Ad hoc Group on the Evaluation of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Status and endorsement of official control programmes of Members

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A meeting of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of foot and mouth disease (FMD) status and endorsement of official control programmes of Members (hereafter the Group) was held from 04 to 07 November 2024 at WOAH Headquarters.

1. Opening

Dr Montserrat Arroyo, Deputy Director General for International Standards and Science, welcomed and thanked the Group for its commitment and extensive support towards WOAH mandates. She highlighted that the official recognition of animal health status was an important activity for WOAH and acknowledged the amount of work before, during and after the meeting and the efforts required in reviewing the dossiers, particularly considering the high number of dossiers received each year.

Dr Arroyo reminded the Group of the confidentiality of the dossiers for official recognition and thanked the experts for abiding by the undertaking of confidentiality. She also mentioned that if any members of the Group had any conflict of interest in the evaluation of a dossier, the expert(s) should withdraw from the discussions and decision-making of the particular application.

Dr Park briefed the Group on the adoption of the revised Chapter 8.8. 'Infection with FMD virus' of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (*Terrestrial Code*), which included provisions for the introduction of animals from countries or zones free from FMD where vaccination is practised into countries or zones free from FMD where vaccination is not practised, recommendations for the importation of fresh meat of small ruminants from FMD-infected countries/zones, etc.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur

Dr Wilna Vosloo chaired the Group, and Dr David Paton acted as rapporteur, with the support of the WOAH Secretariat. The Group endorsed the proposed agenda.

The terms of reference, agenda and list of participants are presented in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

The Group was informed that WOAH reviewed declared interests, and it was agreed that members with a potential conflict in the evaluation of the FMD status of Members would withdraw from the discussion during the decision-making process.

3. Evaluation of applications for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is not practised

a. Bolivia

Bolivia has three FMD-free zones officially recognised by WOAH covering its entire territory: two zones FMD-free where vaccination is not practised, and one zone FMD-free where vaccination is practised.

In September 2024, Bolivia submitted a dossier requesting official recognition of a zone (covering the departments of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Tarija, and parts of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí) as FMD-free where vaccination is not practised. This zone spans 47% of Bolivia's land area and represents 64% of the national cattle population. Vaccination in the proposed zone was suspended as of September 2023. Bolivia confirmed that the application is for the official recognition of the proposed as free where vaccination is not practised and merge with the adjacent FMD-free zone where vaccination is not practised (the Macro-region of the Altiplano). The official recognition of the proposed zone will result in the entire territory of Bolivia being officially recognised as FMD-free where vaccination is not practised by WOAH.

The Group requested additional information and received clarifications from Bolivia during the evaluation of the dossier.

In accordance with the established procedures, the participating experts having Bolivian nationality and from the Pan American Centre for Foot and Mouth Disease (PANAFTOSA), expressed conflict of interest and withdrew from the meeting during the deliberation of the dossier by the Group.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group acknowledged that Bolivia maintains a consistent record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting. Art. 1.2.3 of the General Regulations for Animal Health (REGENSA) establishes the National Animal Health Commission (CONASA) for coordinated public-private action in animal health. The National Epidemiological Surveillance System (SINAVE) defines early-warning responsibilities within the

Epidemiological Surveillance Network. A surveillance plan for 2024 includes specific protocols for suspected vesicular disease cases.

ii. *Veterinary Services*

The Group acknowledged that the Veterinary Authority had current knowledge of, and authority over, the FMD-susceptible animals in the proposed zone and the country and was compliant with the requirements for a country having officially recognised FMD-free zones.

The Veterinary Authority in Bolivia has demonstrated comprehensive oversight concerning FMD-susceptible animals within the proposed zone and nationwide, which includes extensive animal movement control at various checkpoints and regulated slaughterhouse operations under SENASAG (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Animal e Inocuidad Alimentaria) supervision, with approximately 2.3 million cattle processed annually.

iii. *Situation of FMD in the past 12 months*

The last FMD outbreak in the proposed zone and in the country occurred in March 2007. Bolivia reported no clinical evidence of FMD in unvaccinated populations since 2007, nor evidence of virus transmission based on ongoing sero-epidemiological surveys conducted in areas under previous vaccination schemes.

iv. *Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months*

The last vaccination against FMD in the zone was conducted in September 2023, and vaccination against FMD was legally banned.

v. *Surveillance in accordance with Articles 8.8.43. to 8.8.45.*

Bolivia described its passive surveillance based on a network of epidemiological sensors trained by SENASAG, which engages in weekly communications with official veterinarians. The dossier documented vesicular disease reports from 2022 to 2024, detailing investigation outcomes that ruled out FMD. Bolivia stated that 17 clinical suspicions of vesicular disease were reported between 2022 and 2024 (until the time of submission of the dossier) and described how they were followed up to rule out FMD by serological ELISA/EITB non-structural proteins (NSP) tests. In 2024, a serological survey in the proposed zone of unvaccinated animals aged 6-18 months found no FMDV infection, using a survey design prevalence of 1% between farms and 10% within farms. This study revealed no evidence of FMDV infection and transmission. The Group commended Bolivia on the serological survey performed in 2024 with a clearly described strategy in the proposed zone.

