



GF-TADs

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF
TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES

Global Frontiers – Trans-Boundary Animal Diseases: Vision and Strategic Lines of Action

Historical Perspective

Perhaps more so than at any other time in history, the presence or absence of animal and zoonotic¹ diseases plays a crucial role in determining the future economic growth of countries in the Americas. In this era of globalization, the sanitary status of a country goes well beyond whether disease is present at the farm level and affects the viability of other sectors including public health, trade, competitiveness, tourism and the environment, among others.

In the Americas, a significant portion of development is still tied to agriculture, animal production and related industries. In 2003, agriculture accounted for 46% of all exports from Central America and 35% of total exports from South America.² From 1997 to 2020, the global demand for meat is expected to grow by 55%.³ This is important for the Americas that produce, for example, 34% of the world's cattle – more than three-fourths in developing countries – and accounts for 54% of total world exports. In 2003, some \$157 billion dollars in agricultural exports and \$111 billion dollars⁴ in agricultural imports were facilitated by agricultural health and food safety regulations, standards or norms, or actions such as inspection and risk assessment – all basic and critical competencies of national veterinary services. Animal health and zoonoses trade issues constitute 40 percent of total trade related issues raised in the World Trade Organization Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (WTO/SPS). Sixty-seven percent of these trade issues are either raised directly or supported by countries in the Americas.⁵

Capacity and Growing Importance of National Veterinary Services

National veterinary services are integral to the health and well being of a country. Eleven of the last twelve major global disease outbreaks were from zoonotic agents.⁶ In Latin America and the Caribbean, over the last 45 years, human population has grown by 146 percent to 554 million people.⁷ During this same time frame, animal production has grown by 366 percent to almost 38 million metric tons, 83 percent of which is cattle and poultry.⁸ According to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), 60% of human pathogens are zoonotic and 80% of animal pathogens are multi-host.⁹ Much of the production growth has been in intensive rearing facilities, which often heightens the risk of disease transmission. In addition to population growth, advances in technology and transportation make it possible for people and products to converge at one place from different parts of the world, almost within a matter of hours. There are an estimated 120 million people who visit the Americas each year from all over the world and each visitor carries the possibility of accidentally introducing a new disease.

¹ agents that can spread from animals to humans

² COMTRADE data statistics

³ International Food Policy Research Institute. “*Toward Food and Nutrition Security*”. 2003.

⁴ IICA with additional data from COMTRADE

⁵ WTO/SPS document G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.5. February 25, 2005. Moreover, 74percent of all trade issues in the WTO/SPS committee are either raised directly or supported by countries in the Americas.

⁶ National Academy of Sciences. “*Animal Health at the Crossroads.*” July, 2005.

⁷ United Nations Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

⁸ United Nations FAOSTAD

⁹ OIE presentation in PAHO/RIMSA meeting, April 2005.



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Despite the fact that most national veterinary services were established many years ago, the vast majority have struggled to eliminate long-standing diseases and are poorly positioned and structured to address the growing global challenges and opportunities. Since the 1950s, only one country in South America, Chile, has been able to eradicate and then remain free of foot-and-mouth disease. Although infected countries report progress in establishing geographic zones or regions free of outbreaks, in the last 30 years, there has been no country declared free and has remained free for more than six years without a reoccurrence or reported outbreak.¹⁰ Other persistent diseases continue to pose significant challenges. In 1996, 67 diseases (previously classified as OIE List A and List B diseases) were reported present in at least one of 33 countries providing data to the OIE. By 2004, 68 diseases were reported present. On the positive side, from 1996 to 2004, the number of countries reporting classical swine fever decreased by 3 to 13 countries, screw worm by 3 to 17 countries, rabies by 2 to 21 countries, blue tongue by 2 to 15 countries and Newcastle by 5 to 12 countries.¹¹ However of growing concern, the hemisphere now faces several emerging diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease), highly pathogenic avian influenza and West Nile virus.

A reality check of today's environment reveals the fundamental need to reprioritize and invest so that national veterinary services do not become a bottleneck for growth and limit country development. This will not be easy. In 2001, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) estimated the effectiveness of national agricultural health services to be able to comply with and benefit from the WTO/SPS agreement at less than 40% and institutional sustainability at about 20%.¹² National governments typically allocate approximately 5 percent of their national budget to agriculture, and of that amount, only about 5 – 10 percent goes toward sanitary and phytosanitary health.¹³ Precise amounts of external loans specifically for agricultural health are difficult to determine but the range falls between 0.20 to 2.0 percent of the total amount loaned to agriculture.¹⁴

Vision and Strategic Lines of Action of the GF-TAD initiative

The Global Frontiers – Trans Animal Boundary Diseases (GF-TADs) initiative approaches this challenge from a regional and hemispheric perspective. It recognizes that disease transmission occurs irrespective of decreed national boundaries. GF-TADs is the result of an official agreement between OIE and FAO, endorsed by the Member Countries of both Organisations. This agreement is managed by a Global Steering Committee with the participation of WHO. It is regionally implemented by five Regional Steering Committees (Africa, Americas, Asia and Pacific, Europe and Middle East). The permanent Secretariat of all Regional Steering Committee is managed by the Regional Representations of the OIE in

¹⁰ Based on data contained in Handistatus II reports for food and mouth disease (List A) and the OIE Committee Resolutions: "List of Food and Mouth Disease free countries". Both available on-line from OIE.

