

### 13 REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

There are considerable opportunities for regional-level support to countries in the implementation of the *Technical Guidelines*. Through NACA, member countries can optimize their limited resources by working together under a common strategy for minimizing the impact of aquatic animal disease. Duplication of effort can be avoided and opportunities to promote complementarity and synergies can be promoted. The following support to implementation of the *Technical Guidelines* offers opportunities for regional cooperation that should be pursued:

- *Information exchange and communication.* This includes the opportunities for further development of information systems (e.g. AAPQIS) to support national efforts and sharing of information on aquatic animal health management.
- *Regional reference laboratories* in support of the diagnosis of important diseases important to the region, and to support training and emergency response in specialist areas. The identified regional laboratories could maintain reference material and verify diagnosis of diseases important to the region. Such laboratories need to be identified and their capacities reinforced. The regional disease list can be used as the basis for identification of the laboratories and skills required.
- *Regional cooperation to share information* on diagnostic techniques, harmonization, and support diagnosis through key referral laboratories and to provide training and other support for less developed countries will be essential in implementation of these guidelines.
- *Regional reporting system.* The further development of the regional reporting system will allow the region to more effectively monitor the status and impacts of aquatic animal diseases, and respond in a timely and effective way to serious future outbreaks. A continued close cooperation with OIE and FAO will allow the fisheries sector to learn from experiences of the livestock sector, and gain from international experience on this subject.
- *Regional mechanism for emergency response* should be developed to provide assistance, upon request, to countries suffering serious aquatic animal disease outbreaks.
- *Human resources development.* Regional training and education programs to assist with building national capacity, ensuring uniform and acceptable standards of diagnosis and reporting, should be further enhanced. Training is particularly needed in countries where technical skills are scarce (e.g., in epidemiology, histopathology, immunology and molecular biology, virology, extension methodology, mycology, research methodology and design, and risk analysis and management). Regional-level monitoring systems and databases should be enhanced and supported, with strong links to the *Aquatic Animal Pathogen and Quarantine Information System (AAPQIS)*. This includes maintenance of the NACA/FAO and OIE *Asia-Pacific Quarterly Aquatic Animal Disease Reporting System*.
- *At the regional level, hands-on training is required* to establish uniformity in techniques and methodology of diagnosis, reporting and health certification, among others. Regional training and education programs in support of building national capacity should be developed in response to the requirements identified in the *Technical Guidelines*.
- *Cooperation in aquatic animal health management in countries with shared watersheds* and other trans-boundary systems, such as the Mekong river basin and Ganges River, is needed.
- Finally, a regional working group, the Advisory Group on Aquatic Animal Health (AG) will be valuable in providing continued high-level support for development and implementation of the *Technical Guidelines*. Its active involvement in aquatic animal disease issues within the region should be sustained, in order to respond to new challenges and provide consistent leadership for regional developments in this field, as well as assisting in

projecting the aquatic animal health concerns of the region into international organizations dealing with global aquatic animal health issues.