World Organisation for Animal Health

Proposed Regional Action Plan for Aquatic Animal Health in the Americas, 2027–2032

A common regional framework, with actions tailored to the capacities and needs of the Members.

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Proposed Regional Action Plan for Aquatic Animal Health in the Americas, 2027–2032

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1. Introduction and Global and Regional Context

The WOAH, recognizing the need to strengthen sustainable aquatic animal health systems, launched its first Aquatic Animal Health Strategy during the 88th General Session in May 2021. This framework promotes the health and welfare of aquatic animals, sustainable production, food security, and safe international trade, thereby supporting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Aquaculture is a strategic sector for the Americas due to its contribution to food security, employment, productive development, and trade. Its growth requires robust systems to prevent, detect, and respond to diseases and other health risks.

According to the Sofia 2026 report (FAO), aquaculture production of aquatic animals in Latin America and the Caribbean increased from nearly 0.8 million metric tons in 2000 to 4.4 million metric tons in 2024, with an average annual growth rate of 7.2%. Chile, Ecuador, and Brazil accounted for about 79% of regional production in 2024. This situation underscores the importance of advancing standards for surveillance, diagnosis, biosecurity, reporting, emergency preparedness, and regional cooperation.

2. Basis for Developing the Proposed Action Plan

The regional proposal is based on complementary sources—varying in nature and scope—that make it possible to align WOAH's global priorities with the needs reported by the countries of the Americas.

- WOAH Global Aquatic Animal Health Strategy: a strategic and reference framework for the four pillars: Standards, Capacity Building, Resilience, and Leadership.
- WOAH'S Second Observatory Monitoring Report: monitoring the implementation of standards, gaps, and information gaps.
- 2024 WOAH Report on Barriers to the Implementation of Aquatic Standards: global evidence on institutional, technical, and financial obstacles.
- 2026 Regional Survey for Delegates and Focal Points for Aquatic Animals: aimed at identifying progress, gaps, capacities, and specific priorities in aquatic animal health; 22 member countries participated.
- Technical consultations with Members from the Americas grouped by subregions: comparison of results and targeting of possible actions.

As supporting background information, progress made on the REASONS project (2025–2026)—led by the WOAH in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico with funding from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and in collaboration with the Collaborating Centers for Antimicrobial Use Management (CASA) in Chile and CIGB in Cuba—was taken into account. Through national workshops, the project identified technical, regulatory, and institutional barriers to the development of and access to alternatives to antimicrobials in aquaculture—particularly vaccines and autovaccines—as well as opportunities for cooperation.

In addition, the proceedings of five webinars organized in 2025 and 2026 by the WOAH Regional Office for the Americas in collaboration with CASA were reviewed, as part of the initiative "Combating Antimicrobial Resistance in Aquaculture." The seminars addressed autovaccines, alternatives to antimicrobials, genetic improvement to prevent disease, biosecurity, and animal welfare; according to records provided by the organizers, approximately 150 to 200 people participated in each seminar. These meetings serve as forums for exchanging ideas and identifying common interests.

2.1. From the Observatory to Regional Diagnosis

The Second Follow-up Report of the WOAH Observatory identifies opportunities for improvement in the implementation of standards and gaps in information regarding Members' critical capacities, particularly staff availability, the development of contingency plans, and the conduct of simulation exercises. It also identifies differences between the terrestrial and aquatic sectors in certain indicators related to the use of antimicrobials and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Furthermore, the 2024 WOAH report "Barriers to the Implementation of Aquatic Animal Health Standards," based on a global survey conducted among 119 Members, identified obstacles related to human, financial, and material resources; training; diagnostics; and national regulatory frameworks.

The same report highlighted the limited use of the PVS Process for Aquatic Animal Health Services: nine of the 119 Members surveyed reported having conducted an Aquatic PVS assessment. WOAH emphasized the need to promote awareness of and voluntary access to this tool and to address financial and institutional barriers.

Within this context, the regional assessment complements the Observatory's work by gathering specific evidence on the capacities, gaps, and needs of Aquatic Animal Health Services in the Americas. The regional survey and its analysis make it possible to translate this information into proposals for regional priorities.

3. Regional Assessment and Priority Areas for Strengthening

Methodology and Technical Inquiries

The survey was designed by the team at the WOAH Regional Representation for the Americas, taking into account the four pillars of the Global Strategy and the Observatory's background information. It was distributed via the institutional platform to delegates and focal points for aquatic animals from 32 countries; 22 (68.8%) responded.

A descriptive analysis was conducted at the regional level and by subregional groupings—North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America—taking into account differences in species, production systems, and institutional capacities. Subsequently, the results were discussed internally by the team at the WOAH Regional Representation for the Americas and during technical consultation meetings with Member Countries grouped by subregions. Findings were presented and compared, observations were gathered, and opportunities for training, coordination, and regional cooperation were identified. Participants broadly agreed on the main needs identified.

The survey included closed-ended single-choice or multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to gather proposals and experiences; the results reflect statements from the participating countries, and subregional differences are descriptive. The accompanying charts are presented in **Appendix I.**

The survey findings, observations from the consultations, and supplementary technical background information were used as inputs to formulate the Proposed Regional Action Plan 2027–2032.

