

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS IN DISEASE CONTROL

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THE ISSUE

People play a vital role in the emergence and prevention of animal diseases. The emergence of certain animal diseases can be traced back to the dynamics of livestock systems and the demands society is placing upon them. Understanding the producers, traders, consumers and the risk parameters within these systems is therefore important in developing appropriate approaches to disease control and prevention. Working directly with people within these systems allows for sustainable disease reporting, control and prevention measures. Towards ensuring more effective and equitable disease control interventions, the ECTAD Socio-economic Unit provides technical input in three crucial areas:



Women selling poultry in local markets as a source of income in Egypt

- ▶ **Evidence and support for policy development:** Offering policy-makers and governments analytical tools and information to better understand the systems they are trying to influence, to reduce disease introduction, spread and impact, and to enhance productivity.
- ▶ **Animal health interventions:** Working closely with governments and the private sector (large- or small-scale) on the interventions and their appropriateness, acceptability, sustainability and cost-effectiveness, and institutionalisation of the proposed interventions.
- ▶ **The future of animal production and health systems:** Helping countries prioritize and plan for the future – looking at other diseases and at developments within animal health services; and from producer to consumer, including other interest groups, such as animal welfare.

THE FACTS

Comprehensive risk management is based upon the notion that due attention is given to the nexus of often conflicting health, socio-economic and environmental objectives. Where disease control and prevention become integral components of wider development efforts, people rather than pathogens take centre stage. In relation to poultry, for example, providing a better understanding of the sector and deciphering the complexity of the system is essential. It is now widely recognized that more nuanced approaches to H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) control are necessary, taking into account the diversity that characterizes poultry systems:

- ▶ There are distinctly different commodities (broilers, spent hens, eggs, etc.) and different sets of actors involved in the production and marketing of such products.
- ▶ People have divergent motivations for being involved in poultry, for example, as a primary source of income, as an emergency source of cash, and as a vehicle for cultural cohesion.
- ▶ The impacts of disease are widespread: from direct (income through loss of poultry) to indirect (downtime of enterprise); from limited (recurrent effects of Newcastle disease for households where poultry is not a significant component of their income) to significant (export ban for a whole sector); and, from the tangible (loss of income) to the intangible (loss of poultry for social functions).

CHALLENGES AND GAPS

The work of the ECTAD Socio-economic Unit addresses a number of important questions which will help countries develop and implement appropriate, cost-effective, and sustainable solutions in disease prevention and efficient production practices:

- ▶ In what ways can governments improve interventions and institutionalise them, including in such areas as compensation strategies, contingency plans, vaccination and biosecurity?
- ▶ How should countries prioritize diseases and plan for the future, including enhancing the capacity of animal health services to improve regulatory oversight or respond to diseases?
- ▶ How can countries plan for changes in the production and food delivery systems, and anticipate the implications for disease prevention, detection and control?
- ▶ How can understanding of value chains, livelihoods, socio-economic impacts, trade flows and risk assessments be enhanced, and the knowledge and analysis used most beneficially for improving animal health?

In addressing these questions, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with governments, universities, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and key actors in the production and marketing chains, is using a number of different approaches, including: impact studies to assess the impact of disease and disease control, and the differential impact within society; value chain studies to better understand inter-relationships within the poultry sector, and to undertake risk-based surveillance; livelihood analysis to understand the role of household dynamics, decision-making and risk perception; and economic models, such as cost-effectiveness, for analysis of vaccination strategies.

FAO'S POSITION

The ECTAD Socio-economic Unit is working closely with veterinary scientists and programme managers to find more effective ways to prevent and manage H5N1 HPAI and other animal diseases. The Unit has also successfully lobbied for developing the capacity and skills of officials within national governments and the private sector engaged in disease prevention and control.



Value chain mapping by ECTAD Socio-economic Unit in Cambodia

Three core principles drive the ECTAD Socio-economic Unit:

- (i) work with policy makers and people in-country to develop appropriate options for systems and the people implementing them;
- (ii) ensure that recommendations and interventions improve the livelihoods of those affected; and
- (iii) focus on all actors in the value chain, from producers to consumers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Increase understanding of societal drivers behind disease emergence and spread, and institutionalise disease control approaches that integrate people as solvers of problems.
- ▶ Establish feedback loops for socio-economic analysis and integration into veterinary services and policy development.
- ▶ Increase focus on: the interface between communities and the reporting/surveillance systems; the public and private role of veterinary services; poultry and other livestock chain entrepreneurs and society in general.
- ▶ Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of interventions and policy integration.
- ▶ Understand how to engage people in biosecurity: the opportunities and the limitations.

References and Resources:

- *Animal health and production information resources:*
www.fao.org/avianflu/en/inforesources.html
- *Socio-economics webpage:*
www.fao.org/avianflu/en/socialeconomics.html

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