Regarding FMD diagnostic capabilities, Bolivia indicated that the UNALAB Santa Cruz laboratory is expected to achieve ISO 17025 accreditation for FMD tests by September 2025.

The Group noted that Bolivia participated in interlaboratory proficiency schemes in 2021 and 2022 for serological and PCR diagnostic tests, achieving satisfactory results. However, recognising the importance of UNALAB Santa Cruz's participation in WOAH Reference Laboratory proficiency trials for FMD to ensure independent verification of diagnostic quality, the Group expressed its concern that the laboratory's lack of participation in these trials in recent years may impact the reliability of its diagnostic outcomes.

Overall, the Group concluded that Bolivia's combined strategy for surveillance, including passive and serological surveillance, as well as surveillance at the abattoirs, was sufficient to demonstrate the absence of infection with FMDV in unvaccinated animals and FMDV transmission in previously vaccinated animals.

vi. *Regulatory measures for the prevention and early detection of FMD*

The Group agreed that Bolivia has a well-established awareness network among producers involving local leaders and epidemiological sensors to support passive surveillance. Awareness campaigns target farmers and other stakeholders. The dossier described legal procedures for addressing illegal imports, including confiscation and destruction of animals or products. Notably, REGENSA include sanctions for non-compliance, and administrative protocols ensure proper handling of illegal commodities.

vii. *Description of the boundaries of the proposed free zone*

Bolivia confirmed that the application is for the official recognition of the proposed zone as free from FMD without vaccination and merge with the adjacent FMD-free zone without vaccination (the Macro-region of the Altiplano). Additionally, Bolivia clarified that the proposed zone and the zone comprised by the Departments of Pando, Beni and north of La Paz be kept separate. The main reason for keeping the two zones separate was to take advantage of the natural barriers between the two zones and the existence of artificial sanitary barriers (Yucumo and San Pablo checkpoints) that would allow effective movement control between the two zones in non-emergency situations and strategically in emergencies, contributing to the control and containment of the disease in case of recurrence.

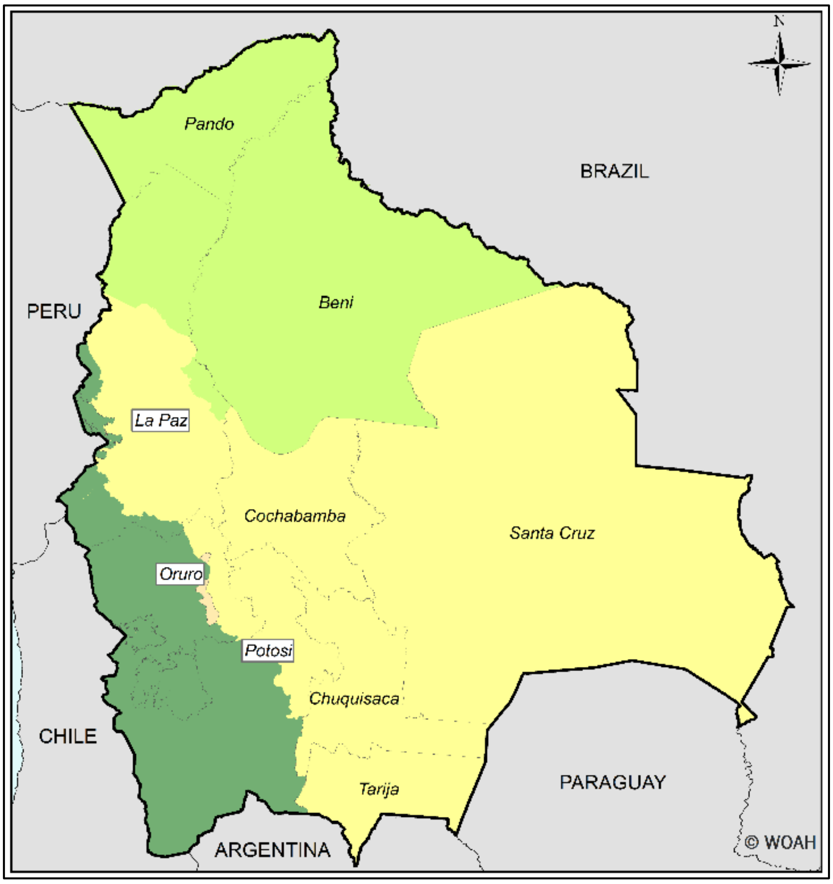

Figure 1. Proposed zone in yellow for potential recognition in May 2025 as FMD-free where vaccination is not practised and merge with the adjacent zone consisting of the Macro-region of the Altiplano in dark green. The FMD-free zone where vaccination is not practised consisting of the Department of Beni and the northern part of the Department of La Paz and the Department of Pando (in light green) to be kept as a separate zone.