3.1. Understanding and Implementation of WOAH Standards and Tools

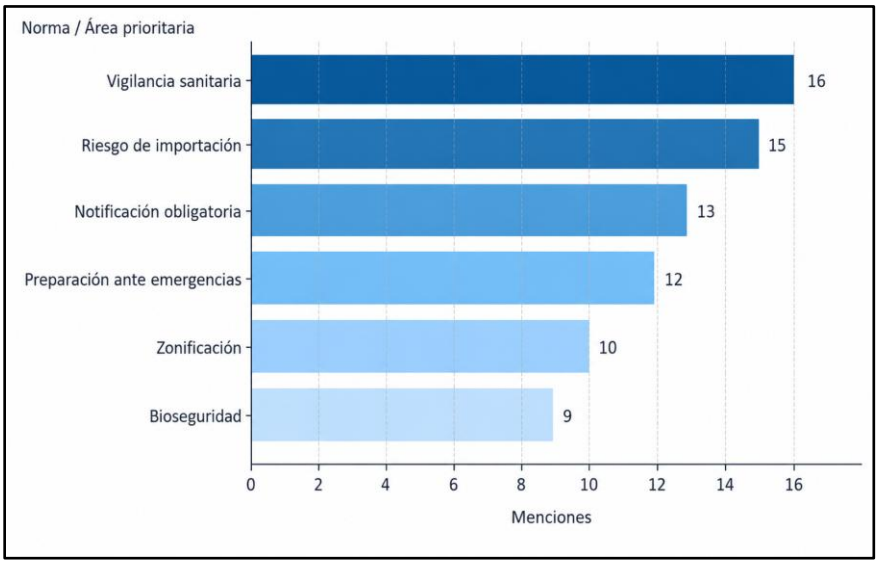
91% of participating countries reported to be familiar with the Global Strategy and to use the Aquatic Animal Health Code, while 73% claimed to use the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals.

The survey allowed for the identification of chapters deemed a priority for revision and standards whose national implementation requires strengthening, particularly in surveillance, risk analysis associated with imports, biosecurity, reporting, zoning, compartmentalization, diagnosis, and emergency preparedness.

The aspects of animal welfare and safe trade must also be maintained in the regulatory action plans.

When respondents were asked to select the standards whose implementation should be strengthened, the most frequently mentioned areas were sanitary surveillance, import risk analysis, disease notification, emergency preparedness, zoning, and biosecurity. Respondents could select up to three standards (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Priority WOAH standards for strengthening their national implementation.



Regulatory priorities also include safe trade, aquatic animal welfare, and the responsible use of antimicrobials. Their scope should distinguish between issues prioritized through closed options, open proposals, and other regional technical background information.

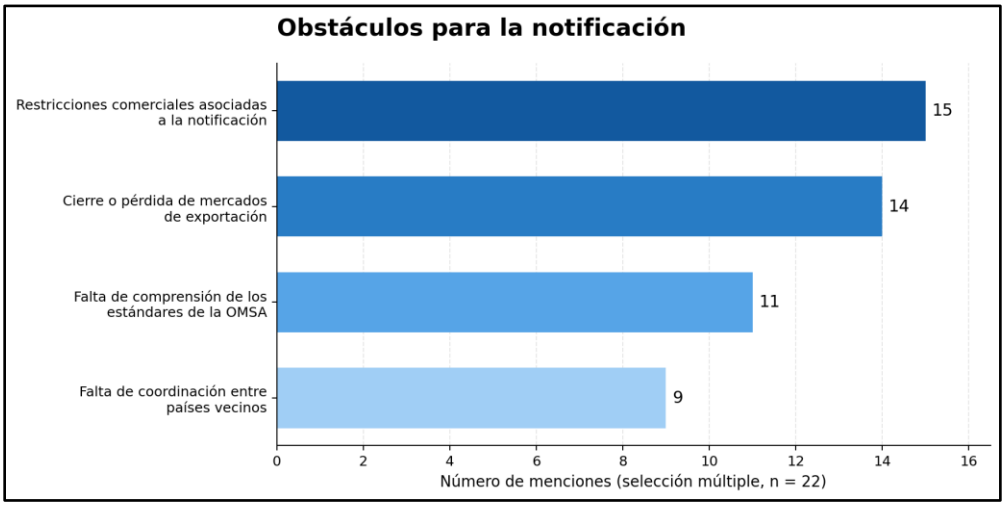
3.2. Surveillance, Detection and Reporting

The responses highlighted the importance of strengthening health surveillance, early detection, diagnosis, and epidemiological analysis.

Surveillance was the standard whose national implementation received the most mentions in the survey. This emphasizes the need to integrate early detection, access to diagnosis, epidemiological interpretation, information sharing, and the timely adoption of control measures.

In response to the question about barriers to transparency in reporting, fifteen countries pointed to trade restrictions associated with reporting, fourteen to the risk of market closure or loss, eleven to a lack of understanding of WOAH regulations, and nine to insufficient coordination among countries (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Perceived barriers to the international reporting of aquatic animal diseases.



3.3. Preparedness and Management of Public Health Emergencies

45% of participating countries reported having a system for managing aquatic animal health emergencies, while 23% reported having conducted simulation exercises in the past five years. Eight of 22 countries provided information on subregional health response experiences.

The findings and consultations support prioritizing contingency plans, defining roles, inter-agency coordination, surveillance and early warning, national and subregional drills, and the sharing of lessons learned.

Table 1. Preparedness for and Management of Public Health Emergencies declared by participating countries.

