

27th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Item 2.2: Preventing, anticipating and responding to high-impact animal and plant diseases and pests

Introduction notes

Livestock and crop production worldwide is challenged by the continuous threats of animal and plant pests and diseases (APPDs), causing heavy annual losses and severely affecting livelihoods and food security.

Increased movement of people and agricultural goods in a globalized world, coupled with degrading biodiversity, changing agro-ecological conditions and inappropriate management practices contribute to spread of these threats farther and faster than ever before. In addition, climate change represents another potential driver for their emergence, spread and escalation, causing significant damage to crops and livestock and in some cases severely affecting public health.

The Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), foot and mouth disease and African swine fever are examples of devastating livestock diseases. PPR is particularly affecting livelihoods of small ruminant keepers, thereby exacerbating poverty and food insecurity. FAO with its partners are working toward its eradication by 2030. In addition to these livestock diseases, the emergence and spread of epidemic and pandemic diseases transmitted from animals to humans such as highly pathogenic avian influenza and the current COVID-19 pandemic are seriously compromising global health and food security.

Among the major plant pests, locusts are the most devastating because of their rapid spread in large distances. The largest Desert Locust upsurge in decades is currently ravaging thousands of hectares in Eastern Africa while severe outbreaks also occurring in Southwest and Central Asia, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Red Sea area. Fall Armyworm is another disease of concern due to its widespread in Africa, Asia and Near East. Many other specific pest and disease outbreaks continue impacting production, economies and livelihoods in different regions.

FAO`s work and priorities

FAO works with member countries and international and regional partners to promote evidence-based mitigating measures, fostering collaborations to implement coordinated strategies and cross-sectoral and integrated approaches to reduce the socio-economic impact of APPDs.

Critical areas of FAO`s work include facilitation of international cooperation, knowledge exchange, monitoring, early warning, policy development as well as developing international standards and guidance for effective management of APPDs. These actions are coupled with provision of technical and capacity building support to countries in prevention, preparedness, response to outbreaks and long-term pest and disease management.

The way forward

In order to strengthen the efforts to fight high impact APPDs, FAO should further intensify its work, particularly to:

- a) Significantly strengthen its animal and plant health related capacities and governance mechanisms to support the countries and international efforts in addressing increasing threats from APPDs;
- b) Enhance its proactive coordination role in fostering sustainable global and regional cooperation and in leading capacity development for the improvement of animal and plant health systems,

building the resilience of agriculture and food systems to multiple risks from APPDs interconnected with aggravating factors such as climate change, naturally induced disasters and social insecurity

- c) Adopt upstream approaches for understanding the common drivers triggering APPDs and further integrate and synergise activities to increase the effectiveness of the Organization's support in mitigating animal and plant health threats at every level.

The Committee is invited to:

- Support the FAO's approaches in addressing APPDs and endorse the key areas that FAO should focus on to reduce the burden of these threats as outlined in the paper (paragraph 34), and
- Endorse the resolution (provided in annex) for consolidating the implementation of the PPR Global Eradication Programme to achieve the goal of a PPR free world by 2030.

Keith Sumption Chief, Veterinary Officer, NSA