viii. *Description of the boundaries and measures of a protection zone, if applicable.*

Not applicable.

ix. *Description of the system for preventing the entry of the virus into the proposed FMD free zone*

The Group noted that the proposed zone borders countries or zones that are FMD-free, reducing the risk of virus introduction. The Group acknowledged that Bolivia enforces strict import protocols and prohibits feeding pigs with food waste from human sources from sanitary facilities, international airports and ports. Additional regulations were in place to prevent pigs' access to animal waste in slaughterhouse operations. The movement of susceptible animals and related products follows Andean Community regulations, and Bolivia coordinates closely with veterinary authorities in neighbouring countries, particularly for transhumant animal movements.

The Group agreed that Bolivia was compliant with the requirements in Chapter 8.8 for controlling the entry of FMD via imported animals and products.

x. Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.3.

The Group agreed that the format of the dossier was compliant with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.3.

Conclusion

Considering the points mentioned above, the Group concluded that Bolivia's application complied with the requirements of Chapter 8.8 and Article 1.11.3 of the *Terrestrial Code*. Therefore, the Group recommended that the proposed zone of Bolivia be officially recognised as free from FMD where vaccination is not practised.

b. Brazil

In September 2024, Brazil submitted a dossier requesting official recognition of a zone covering the States of Alagoas, Amapá, Amazonas, Bahia, Ceará, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Maranhão, Minas Gerais, Pará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Norte, Roraima, São Paulo, Sergipe, Tocantins and Distrito Federal, with the exclusion of the municipalities of the States of Amazonas and Mato Grosso that are part of the zone of Block 1. The official recognition of the proposed zone will result in the entire territory of Brazil being officially recognised as FMD-free where vaccination is not practised by WOAH.

The Group requested additional information and received clarifications from Brazil during the evaluation of the dossier.

In accordance with the established procedures, the participating expert from the PANAFTOSA expressed conflict of interest and withdrew from the meeting during the deliberation of the dossier by the Group.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group agreed that Brazil has a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting. The Group noted the well-documented, marked reduction in the number of outbreaks and epidemic events after the implementation of the eradication program.

ii. Veterinary Services

The Group acknowledged that the Veterinary Authority of Brazil has current knowledge of, and authority over, the FMD-susceptible animals in the proposed zone and the country and was compliant with the requirements for a country having officially recognised FMD-free zones.

iii. Situation of FMD in the past 12 months

The last FMD outbreak was in 2006, in the municipality of Eldorado, Mato Grosso do Sul, which is part of the proposed zone. At that time, the cases were controlled by stamping out infected and at-risk populations.

iv. Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months

The Group noted the phased cessation of vaccination in the proposed zone between November 2022 and April 2024, accompanied by the implementation of serosurveys. The last vaccination in some of the states of the proposed zone was carried out in April 2024. The Group agreed that the proposed free zone would meet the provisions of Article 8.8.3. in May 2025 when the World Assembly would make the final decision, provided that Brazil confirms that the prohibition of vaccination against FMD continues to be effectively implemented and supervised (Article 8.8.3. point 6 of the *Terrestrial Code*).

v. Surveillance in accordance with Articles 8.8.43. to 8.8.45.

The Group commended Brazil's surveillance system with many components, including passive surveillance, sero-epidemiological studies, surveillance on farms, surveillance in animal movements, surveillance in animal agglomerations and surveillance at slaughter. The Group acknowledged the surveillance data provided for the past years and the investigations undertaken to rule out the suspected cases. The Group expressed concern regarding the possible illegal movements at the border with a country not recognised as free from FMD and requested additional information, to which Brazil responded by providing updated maps and an extensive explanation indicating that the concerned border is composed mostly of dense rainforest. The only entry point is where the protection zone is established, and inspection posts have been implemented.

The Group noted that no infections had been detected in states that discontinued vaccination, and recent serosurveys have indicated an absence of viral circulation.

vi. Regulatory measures for the prevention and early detection of FMD

The Group acknowledged the existence of regulatory measures in place, including the notification of suspected cases, as well as the use of incentives and penalties.

vii. Description of the boundaries of the proposed free zone

The proposed zone is the only remaining zone in Brazil that is officially recognised by WOAH as FMD-free where vaccination is practised. This large zone has nearly 184 million previously vaccinated cattle and buffalo. Vaccinations were stopped in three different phases from November 2022 to April 2024.