Stated capacity/ reported experience	Participating countries
Emergency Management System	45 %
Simulation Exercises Conducted in the past five years	23 %

The disparity between having established emergency management mechanisms (45%) and having conducted simulations in the last five years (23%) warrants priority attention. Exercises allow for testing procedures, coordination, communication, and response capabilities; having an established system does not prove that all its components have been tested.

The subregional meetings reinforced the importance of sharing contingency plans, activation criteria, practical exercises, and lessons learned. The proposal prioritizes adaptable activities, including national and subregional drills and coordination among competent authorities, laboratories, and relevant sectors.

3.4. Biosecurity

Biosecurity must be addressed both within national public health systems and at aquaculture facilities. Title 4 of the Aquatic Code addresses disease prevention and control, and Chapter 4.1 specifically addresses biosecurity for aquaculture facilities. The survey included regulatory priorities related to biosecurity but failed to separately measure the implementation of measures at the national and production levels.

The aim is to promote implementation tailored to risks, species, and production systems, including the specific conditions of small-scale aquaculture.

3.5. PVS Process

23% of participating countries reported having conducted an Aquatic PVS assessment. In line with the 2024 WOAH background document, the proposal is that awareness and voluntary use of this tool be promoted among interested Members to support the identification of gaps and institutional strengthening.

In line with the 2024 WOAH global report, the proposed role for regional cooperation is to disseminate information on the scope and benefits of the tool and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and access for interested Members.

3.6. Antimicrobial Resistance and Responsible Use

The survey addressed institutional responsibilities regarding AMR and national guidelines for its prevention in aquaculture.

The proposal calls for strengthening cooperation on the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials, disease prevention, biosecurity, vaccination, and alternatives to antimicrobials, drawing on lessons learned from REASONS and WOAH–CASA activities.

Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen best practices, disease prevention, biosecurity, and evidence-based preventive alternatives; promote communication among authorities, academia, industry, and reference networks; and encourage the implementation of relevant WOAH standards under the One Health approach.

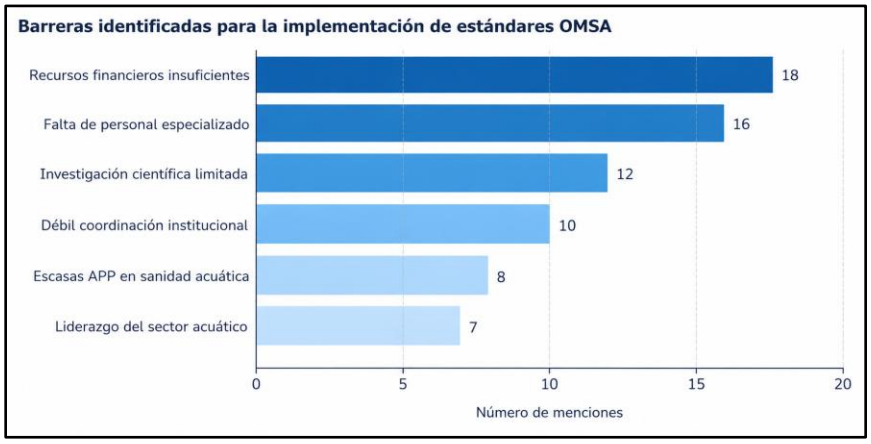
4. Cross-Cutting Barriers to Implementation

Participating countries identified barriers that cut across the implementation of international standards and capabilities in prevention, surveillance, diagnosis, biosafety, and emergency preparedness. The main barriers were related to insufficient financial resources, limited availability of specialized personnel, and the need for more scientific research; problems with institutional coordination, leadership, and public-private collaboration were also highlighted.

Regional cooperation can support training, technical networks, tools, and the exchange of experiences, but it does not replace national responsibility for budgets, staffing, or animal health infrastructure.

In the analysis of 22 countries, eighteen identified insufficient financial resources, sixteen identified a shortage of specialized personnel, twelve reported limited scientific research, ten identified difficulties in institutional coordination, eight reported a lack of public-private partnerships, and seven identified weak leadership in the aquatic animal sector (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Main reported barriers to implementing WOAH standards.



Limitations in public-private coordination also present an opportunity to strengthen aquatic animal health systems. Cooperation among Competent Authorities, producer organizations, academic institutions, and reference centers can contribute to capacity building, the generation and exchange of health information, the implementation of biosecurity measures, and emergency preparedness. These mechanisms must be developed while respecting the jurisdiction of national authorities, the confidentiality of information, and applicable regulatory frameworks.

5. Strategic Proposal: Four Pillars for Regional Action

The four pillars align with the WOAH's global framework and are tailored to the findings of the regional assessment, consultations with Members, and complementary technical background information. Their implementation provides a common regional framework with measures tailored to production systems, species, institutional development, and health risks.

Coherence among the pillars is reflected in distinct functions: Standards promote knowledge, implementation, and participation in their development; Capacity Building fosters tools and competencies; Resilience guides the use of those capacities for prevention and response; and Leadership coordinates stakeholders and institutional oversight.

5.1. Pillar 1. Standards

Regional objective: To strengthen knowledge, participation, and implementation of the WOAH's international standards for aquatic animal health, while promoting closer ties with the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission.

