



# **Aquatic Animal Health Programmes** their benefits for global food security

(Panama), 28-30 June 2011

## **OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health**

### **Panama Declaration**

#### **CONSIDERING THAT**

1. The first OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health was held in Bergen, Norway, in 2006, recognised the urgent need for Members to develop national aquatic animal health strategies;
2. The need for greater efficiency in the production of animal protein to meet the demands of the growing world population, especially in developing countries;
3. Aquaculture is one of the world's fastest growing food producing sectors and food derived from aquatic animals is an important source of high quality animal protein; aquaculture representing now close to 50% of aquatic animal global consumption;
4. Aquatic animal diseases represent a major limitation to efficient aquaculture production and a constraint on international trade;
5. An increasing number of aquatic species are farmed worldwide but few, if any, are truly domesticated, leading to important gaps in knowledge, including on nutritional requirements, welfare and disease control of many farmed species;
6. Countries need effective aquatic animal health programmes to increase production of safe products in an environmentally sustainable way and to participate in international trade;
7. Veterinarians and other aquatic animal health professionals play a key role in the establishment and implementation of aquatic animal health programmes;
8. Aquatic Animal Health Services, whether part of the Veterinary Services or not, frequently lack human and financial resources and infrastructure, including legislation, to implement efficient aquatic animal health programmes.
9. That the mandate of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), as an intergovernmental organisation with 178 Members, is to improve terrestrial and aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide and to promote safe trade;

10. The need for all OIE Members to support the application of the OIE standards to improve animal health and welfare globally and to promote safe international trade in animals and animal products worldwide, notably through meeting the obligations of World Trade Organization membership (as appropriate), including for health certification;
11. Government authorities are responsible to establish appropriate regulatory frameworks for aquaculture products to mitigate risks to human health, animal health and the environment, and to ensure that these products are safe and appropriately certified to meet international trade requirements.
12. Good governance is of critical importance in enabling veterinary services and aquatic animal health services, in coordination with stakeholders, to fulfil the basic missions recommended by the international community and the OIE in order to improve animal health and welfare worldwide;
13. There is a need to increase the capacity of all countries worldwide to create or maintain national animal health and veterinary public health systems that cover all national territories, with the necessary infrastructure and can provide for the prevention, surveillance, early detection and rapid response to outbreaks of aquatic animal diseases, including zoonoses, whether these arise through natural, accidental or intentional events and for the safety of aquatic animal products for human consumption;
14. The OIE is working to support Member Countries, including through the ongoing conduct of capacity building seminars that aim to raise awareness and improve capacities of national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals, under the overall authority of the National OIE Delegate;
15. At the 79th OIE General Session (2011), the OIE adopted a resolution calling for the provision of recommendations on Veterinary Education, based on recommended minimum competencies required of Day 1 veterinary graduates, to enable all countries to meet the OIE standards for efficient Veterinary Services (comprising both the public and private sector);
16. In many countries, aquatic animal health and medicine are regarded as a post graduate specialisation and are not taught to veterinary undergraduates;
17. OIE Reference Centres are of critical importance to help the OIE to fulfil its mandate relevant to diagnostic capacities and the setting of science-based standards, guidelines and recommendations on animal health and welfare;
18. The OIE Twinning Programme, launched in 2006, creates opportunities for developing and in-transition countries, including to implement laboratory diagnostic methods based on the OIE standards, with the eventual aim of creating more OIE Reference Centres in geographic areas that are currently under-represented and to reinforce the veterinary scientific community in developing countries;
19. Scientific knowledge on tools for disease prevention and therapy is less advanced for aquatic animals than for terrestrial animals, notably in relation to the use and availability of veterinary medicines, including antimicrobial agents;

20. The risks presented by the use of antimicrobial agents.
21. The epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS) presents important threats to fish health, livelihoods and food security in Africa; and

**THE CONFERENCE MAKES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FOR THE OIE:**

22. The OIE should cooperate with governments and with relevant international and regional organisations to increase awareness of the need for aquatic animal health programmes; improve disease reporting and foster cooperation between veterinary and other relevant authorities at the national and international level;
23. The OIE should strengthen collaboration with donors and with regional and international organisations, such as FAO, to advocate for the key role of veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals in the prevention and control of disease and to encourage governments and donors to invest in Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services as a Global Public Good;
24. The OIE should continue taking steps to make the PVS Pathway, appropriately adapted to national aquatic animal health systems, more accessible to governments that wish to strengthen Aquatic Animal Health Services (AAHS), including through the conduct of pilot evaluations of AAHS at the request of OIE Members;
25. The OIE should continue providing capacity building support to National Delegates to help them to comply with their rights and obligations, and to Aquatic Animal Focal Points under the authority of National Delegates, to strengthen the capacities of OIE Members, particularly developing countries, to participate in the standard-setting process.
26. The OIE should continue encouraging governments, relevant regional and international organisations and donors, to provide sufficient resources for aquatic animal health governance and programs, and for applied research relevant to these programmes, including into aquatic animal feed, welfare, therapeutics and vaccines;
27. The OIE should promote twinning projects that can strengthen early diagnosis; reporting, prevention and management of aquatic animal diseases; and other appropriate elements of capacity building;
28. The OIE should address the particular needs of veterinarians working with aquatic animals as part of its recommendations on the Day 1 competencies of graduating veterinarians, including by asking the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission to prepare recommendations on the content of the curriculum for Day 1 and Specialist Veterinarians; and
29. The OIE should convince governments and donors to assist African countries under threat from epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS).

**FOR OIE MEMBERS:**

30. Countries where aquaculture is an important or growing sector should consider requesting an OIE PVS evaluation of their Aquatic Animal Health Services, with the objective of improving competencies and general compliance with OIE standards and guidelines;
31. Independent of entering the PVS Pathway, Members should take steps to improve compliance with OIE standards and guidelines, notably on the diagnosis and reporting to the OIE of aquatic animal diseases; on the use of therapeutic tools, such as antimicrobials, and on the formation of public-private partnerships;
32. Those Members who have not yet done so should nominate national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals under the authority of the OIE Delegate and support participation of nominated Focal Points in OIE regional capacity building seminars and other relevant activities;
33. The OIE National Delegate should take steps to ensure that the OIE standards and recommendations on the prudent use of antimicrobial agents are respected in his/her country;
34. OIE Reference Centres should, as part of their mandate, continue to comply with and promote the application of OIE standards, and provide services to OIE Members;
35. Members with an OIE Reference Centre for aquatic animal diseases should provide sufficient resources to enable the Centre to adequately fulfil its mandate and duties.
36. OIE Members, especially those with OIE Reference Centres, should give favourable consideration to participating in the OIE Twinning Programme;
37. Governments should support and encourage applied research on key questions related to aquatic animal health programmes, including on: relevant aspects of feed for use in aquaculture; aquatic animal welfare; and ecologically sustainable tools for the prevention and control of important aquatic animal diseases; and
38. Governments should, as appropriate, comply with their WTO SPS obligations with respect to aquatic animal health certification for international trade.