Figure 2. Proposed zone of Brazil in yellow for potential recognition in May 2025 as FMD-free where vaccination is not practised. Zones already having an FMD-free status where vaccination is not practised (light blue, pink, light green and green).

viii. Description of the boundaries and measures of a protection zone, if applicable

The Group acknowledged that the majority of bordering countries have an FMD-free status officially recognised by WOAH and noted that a protection zone was set bordering the areas with a higher risk of disease introduction, including procedures for surveillance and response. A Mutual Understanding Agreement was signed on 6 September 2018 between the veterinary services and the private sectors of both countries, establishing the commitment to ensure work cooperation and exchange of information to prevent virus incursion. The Group noted the implementation of specific programmes to increase surveillance and controls at the border. In addition, the Group noted that the border with Brazil is characterised predominantly by dense forest and rugged terrain, which serves as a substantial natural barrier.

ix. *Description of the system for preventing the entry of the virus into the proposed FMD free zone*

The Group recognised that a surveillance system with five components is in place (see section *v.* of the report). In addition, the Group noted that measures are in place for monitoring animal movements, regulations and procedures are in place for imports of animals and animal products, and relevant data was provided in the dossier. Moreover, the Group acknowledged that a summary of movements within states in the zone was provided. All measures in place to minimise the risk of introduction via imports of animals or animal products were described, along with data on the types of imports and countries of origin. Additionally, information on actions taken and data on movements or imports that did not meet regulations over recent years were also included, and the results presented demonstrate that an efficient control system is in place.

x. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.3.*

The Group agreed that the format of the dossier was compliant with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.3.

Conclusion

Considering the points mentioned above, the Group concluded that Brazil's application complied with the requirements of Chapter 8.8 and Article 1.11.3. of the *Terrestrial Code*. Therefore, the Group recommended that the proposed zone of Brazil be officially recognised as free from FMD where vaccination is not practised.

The Group acknowledged that Brazil is aware of the significant risk of reintroduction of FMD virus into the proposed FMD-free zone from a bordering country that does not have an FMD-free status recognised by WOAH. The Group recommended that Brazil ensures that a high level of awareness regarding FMD is maintained among livestock keepers in the protection zone and along the border with this country. The Group also recommended that the programme of enhanced surveillance continues along this border, based on a systematic and frequent clinical inspection of farms and communities that keep susceptible livestock. The Group emphasised that regular inspections are required to increase the sensitivity of early detection of FMD and rapid control of FMD introductions.

4. Evaluation of applications for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised

a. Argentina

In September 2024, Argentina submitted an application for official recognition of a merged FMD-free zone. This merge was proposed for the two northern zones: *Centro Norte* and *Cordón Fronterizo*. The proposed merging of the *Centro Norte* and *Cordón Fronterizo* zones reflects their shared health status and compatible risk profiles, enabling streamlined animal health management without necessitating a protection zone. Historical additional controls in *Cordón Fronterizo* had been discontinued due to reduced risk from neighbouring countries, all of which are now FMD-free.

Figure 3. Proposed merged zone of Argentina in yellow for potential recognition in May 2025. Zones already having an FMD-free status where vaccination is not practised in the three shades or green.

Furthermore, the Group recognised that Argentina's FMD surveillance practices are in line with Articles 8.8.43 to 8.8.45, incorporating a robust strategy combining annual serological surveys with ongoing passive surveillance to identify potential FMD incursions. Two types of serological surveys are performed, and both follow a two-stage cluster sampling approach. Both types perform a similar design approach for the random selection of establishments but differ in the approach used for the selection of animals within an establishment. One type of survey randomly selects unvaccinated young animals (sentinels), whilst the other type randomly selects vaccinated animals between six and 24 months of age. Supported by longstanding regulatory measures, Argentina has implemented strict import controls and ensured compliance with international standards to enhance early detection, prevention, and control of FMD. The Group agreed that this comprehensive and effective approach satisfies the requirements for maintaining FMD-free status in accordance with Chapter 8.8 of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Conclusion

Considering the rationale provided by Argentina to merge the two zones, the Group recommended the recognition of the merged zone as an FMD-free zone where vaccination is practised.

b. Korea (Rep. of)