Proposed lines of action:

- Promote understanding and implementation of the Aquatic Animal Health Code and the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals, with emphasis on the standards and chapters prioritized by the Members;
- Strengthen the exchange of knowledge and experiences regarding the practical implementation of standards, particularly in surveillance, risk analysis associated with imports, biosecurity, reporting, zoning and compartmentalization, diagnosis, and emergency preparedness;
- Promote awareness and implementation of WHO-FAO guidelines on the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), aquatic animal welfare, and safe international trade.

- Strengthen engagement with the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission by promoting its work program, priorities, and chapters under development or review; create opportunities for technical exchange and facilitate Members' timely participation in standard-setting processes.

5.2. Pillar 2. Capacity Building

Regional Objective: To strengthen the technical and institutional capacities of Aquatic Animal Health Services through training, cooperation, and the use of regional technical resources.

Proposed Lines of Action:

- Promote regular meetings of the Aquatic Animal Health Focal Points to update knowledge, exchange experiences, and strengthen technical capacities; organize in-person and online technical workshops on priority areas.
- Build capacity in epidemiological surveillance, diagnosis, biosecurity, disease prevention and control, as well as emergency preparedness and management; facilitate the exchange of tools, experiences, and best practices among Members.
- Promote awareness of and voluntary use of the Aquatic PVS Process as a tool for evaluating and strengthening the institutional capacities of interested Members.
- Strengthen cooperation with WOAH'S Collaborating Centers, Reference Laboratories, academic institutions, and other technical organizations to support training, diagnostic networks, and knowledge transfer.
- Encourage the exchange of experiences regarding vaccination, genetic improvement, the prudent use of antimicrobials, and alternatives to antimicrobials; promote tailored activities taking into account species, production systems, national capacities, and small-scale aquaculture.

5.3. Pillar 3. Resilience

Regional objective: To strengthen capacities to prevent, detect, prepare for, and respond to public health emergencies and emerging risks in a timely and coordinated manner.

Proposed Lines of Action:

- Promote the strengthening of public health surveillance systems, the generation and analysis of epidemiological information, and early warning mechanisms for the timely detection of emerging diseases and risks.
- Strengthen emergency preparedness and management through the exchange of experiences regarding the development and updating of contingency plans, the definition of responsibilities, and interagency coordination.
- Encourage national and subregional simulation exercises as tools to assess and strengthen response capacity; promote the documentation and exchange of lessons learned.
- Promote the exchange of information, experiences, and practical tools on the prevention, control, and management of outbreaks, as well as cooperation among countries that share health risks.
- Promote preventive and biosafety measures tailored to the risks and characteristics of different production systems, including the needs of small-scale producers.

5.4. Pillar 4. Leadership

Regional Objective: To strengthen the leadership of Competent Authorities and Aquatic Animal Health Services and to support mechanisms for sustained regional coordination and cooperation.

Proposed Lines of Action:

- Promote stronger leadership and participation by Competent Authorities, Delegates, and Focal Points in identifying national and regional animal health needs and priorities.

- Propose the establishment of a permanent Regional Coordination Group on Aquatic Animal Health as a technical and consultative mechanism to support coordination, cooperation, and follow-up, subject to consideration by the competent bodies of WOAH.
- Strengthen mechanisms for cooperation and exchange among Members and coordination with the WOAH Regional Office for the Americas, the Regional Commission for the Americas, and the Commission on Health Standards for Aquatic Animals, while respectfully acknowledging their distinct roles and responsibilities.
- Promote collaboration mechanisms and public-private partnerships among Competent Authorities, organizations in the productive sector, Collaborating Centers, Reference Laboratories, academia, and technical or financial partners to support training, surveillance, biosecurity, and emergency preparedness, while upholding national competencies and WOAH's institutional procedures.
- Propose mechanisms for monitoring progress, results, and emerging priorities, including reports and proposed activities for consideration by the Regional Commission; facilitate adjustments to the Action Plan, if the Proposed Action Plan is endorsed.

6. Cross-cutting approaches

- Tailored actions based on capacity, institutional maturity, species, and production systems.
- Technical cooperation and exchange of experiences among countries.
- Public-private partnerships to support health management.
- Science, research, and innovation involving centers and networks of experts.
- Particular attention to small-scale aquaculture.
- One Health approach and AMR, where applicable.

These approaches should be applied to the design, prioritization, implementation, and evaluation of activities, not merely cited as principles. Their application should ensure relevance for countries with varying levels of institutional capacity and diverse production systems.

7. Proposal for Regional Governance

The growing importance of aquaculture and the transboundary nature of health risks require Aquatic Animal Health Services and Competent Authorities with the capacity to lead prevention, surveillance, preparedness, and health response efforts, coordinating public, private, scientific, and industry stakeholders.

At the regional level, WOAH can facilitate cooperation among Members and more systematic interaction with the Commission on Aquatic Animal Health Standards. Within this framework, the establishment of a Regional Coordination Group serves as a central mechanism for sustaining regional leadership, channeling priorities, connecting capacities, and ensuring continuity in the implementation and monitoring of the 2027–2032 Action Plan.

Regional Coordination Group on Aquatic Animal Health for the Americas

In May 2025, in order to strengthen regional governance of the organization's work on animal welfare and wildlife, WOAH's Regional Commission for the Americas agreed to create two regional coordination groups for each of these areas, with the goal of supporting the development of a regional strategic vision and the identification of priorities that address the actual needs of member countries.

