 30 minutes duration, designed in workshop-style format, where EuFMD experts will talk on pertinent and current topics. Multiple sessions may run concurrently, allowing participants to select the topics they are most interested in learning about. As in Open Session 2022 (OS22), discussion panels will be a prominent feature of proceedings. In addition, the Secretariat is exploring the possibility with the Global Foot-and-Mouth Disease Research Alliance (GFRA) of co-hosting and co-funding a one-day meeting on the theme of “FMD science meets policy” in tandem with OS24. Novel aspects of OS24 will include an attempt to establish a “FAST diseases awareness day”, the use of Near Field Communication tags (or digital stickers) for the registration of attending participants, digital poster sessions through totems with posters connected to each oral session, and greater involvement of universities.

Discussion

LB asked if OS24 will be held at a single venue over several days as for previous Open Sessions and if the increase in registration fees would be reflected in the content and logistics of the event; NR confirmed on both counts. DS stressed the importance of not accepting large amounts of corporate sponsorship – the reason for increasing the registration fees – to assure participants of a neutral forum that is not unduly influenced by any commercial interests. SZ provided a comparison with an international symposium of veterinary laboratories recently held in France for over 500 delegates from all over the world, and for which

² Megatrend: a sustained, irreversible transformation that disrupts the market, leads to innovation and is felt on a global scale

the registration fee was EUR 600. FB asked if OS24 would be cost neutral and FR confirmed that the costs are expected to be covered by registration fees and by collaboration with other partners such as GFRA.

ES wondered how easy it would be to organize a FAST disease awareness day and NR acknowledged that official recognition for such a day can be a long and complicated process so might not be completed in time for OS24. However, she said that the support of the ExCom would allow the process to be launched internally. HJR welcomed the plans and ideas for OS24 and asked if the conference will be fully hybrid; NR responded that while it was intended to live stream OS24, it was not intended to provide for full interaction by linked in participants as in OS22 (due to the associated costs and logistical complications).

The Executive Committee endorsed the suggestion of seeking to establish a “FAST diseases Awareness Day” to mark the beginning of OS24.

Conclusion

Preliminary plans are being made to hold OS24 in Spain at end October 2024.

Recommendation

EuFMD should issue a save the date notification for the Open Session 2024 before end of October 2023, should explore the possibility of establishing a “FAST diseases awareness day” and should progress discussions with the GFRA on co-hosting a joint meeting in tandem with OS24. *ACTION: Secretariat.*

Item 11. AOB, dates of the next Executive, and close of session

Presenter: Dónal Sammin, Executive Secretary, Appendix 12

Developing a long-term strategy for EuFMD

Donal Sammin presented a proposal to develop a long-term strategy for EuFMD. Introducing the proposal, DS noted that EuFMD will mark its 70th anniversary in 2024. DS outlined three distinct phases in the life of the Commission during the years since 1954, as it has evolved and focused on different activities to meet changing circumstances and the changing needs of MNs. In recent years EuFMD has greatly extended the breadth and depth of its activities in its MNs, across 20 neighbouring countries and more widely in support of global FMD control. However, it would now be timely to ask what role EuFMD should play in the future – what are its unique selling points and where does it most add value – and to plan accordingly.

DS proposed that a comprehensive review of EuFMD activities and a consultation with significant EuFMD stakeholders would need to be undertaken to inform the development of a long-term strategy for the Commission and its Secretariat. He suggested that the Secretariat appoint technical experts on a short-term basis (consultancy) to undertake this review and consultation process; the suggested membership of the review team would bring three different perspectives together – that of Member Nations, that of FAO’s Animal Health Service and a global perspective on the control of FAST diseases. This review team would work closely with the EuFMD Secretariat, and would consult widely with EuFMD Stakeholders, including the EuFMD Executive Committee, the EuFMD Standing Technical Committee and other specialist committees, relevant business units in FAO, the European Commission, and other relevant external stakeholders. The review team would be expected to provide a final report with practical recommendations at least two weeks before the next Executive Committee meeting in March 2024.

The review team would be specifically asked to consider the following key questions:

- (i) What role should the EuFMD play in the control of FMD in non-member nations, especially in countries that are not within its immediate neighbourhood?
- (ii) What if any role should EuFMD play in the control of FAST diseases (other than FMD) outside its Member Nations?

- (iii) How can EuFMD optimize its position in and its contribution to FAO's Animal Health Services while continuing to deliver for its Member Nations?
- (iv) What would be the optimal structure of the Secretariat team of the future to be agile and operationally efficient yet ensure business continuity and retention of technical expertise?
- (v) Review the current governance mechanisms, structures and funding model of EuFMD and make recommendations as appropriate.

Discussion

Emmanuelle Soubeyran agreed that it would be important and timely to undertake such a reflection and agreed on the methodology, presuming that it would not be difficult to identify appropriate people to undertake the review/consultation process. ES emphasized the importance of liaising with key external stakeholders such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). Hendrik-Jan Roest also agreed that such an exercise would be timely but asked that consideration be given during this process to other potential donors and possible external projects to ensure more sustainable funding for EuFMD in the future. Gonzalo Sanchez Cabezudo on behalf of CVO UK agreed that these reflections would be timely, especially in the context of the changes being proposed by FAO and how these might impact the work of EuFMD. DS agreed to incorporate these suggestions in the terms of reference (ToR) for the review team – making more explicit reference to consultation with WOAH and to exploring the possibility of alternative sources of funding. In conclusion DS suggested that when developed, the ToR would be shared with the Chair and Vice-Chairs and final approval would be sought from them before proceeding further. Lajos Bognar agreed with this approach.

Conclusion

There are compelling reasons to think about the future development of the Commission and its Secretariat over a longer timeframe than biennial cycles and four-year grant agreements – to make sure it continues to meet the needs of Member Nations, to collaborate effectively with its partners, and to make a significant contribution to global animal health.

Recommendation

EuFMD should develop a long-term strategy for the Commission and its Secretariat, to be published in 2024 - marking its 70th anniversary by preparing for the future. *ACTION: Secretariat & Executive Committee.*

Date of next meeting

LB proposed that the next (103rd) meeting of the Executive Committee be held in-person on 12 March 2024 in FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy.

Close of Session

LB concluded the meeting by thanking the EuFMD operations team for facilitating and supporting the virtual meeting and providing the background documents.

PROTECT RESPOND CONTROL

MOVE FAST

FAST, Foot-and-mouth
And Similar Transboundary
animal diseases.

EuFMD structure

Secretariat, Executive Committee, Standing Technical Committee (STC), Special Committee on Risk Monitoring, Integrated Surveillance and Applied Research (SCRISAR), Special Committee on Biorisk Management (SCBRM), Regional Groups for FAST Coordination, Standing Committee on Prequalification of Vaccines against FAST diseases (SCPQv), Steering Committee TOM (SCTOM).

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