In August 2024, the Republic of Korea (hereinafter Korea) applied for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised. The zone is the island of Jeju, a Special Self-Governing Province located at the southernmost tip of the Republic of Korea. The Group requested additional information and received clarifications from Korea during the evaluation of the dossier.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group acknowledged that Jeju never had FMD outbreaks, while mainland Korea had experienced several outbreaks. The Group noted that Korea reported these outbreaks in a timely manner. The most recent outbreak of FMD was timely notified to WOAH through WAHIS, along with other transboundary animal diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza and lumpy skin disease. Reporting of FMD suspect cases is compulsory to anyone, not only veterinarians and farmers. When reported, suspect cases are investigated promptly.

ii. Veterinary Services

In Korea, the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) oversees veterinary legislation and coordinates national disease control and prevention strategies, while its affiliate, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA), handles animal inspection, quarantine, diagnostic testing, and disease control activities. The 'Act on the Prevention of Contagious Animal Diseases' (PCAD) is the primary law governing animal disease control in Korea. The province of Jeju has, since 2018, additional animal disease control and prevention regulations for the importation of commodities allowed under the 'Special Act for the Establishment of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province and the Creation of an International Free City'. In addition, the Group noted that Korea has FMD-control guidelines in place, which includes the 'Operation Guideline for FMD Control' and the 'Standard Operating Procedures for FMD Prevention and Control'.

The Group acknowledged the 22 offices, ten livestock disease prevention centres, and the large workforce APQA placed throughout the country. APQA is responsible for quarantine inspections of animals entering and exiting Jeju Island, while the Livestock Disease Control Center conducts national disease surveillance and response activities. The FMD Diagnostic Division operates a WOAH Reference Laboratory that has participated in and conducts proficiency testing for FMD. The local veterinary services collaborate with the central government to manage quarantine measures for livestock diseases. The Jeju Special Self-Governing Province Veterinary Service Laboratory (JVSL) is nationally certified for FMD diagnosis and handles livestock disease diagnosis and inspections. The Group noted that subordinated local organisations have qualified staff to execute field disease control tasks, including vaccination against FMD and biosecurity guidance.

The Korean Federation of Livestock Cooperatives maintains a 'Livestock Traceability System,' and the Group acknowledged the efficient management of livestock movement and births in Jeju, with compliance being closely monitored.

iii. Situation of FMD in the past 12 months

The Group acknowledged that FMD outbreaks were never reported in the proposed zone of Jeju and that, per local laws, it enforced a ban on livestock entry from other regions of peninsular Korea after recent outbreaks, the last of which was in May 2023.

iv. Routine vaccination and vaccines

Korea reported that vaccination is compulsory for cattle, pigs, and goats and has been voluntary for deer since 2011. The Group acknowledged the high potency of vaccines used in Jeju, including bivalent vaccines against FMDV serotypes O and A, with booster schedules in place. The Group noted satisfactory vaccine matching data and results on FMD vaccine antibody positivity rates from 2022 to 2024, showing a 98% positive rate for cattle and 91% for pigs.

The Group acknowledged that serological testing is required after vaccination to ensure efficacy. In farms with inefficient vaccination results, the animals are held in place, the owner notified and fined, and additional vaccinations are administered in 1-2 days. Animals with low immunity are not allowed to move, even to slaughter.

From the additional information provided, the Group agreed that the results of the FMD vaccine antibodies positivity rate were adequate. The Group observed that the results varied depending on the SP-ELISA diagnostic test used to evaluate the seropositivity in pigs. Upon the Group's request, Korea explained that differences in the average positivity rate observed were related to the different sensitivity of the two diagnostic kits used.

v. *Surveillance in accordance with Articles 8.8.43. to 8.8.45.*

Korea reported that the Jeju Veterinary Services conducts clinical surveillance in farms and slaughterhouses. The Group noted that intensive clinical, serological and targeted surveillance is in place in the proposed zone. Clinical surveillance in the past two years examined over half a million head of cattle and more than eleven million pigs associated with the brucellosis and tuberculosis control programmes and also at slaughter. Korea reported that all cattle farms are subject to surveillance at least once a year, while all pig breeding farms are inspected four times per year. No FMD suspected cases were reported in the last 24 months.

The Group noted that the number of farms surveyed was determined considering 10% prevalence, 95% sensitivity, 100% specificity and 99% confidence level. The Group acknowledged the low proportion of NSP-positive samples in recent years, with detection rates staying below 1%. Korea also indicated the use of ELISA for FMDV NSP antibody screening, with ample coverage in Jeju for 2023-2024. The Group agreed that the protocol for handling NSP-positive cases, including follow-up testing and potential movement restrictions were in accordance with the recommendations of the *Terrestrial Code* and *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (Terrestrial Manual)*.

vi. *Regulatory measures for the prevention and early detection of FMD*

The Group observed the stringent measures in place at Jeju's borders, including quarantine inspections at airports and seaports, with X-ray machines and quarantine detection dogs inspecting incoming travellers' baggage. Korea explained that livestock owners and workers are mandated to undergo animal disease control education programmes, and over 350 people participated annually since 2022.

vii. *Description of the boundaries of the proposed free zone*

The proposed zone of Jeju Province is at the southernmost tip of the Korean Peninsula, an island in the northwestern part of the Pacific Ocean in the northeastern part of Asia. Covering an expanse of 1,850 square kilometres, Jeju Province consists of nine inhabited islands and 55 uninhabited islands. Transportation to Jeju from mainland Korea and nearby countries is by air and sea routes. Transportation to the affiliated islands of Jeju is available via ships departing from the main island of Jeju.