A similar regional coordination mechanism is proposed to support the implementation, monitoring, and updating of the 2027–2032 Regional Action Plan, promoting cooperation among Members and coordinating the technical capacities available in the region.

The Group would operate under the coordination of the WHO Regional Commission for the Americas, reporting to it and submitting recommendations and proposals to the Regional Commission, which is composed of the Delegates.

Main Functions:

- Direct regional priorities to the WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas and foster sustained interaction with the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission.
- Propose, prioritize, and monitor the regional Action Plan.
- Facilitate technical cooperation and the exchange of experiences among Members.
- Identify and coordinate existing regional capacities.
- Support actions related to surveillance, emergencies, biosecurity, and other priorities.
- Promote the use and implementation of WOAH standards and tools.
- Identify emerging needs and risks.
- Periodically review progress, results, and indicators

The composition and operation will be defined in specific Terms of Reference, seeking a balance between geographic and sectoral representation, including Focal Points, Collaborating Centers, Reference Laboratories, and other relevant technical capacities. Where appropriate, representatives from academia, research institutions, and the private sector may be included. See Appendix II.

Table 2. Proposed Bodies and Functions in Regional Governance

Bodies	Proposed Function
WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas (Delegates)	Regional consideration and decision-making
Permanent Regional Coordination Group	Technical advice, coordination, proposals, and follow-up; reports to the Regional Commission
WOAH Regional Representation for the Americas (RR)	Support for institutional coordination and technical coordination; two representatives proposed
Authorities, Private Sector, and Reference Network	Technical and sectoral participation in the Group, subject to selection and approval

8. Proposed Arrangements and Activities for the 2027–2032 Action Plan

The following activities are proposed measures and do not constitute an adopted operational plan. Detailed planning, indicators, responsible parties, and resources must be defined after the Action Plan has been approved by the institution.

Table 3. Proposed Work Modalities and Activities for the 2027–2032 Action Plan.

Modality	Purpose	Main Pillar
Virtual technical workshops	Practical application of standards, surveillance, biosecurity, diagnostics, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and emergency management	Standards / Capacity Development
In-Person Workshops and Meetings	Applied learning and strengthening of networks	Capacity Development / Resilience
Focal Point Meetings	Regular exchange and development of technical networks	Capacity Development / Leadership
Exchange Among Members	Sharing plans, tools, and lessons learned	Resilience / Leadership
Activities with WOAH Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories	Transfer of scientific and diagnostic expertise	Capacity Development / Leadership
National and Subregional Simulation Exercises	Assessing coordination, preparedness, and response	Capacity Development / Leadership
Technical Cooperation Between Countries	Addressing differentiated gaps	Leadership / Capacity Development
Proposed Coordination Group	Facilitating continuity and follow-up, subject to approval	Leadership
Progress Monitoring	Reviewing indicators, lessons learned, and priorities	Leadership
Engagement with the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission	Disseminating the standards work program and facilitating participation	Standards / Leadership

Initial priorities should focus particularly on surveillance, emergency preparedness, reporting, biosecurity, and capacity development. Other areas of work may address antimicrobial resistance (AMR), vaccines, alternatives to antimicrobials, animal welfare, and emerging standards-related issues, depending on needs and available resources.

The operational sequence, timeline, responsible parties, indicators, and funding will be proposed in biennial action plans, subject to the relevant institutional approvals and procedures. The modalities described herein do not constitute budgetary authorizations or commitments that have already been adopted.

9. Expected Results

- Greater knowledge and documentation of progress in the implementation of the Aquatic Code and Manual.
- Strengthened capacities in surveillance, detection, diagnosis, reporting, and biosecurity.
- Strengthened capacities in surveillance, detection, diagnosis, reporting, and biosecurity.
- Improved emergency preparedness through contingency plans, coordination, and simulations.
- Technical exchanges and activities tailored to national needs.
- Strengthening of regional cooperation, scientific networks, public-private partnerships, and small-scale support.
- Progress on actions related to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), vaccination, alternatives to antimicrobials, animal welfare, and safe trade.
- Greater regional interaction with the Aquatic Animals Health Standards Commission.
- If adopted, setting up of a technical mechanism for regional coordination and monitoring.

10. Implementation and Monitoring Framework

The proposal provides for a cycle of continuous improvement: assessment → prioritization → action → cooperation → monitoring → learning. The assessment of results should take into account verifiable indicators, periodic reports to the Regional Commission, available resources, and any necessary adjustments. The Coordination Group, if adopted, would support the technical continuity of this process.

The eventual Permanent Regional Coordination Group could facilitate technical monitoring and submit regular reports to the WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas, without replacing its decision-making authority or the procedures applicable to implementation and financing.

Indicators should be defined based on verifiable activities and outputs, specifying responsible parties, frequency, and information sources. The assessment should recognize differences in capacity and avoid inappropriate comparisons between countries or subregions.

11. Main sources

- WOAH. Aquatic Animal Health Strategy, 2021–2025.
- WOAH. Second Observatory Monitoring Report.
- WOAH (2024). Barriers to the implementation of aquatic animal health standards: Findings from Findings from a survey of WOAH Members and recommendations. https://doi.org/10.20506/woah.3476
- WOAH Americas. Regional Survey to Delegates and Focal Points: Progress and Gaps in Aquatic Animal Health, 2026.
- WOAH Americas. Subregional technical consultations with Members, 2026.
- WOAH Americas. REASONS Project: activities and workshops in Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, 2025–2026.
- WOAH Americas and CASA Collaborating Center. Seminar series on antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture, 2025–2026.