¹¹ Based on analysis of data contained in Handistatus II. Available at <http://www.oie.int/hs2/report.asp?lang=en>

¹² Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture "The Multiple Roles of Agricultural Health" 2002.

¹³ Pomareda, C. (2001) Propuesta de Programa Hemisférico de Sanidad Agropecuaria e Inocuidad de Alimentos, presentada por el IICA a consideración de Organismos Internacionales de Financiamiento de Desarrollo, Agencias de Cooperación Bilateral. San José-Costa Rica.

¹⁴ Based on loan information available on on-line from World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank for the periods 1961 and 2004.



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Bamako (Africa), Beyrouth (Middle East), Tokyo (Asia and Pacific), Sofia (Europe) and Buenos Aires (Americas).

Countries in the Americas are divided by almost 50,000 kilometers of land borders and many of these borders were determined based on political considerations with little significance when considering disease movements. As a result, any actions must be in line with two fundamental objectives: First, the presence of disease – and the ability to eliminate disease – in a country is greatly influenced by the sanitary status of its neighboring countries, strongly suggesting that collaborative actions beyond its frontiers are absolutely essential. Second, those countries who are best positioned to enhance their national sanitary status, confront the disease challenges of today and meet the opportunities of tomorrow, do so by continually improving their veterinary services around four basic components: technical capacity, human and financial investments, partnerships with the private sector and capacity building in market access and retention.



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The vision of GF-TADs is to assist countries in the control of disease by strengthening their veterinary services. The initiative is designed to increase awareness of the need for change, develop specific actions based on the regional profiles of diseases, and promote an expanded vision and mandate for enhancing national veterinary services. Global realities require stronger alliances and greater cooperation than ever before. It also requires that national services operate transparently and in accordance with international agreements, such as the WTO/SPS, and international standards, especially those developed through the OIE and the Codex Alimentarius. To help guide this effort, the *Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument*¹⁵ outlines twenty seven critical competencies that national services should contain. Initial results from ten countries in the Americas highlight the need for substantial work and investment if the sanitary status is to improve, disease prevalence reduced and countries positioned to meet future opportunities.¹⁶

For the GF-TADs initiative, there are six integrated strategic lines of actions that provide the basic framework for subsequent actions which are to follow:

VISION

1. **Establish a regional strategy** aiming to prevent, control and/or eradicate animal transborder diseases including zoonoses, using among other tools a coordinated action with existing Regional and International Organizations
2. **Increase awareness of the role of national veterinary services.** This means reaching out to decision-taken levels demonstrating convincingly – far better than has ever been done in the past – how the effectiveness of the national veterinary service **facilitates or limits trade, the capacity to grow, the economical prosperity and the countries confidence.**
3. **Establish a shared compromise with all veterinary services across all groups of interest.** This commitment is related with a joint work on epidemiological surveillance, transparency in the sanitary information reaching animal health and public health adequate protection level, aiming safety trade.
4. **Improve veterinary services capacity.** This includes making investments in human resources, technical training, dedicating funding sources, the stability of policies and programs, contingency funds, technical independence, improving fundamental competence in up dating of national legislation, the diagnoses capacity, early emergency response, quarantine, inspection, emerging issues, risk analysis and technical innovation.
5. **Enhance the interaction with the private sector.** This requires making improvements in critical areas, among others, such as communication, information, official

¹⁵ Electronic versions of the first version of instrument in English and Spanish can be found at the OIE (www.oie.int) and IICA (infoagro.net/salud) websites. The new version is attached (in English)

¹⁶ See “A practical tool for assessing the performance, vision and strategy of veterinary services: Initial application in Latin America.” Presented at the World Veterinary Congress, July 2005.



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representation, accreditation, and the capacity to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

6. **Guaranty appropriate application and utilization of international standards aiming safety trade based upon scientific knowledge.** The reduction of potential pathogens diffusion can be reached by application of regionalization/zonification, compartmentalization and risk-based products trade concepts

Sustainability of the GF-TAD initiative

The strategic lines of action guide the types of activities to be carried out in order to achieve the overarching vision. Controlling disease in conjunction with structural improvements in the national veterinary services will test the resolve of countries to make fundamental improvements and will require the support, coordination and collaboration at all levels from veterinarians to agri-industry. This initiative includes important roles for technical cooperation agencies, donor institutions and universities. Critical is the formation of leaders at different levels in both the public and private sector. The sustainability and long term success of the initiative is tied to the shared vision and commitment over time of all parties.

Given the opportunity and commitment, the GF-TADs initiative will be a powerful ally for countries who recognize the importance of enhancing their sanitary status and are committed to investing time and effort to make it happen. By adopting a regional and hemispheric approach and recognizing that the ability to address current disease problems directly relates to the effectiveness of the national veterinary service, countries are better positioned to raise the national priority and level of investment needed. Finally, continuity, sustainability, technical and human resource capacity are all root problems of sanitary health whose solutions require the active participation of all sectors.