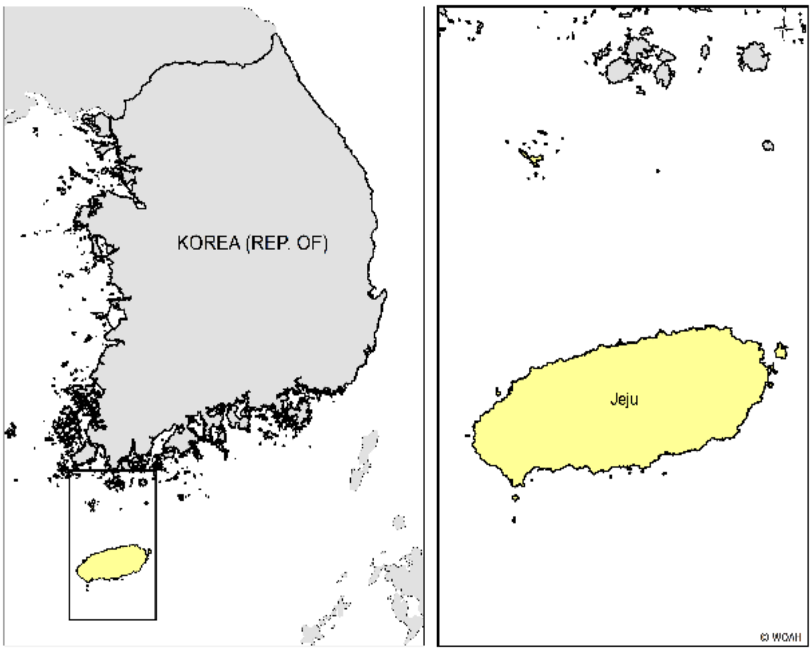

Figure 4. Proposed zone of Korea, Jeju Province in yellow for potential recognition in May 2025 as FMD-free where vaccination is practised

viii. Description of the boundaries and measures of a protection zone, if applicable.

Not applicable.

ix. Description of the system for preventing the entry of the virus into the proposed FMD free zone

The Group acknowledged that Jeju Province has robust controls for preventing the entry of livestock and products without permits, with comprehensive traceability systems in place for cattle and pigs. Vaccination certificates are needed for trading and slaughtering cloven-hoofed animals. The Group considered that, despite numerous disease prevention measures with operation guidelines for FMD control in place, the high number of visitors per year remains a potential risk to introducing the disease.

The Group noted that FMD-susceptible animal commodities were imported to Jeju Province from other provinces of Korea. The Group emphasised the importance of continuously monitoring compliance with provisions of Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code*, even for domestic importations from zones with different animal health statuses.

x. Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.4.

The Group agreed that the format of the dossier was compliant with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.4.

Conclusion

Considering the points mentioned above, the Group concluded that Korea’s application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 8.8, Article 1.4.6. and Article 1.11.4. of the Terrestrial Code. Therefore, the Group recommended the recognition of the proposed zone of Korea as an FMD-free zone where vaccination is practised.

The Group acknowledged the considerable effort the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province employed into managing the risk of FMD introduction via livestock-derived products brought by the large number of travellers entering the Jeju Province per year and encouraged the province to maintain its vigilance and efforts to ensure the safety of their livestock industry.

c. Russia

In September 2024, Russia submitted an application for the recognition of a new zone free from FMD where vaccination is practised consisting of ten Russian Subjects: Saratov, Samara, Orenburg, Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, Tyumen, Omsk, Novosibirsk Oblasts, Altai Krai and the Republic of Altai with the exception of the Kosh-Agachsky Administrative Raion. The Group requested additional information and received answers from Russia during the evaluation of the dossier.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group noted that Russia regularly reported the occurrence of transboundary animal diseases to WAHIS, including the last FMD outbreak, and considered that Russia had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting.

ii. Veterinary Services

The Group reviewed and acknowledged comprehensive information on Russia's legislative framework regarding FMD management and the structure of its Veterinary Services. The Group agreed that Russia’s Veterinary Authority demonstrates adequate knowledge and authority over FMD-susceptible animals within the proposed FMD-free zone.

iii. Situation of FMD in the past 12 months

From the information in the dossier, the Group noted that the last FMD outbreak in the proposed FMD-free Zone II was reported in cattle in the settlement of Karagach, Belyaevsky Raion, Orenburg Oblast in December 2021, affecting a small herd with 17 cattle and 22 sheep. The Group acknowledged a comprehensive report on the outbreak investigation, which concluded that the source of infection was infected, illegally imported animals from a neighbouring country. The outbreak was contained by stamping out the FMD-susceptible animals in the affected holding, movement restrictions and emergency vaccination.