Appendix I. Analytical Summary of the Regional Survey on Aquatic Animal Health, 2026

Proposed Regional Action Plan for Aquatic Animal Health in the Americas 2027–2032 | Working Document

1. Scope and Interpretation Criteria

The WOAH Regional Survey in the Americas was conducted among Delegates and Focal Points for Aquatic Animals from 32 countries; 22 (68.8%) responded. Closed-ended and open-ended responses were collected regarding standards, capacities, barriers, cooperation, and priorities. The figures represent self-reported information, not an independent assessment of the degree of implementation. In multiple-choice questions, the responses are not mutually exclusive and should not total 22 or 100%. In open-ended questions, a clear distinction is made between substantive responses, lack of information, and absence of proposals.

2. Regulatory Instruments and Development Priorities

Table A1. Awareness and reported use of WOAH instruments.

Instrument	Participating countries reporting awareness/use
WOAH Global Strategy	91 %: reported awareness
Aquatic Animal Health Code	91 %: reported use
Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals	73 %: reported use

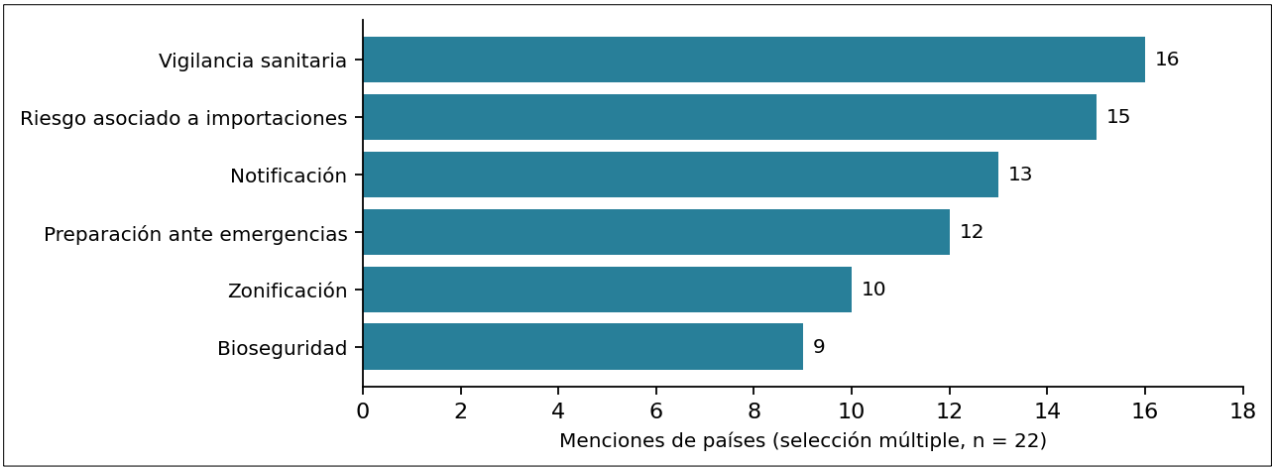
The reported high level of familiarity with the instruments must be set apart from their operational implementation. The survey addressed three distinct dimensions: (i) existing chapters of the Aquatic Code that countries suggest updating, (ii) new areas or chapters proposed for the Code and the Manual, and (iii) standards whose national implementation is considered a priority.

Table A2. Proposed Areas for the Development of the Aquatic Manual.

Qualitative Areas Mentioned for the Aquatic Manual	Scope of the proposal
Lake tilapia virus	Diagnostic protocols and guidelines
Vaccines and quality control	Validation of evaluation methods
Rapid tests	Tools for field decision-making
Artificial intelligence	Potential application in detection and analysis
Antimicrobial resistance	Detection and monitoring methods
Case definitions and susceptible species	Review of technical criteria
Listed Diseases without a chapter	Development of specific diagnostic content

3. Priority Standards for Strengthening National Implementation

Figure A1. Priority areas for strengthening the implementation of existing Standards. Source: WOAH Americas, 2026 regional survey.



Surveillance, import related risk analysis and reporting are the most frequently mentioned topics. These responses guide technical assistance and best-practice exchange activities, without in themselves constituting a request to amend the regulatory text.

4. Structural Barriers, Notification, and Emergencies

Table A3. Reported barriers to the implementation of WOAH standards.

Main Barriers	Mentions
Insufficient financial resources	18
Lack of specialized personnel	16
Limited scientific research	12
Insufficient institutional coordination	10
Lack of public-private partnerships	8
Weak leadership in the aquatic sector	7

The survey results show that the main challenges to implementing international aquatic animal health standards are related to structural and institutional constraints. These include insufficient financial resources, a lack of specialized personnel, limitations in scientific research, difficulties with institutional coordination, limited public-private collaboration, and leadership weaknesses in the aquatic sector. Taken together, these findings underscore the need to strengthen Members' technical and institutional capacities through regional cooperation, the exchange of experiences, and strategic partnerships. Such cooperation can support these efforts without replacing national responsibilities for funding and health management.

Table A4. Perceived barriers to international notification.