During the outbreak investigation, no additional farms in the perifocal area were found to be affected. Moreover, no movement of animals or animal products into or out of the affected farm was recorded within two incubation periods before the outbreak.

As part of the response, Russia examined 1,768 cattle and 789 small ruminants across 153 backyards and two family-operated farms. All livestock within the outbreak area were vaccinated against FMDV using a monovalent serotype O FMD vaccine.

To investigate if the FMD virus was circulating among susceptible animals, Russia collected 300 blood samples in January 2022 from animals in both the outbreak area and the surrounding protection zone, all with negative results.

iv. *Routine vaccination and vaccines*

The Group noted that vaccination against FMD of cattle and small ruminants was resumed in 2022 in ten Subjects of the proposed zone following the outbreak in Orenburg with a monovalent vaccine against FMDV serotype O, altered to a polyvalent vaccine against FMDV (serotypes A, O, Asia-1). Russia indicated that the virus strains in the vaccine were selected based on the circulating field viruses in Russia and its neighbouring countries. Based on the description of Russia, the Group agreed that the vaccine complies with the provisions of Chapter 3.1.8., section C of the *Terrestrial Manual*.

The Group noted that according to the Russian vaccination programme, cattle and small ruminants are vaccinated, but not pigs. Russia explained that young animals are re-vaccinated every three months until they reach the age of 18 months, and after 18 months, vaccination is maintained twice a year. Russia further clarified that the vaccines are provided to owners free of charge and are purchased through the federal budget. The Veterinary Service oversees vaccinations.

Russia reported figures on population immunity broken down by vaccination campaign, Oblast, herd, serotype and stratified by age. The Group agreed that the results were good overall across the Subjects. Based on the results presented, the Group acknowledged the good representativeness of samples from young animals, and the adequate population immunity.

The Group agreed that evidence was supplied to show satisfactory coverage and population immunity, even if the information on the duration of protection in immunised animals was unclear.

v. *Surveillance in accordance with Articles 8.8.43 to 8.8.45.*

The Group noted that the early detection system for FMD in the proposed zone relied on passive and serological surveillance. Russia described its passive surveillance based on investigations of FMD suspicions and clinical examinations during routine disease prevention activities, which are carried out at least three to five times a year. Russia also reported results from testing pathological material from wildlife with no evidence of FMDV infection.

As in past applications, the Group noted that despite large numbers of susceptible animals being clinically examined in the course of routine visits and inspections of slaughterhouses, no FMD suspicious cases were reported for the past 24 months.

Based on the information provided in the dossier and following the recommendations from previous years, the Group requested further clarification on the FMD case definition. From the additional information received, the Group still had concerns about the full alignment of Russia's FMD case definition with the *Terrestrial Code*. It was noted that Russia has a comprehensive approach to following up on FMD suspicions arising from NSP seropositive findings, but it still requires confirmation by a virological test. In contrast, as per the definition stipulated in the *Terrestrial Code,* another confirmatory virological test is not required if the NSP seropositive finding is associated with an epidemiological link or clinical suspicion. Russia replied to a further inquiry, explaining that the virological tests are necessary to confirm the diagnosis with the identification of the serotype and topotype of the FMDV isolate before subsequent seizure and destruction of animals. Russia replied that the amendment of the FMD case definition is pending approval by the Russian Federation Ministry of Agriculture.

The Group commended Russia for following the recommendations given in the past with regard to the NSP sero-survey design. Russia informed that starting from the second half of 2024, the design has been revised to a two-stage sampling approach with a design prevalence of 1% between herds and 5% within herd. The two-stage sampling design includes both cattle and small ruminants, a representation of various age groups (especially younger animals) and all the different production systems. With this approach, the Group was of the opinion that the serological study performed by Russia substantiated with a high level of confidence the absence of viral transmission within its vaccinated susceptible population. These results, combined with the results provided by passive surveillance and clinical inspections, increased the certainty of freedom from FMDV in the proposed zone.

vi. *Regulatory measures for the prevention and early detection of FMD*

The Group noted that reporting of FMD suspect cases is enforced by legislation, and FMD is included in the list of priority diseases for immediate notification to the Veterinary Authority. Russia provided extensive information on awareness campaigns and training carried out for farmers and veterinarians, focusing on the promotion of reporting FMD suspicions.