Perceived barriers to international notification	Mentions
Trade restrictions associated with notification	15
Closure or los of markets	14
Lack of understanding of WOAH regulations	11
Insufficient coordination among countries	9

With regard to the transparency and timeliness of international notification, countries identified as perceived obstacles potential trade restrictions resulting from notification, the risk of market closures or loss, insufficient understanding of WOAH regulations, and difficulties in coordination among countries. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening trust, knowledge, and the implementation of international standards, as well as promoting communication and cooperation mechanisms among Members that facilitate timely and transparent notification. The findings reflect self-reported perceptions and do not constitute a direct measure of noncompliance with notification requirements.

Table A5. Emergency Preparedness and PVS Aquatic Assessment.

Health Preparedness	Reported Result
Emergency management system	45 % (roughly 10 out of 22)
Simulations conducted in the last five years	23 % (roughly. 5 out of 22)
Aquatic PVS Assessment conducted	23 % (roughly 5 out of 22)

The results reveal gaps in preparedness and response to aquatic animal health emergencies. Only 45% of participating countries reported having an aquatic animal health emergency management system, and 23% reported having conducted simulation exercises in the past five years. Likewise, 23% reported having conducted an assessment of the Aquatic PVS Process. These findings support the strengthening of contingency plans, coordination among institutions, national and subregional practical exercises, and voluntary access to institutional assessment tools. The mere declaration of an emergency system does not, in itself, demonstrate that its operation has been tested.

The responses highlight challenges related to resources, response capabilities, and trust in reporting. The figures for emergencies and PVS correspond to reported capabilities or experiences.

5. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Table A6. Public-Private Partnerships: Responses Regarding Benefits and Challenges.

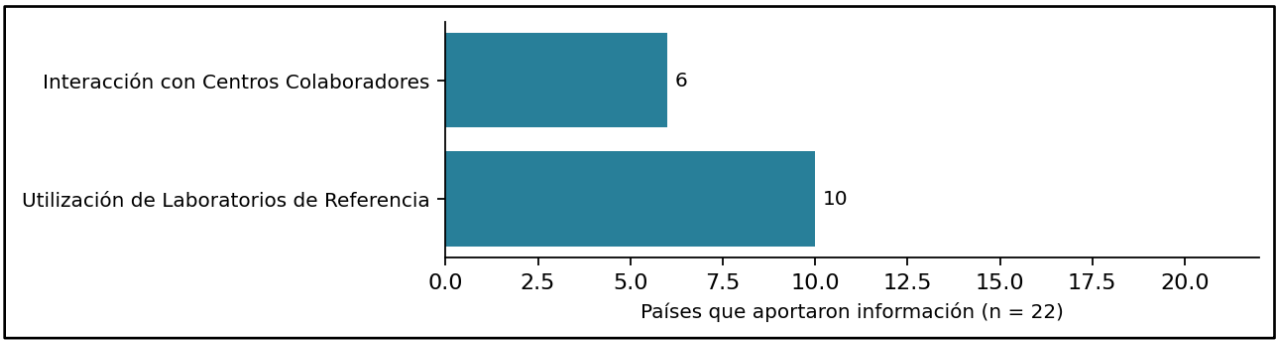
Dimension Surveyed	Substantive Responses	Interpretation
Benefits and Opportunities of PPPs	13/22 (59 %)	Countries that submitted specific proposals
Challenges in Implementing PPPs	21/22 (95 %)	Countries that identified difficulties

Public-private partnerships (PPPs), promoted by WOAH as a tool for cooperation, can help strengthen aquatic animal health through collaboration between competent authorities and private stakeholders. In the survey, 13 of 22 countries (59%) provided substantive responses regarding the benefits or opportunities of PPPs; this figure does not mean that all 13 have implemented a partnership. On the other hand, 21 of 22 countries (95%) identified challenges to their implementation. Among the qualitative barriers highlighted were mistrust between sectors, weaknesses in coordination and governance, insufficient resources and capacity, and the need to establish shared responsibilities and objectives. The results suggest opportunities to promote transparent and sustainable collaboration frameworks, the exchange of

experiences, and joint projects in training, surveillance, biosafety, and emergency preparedness, while respecting the authority of national agencies.

6. WOAH Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories

Figure A2. Substantive responses regarding technical reference networks. Source: WOAH Americas, 2026 regional survey (n = 22).



Six out of 22 countries submitted information on interactions with Collaborating Centers; ten out of 22 described their use of Reference Laboratories. The mechanisms mentioned included training, conferences, and technical meetings; diagnostic support; interlaboratory comparisons; assay standardization; surveillance; and specialized advisory services. Countries that did not report details should not automatically be classified as countries without any access or use.

The presentation references, among others, CASA, centers specializing in epidemiology and risk assessment, and various national and international reference laboratories.

7. Small-scale initiatives, cooperation mechanisms, and working groups

Fourteen of 22 countries (64%) submitted proposals on small-scale aquaculture; seven did not report; and one did not submit a proposal or indicated that it was not applicable. Qualitative areas include training, risk-based biosecurity, passive surveillance, water quality, traceability, access to inputs, and producer organizations.

The survey also highlights peer-to-peer exchanges, meetings of Delegates and Focal Points, and the combination of in-person and online events. These responses support cooperation modalities.

8. Interpretive summary for the Proposed Regional Action Plan

Table A7. Links between regional findings and strategic pillars.

Survey Findings	Strategic Guidance That Can Provide Support
High level of regulatory knowledge, uneven implementation	Regulatory Pillar: practical application and technical dialogue on chapters
Financial, staffing, and evidence-related barriers	Capacity Building: assistance, training, and cooperation
Gaps in simulations and reporting	Resilience: contingency plans, exercises, and trust-building mechanisms
Interest in and challenges with PPPs; uneven use of referral networks	Leadership: transparent coordination and leveraging of capacities
Diverse needs of small-scale producers	Cross-cutting approaches proportional to risks and capacities

The results provide descriptive evidence to guide regional priorities. The courses of action derived from them must be tailored to national needs, validated through the appropriate institutional mechanisms, and remain subject to the availability of resources and endorsement by the relevant WOAH authorities.

Appendix II. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Regional Coordination Group

Proposed Terms of Reference • Regional Coordination Group on Aquatic Animal Health for the Americas

1. Purpose

To support the identification of needs, prioritization, coordination, and monitoring of regional aquatic animal health activities led by WOAH, in accordance with the priorities of the Member States of the Americas.

2. Goals

1. Identify needs and provide strategic advice and recommendations to the WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas and to WOAH regarding priorities and emerging health risks in aquatic animals.

2. Contribute to the monitoring and, where appropriate, the revision of the Regional Action Plan for Aquatic Animals, in line with WOAH's Global Strategy.

3. Propose and support a regional action plan with activities, leaders, timelines, and indicators, subject to institutional authorization and the availability of resources.

4. Facilitate sustainable coordination and communication mechanisms among Members, Reference Centers, reference laboratories, academia, the private sector, and relevant partners.

5. Identify opportunities for cooperation and resources to support prioritized activities.

6. Promote the participation of Members from the Americas in WOAH’s aquatic animal health regulatory processes.

3. Proposed Composition

The composition should promote balanced representation across the subregions of the Americas, the sectors involved, and gender. The following structure reflects the preliminary proposal set out in the strategic document and is subject to institutional review:

- Chair: Elected by the Bureau of the WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas. A two-year term, renewable once, is proposed. The election will be held among candidates nominated by members of the Bureau or those who have volunteered to stand for election. Candidates may include Delegates who are not members of the Bureau and Focal Points for Aquatic Animal Health.

- Technical Secretariat: Two WOAH representatives, one from Headquarters and one from the Regional Representation.

- Other members:

  - Nominated from among WOAH Members, partners with a cooperation agreement with WOAH (non-governmental organizations and private-sector representatives), financial partners, and expert networks, for a two-year term. There is no limit to the number of terms. Each year, 50% of the members will be renewed. The list of members must be submitted by the Chair of the Advisory Group to the President of the Regional Commission for approval.
  - Public sector (3): Three representatives from WOAH Members (Delegates or Focal Points for Aquatic Animal Health), one from each subregion (North America, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America).

- Private sector (3): Three representatives of producer associations with cooperation agreements. No more than one representative per association, ensuring representation of the different production sectors.
- Financial partners (2): One representative from each financial partner providing support for the implementation of the Regional Action Plan and the Action Plan (up to two members).
- Expert network (2): Two representatives from the region's WOAH Collaborating Centres for Aquatic Animal Health. No more than one representative per institution.
- Civil society (1): One representative from a non-governmental organization with a cooperation agreement.

4. Activities

- Update the mapping of capacities, priorities, and needs using the findings of the 2026 Regional Survey and other official sources, and conduct additional consultations where appropriate.
- Propose an operational action plan, initially on a biennial basis, to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Action Plan and include indicator monitoring.
- Organize or promote technical meetings, webinars, and workshops on standards implementation, surveillance, diagnostics, reporting, biosecurity, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), vaccination, and alternatives to antimicrobials.
- Promote emergency preparedness through the exchange of contingency plans and lessons learned, as well as national and subregional simulation exercises.
- Support training and the exchange of experiences among Delegates and Focal Points for Aquatic Animal Health.
- Facilitate collaboration with WOAH Collaborating Centres, Reference Laboratories, academic institutions, the private sector, and other partners.
- Share information on the work program of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission and promote Members' participation in standards-setting consultations.
- Identify funding and collaboration opportunities without committing resources in the absence of the required approvals.
- Prepare an annual report on activities, progress, challenges, and recommendations for consideration by the Regional Commission.

5. Operating Procedures

- The Secretariat will coordinate meeting invitations, agendas, minutes, and reports in close collaboration with the Chair.
- At least two regular online meetings per year are proposed, with additional sessions as required by the Action Plan. In-person meetings may also be held, subject to funding availability and institutional authorization.
- Participation in the Group will not entitle members to remuneration for this role, without prejudice to any administrative arrangements established for specific activities.
- The Group may invite experts and organizations with relevant expertise in matters on the agenda, based on criteria of technical relevance and transparency
- Recommendations will be adopted by consensus whenever possible. Any differing positions must be recorded in the minutes. The Group does not replace WOAH's formal decision-making mechanisms
- The Group will operate under the authority of, and report to, the WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas through the appropriate institutional channels.
- The implementation of activities and budgetary commitments will be subject to the applicable institutional approvals and the availability of resources.
- Members must comply with applicable rules on confidentiality, conflict-of-interest management, and the responsible use of information.

6. Monitoring and Review of the Terms of Reference

The Group will propose process and outcome indicators for the Action Plan. The Secretariat will consolidate monitoring activities and submit regular reports to the Regional Commission. These Terms of Reference may be reviewed in line with regional priorities and in accordance with the applicable institutional procedures.