The Group noted that the products of FMD susceptible animals were imported from countries/zones not having an FMD-free status officially recognised by WOAH. In the additional information provided, Russia clarified that these products undergo treatment according to the provisions of Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code*. Russia provided evidence on the regulatory measures for the movement of animals and animal products between Zone II and other zones with different animal health statuses. The Group pointed out the importance of continuous conformity with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* for the importation of animals and their products from countries or zones with different animal health status, and for maintaining effective separation and control of movements of animals and their products between zones with different and same animal health within Russia.

The Group concluded that sufficient regulatory measures were described in the dossier for the early detection, prevention, and control of FMD.

vii. *Description of the boundaries of the proposed free zone*

The proposed free zone consists of ten Subjects of Russia (the Saratov Oblast, the Samara Oblast, the Orenburg Oblast, the Chelyabinsk Oblast, the Kurgan Oblast, the Tyumen Oblast, the Omsk Oblast, the Novosibirsk Oblast, the Altai Krai and the Republic of Altai, form Zone II Western Siberia-Urals). The Group agreed that the boundaries of the proposed zone were well-defined based on administrative divisions and international borders.

Figure 5. Proposed zone of Russia in yellow for potential recognition in May 2025 as FMD-free where vaccination is practised. Zones already having an FMD-free status where vaccination is not practised (in light green), FMD-free status where vaccination is practised (Zone-South in orange, Zone Far-East in olive green, Zone Eastern Siberia in turquoise, Zone Sakhalin in light blue).

viii. *Description of the boundaries and measures of a protection zone, if applicable.*

Not applicable.

ix. *Description of the system for preventing the entry of the virus into the proposed FMD free zone*

The Group agreed that Russia has a comprehensive legal framework for the identification and registration of animals, as well as for the traceability of animal movements using an electronic certification system. Russia reported that records of farms and animals are updated yearly at the end of the calendar year through a comprehensive census. The Group noted that only animals and animal products accompanied by duly issued veterinary accompanying documents (electronic) are allowed for transportation within the territory of Russia.

The Group noted that Russia had the cooperation of countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in preventing the entry of FMD, with inspection posts established at foreign borders. Measures include control of wildlife populations and susceptible animal movements, as well as import controls. The Group emphasised the importance of continuous compliance with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Group noted that a strict ban on the use of food waste for feeding pigs was in place and was monitored in coordinated action with local authorities, including visits and sanctions/warnings for any non-compliance detected.

x. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.4.*

The Group agreed that the format of the dossier was compliant with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.4.

Conclusion

The Group commended Russia for taking steps to address the main concerns with previous applications. Considering the points mentioned above, the Group concluded that Russia's application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 8.8. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.4. of the *Terrestrial Code*. Therefore, the Group recommended the recognition of the proposed zone of Russia as an FMD-free zone where vaccination is practised.

The Group emphasised the need to update the legal definition of a confirmed FMD case in accordance with Article 8.8.1. point 3 of the *Terrestrial Code*. A confirmed FMD case should not only be based on virus isolation, antigen detection, or genetic material identification. Instead, it must also include a third criterion specified by the *Terrestrial Code*: seropositive animals (for SP or NSP antibodies) whose laboratory results cannot be attributed to vaccination should be considered positive cases if they exhibit clinical signs consistent with FMD or have an epidemiological link to an outbreak.

d. Other application

The Group assessed a request from a Member for the official recognition of its FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised. Based on the final recommendation of the Scientific Commission concluding that the application did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*, the dossier was referred back to the applicant Member.

5. Evaluation of an application for recovery of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised

The Group assessed a request from a Member for the official recognition of its recovery of FMD-free status with change of vaccination status. Based on the final recommendations of the Scientific Commission concluding that the application did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*, the dossier was referred back to the applicant Member.

6. Evaluation of an application for the endorsement of an official control programme for FMD

a. Mongolia

In September 2024, Mongolia submitted an application to WOAH for the endorsement of its official control programme for FMD. The Group requested additional information and received clarifications from Mongolia during the dossier evaluation. Furthermore, the Group had a teleconference with technical experts from Mongolia.

i. *Animal disease reporting*

The Group noted that FMD is a notifiable disease as per legislation and considered that Mongolia had a record of regular animal disease reporting to WOAH.

ii. *Capacity of the Veterinary Services to control FMD*

The Group was informed that Mongolia had received a Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) evaluation mission in 2007, followed by a Gap Analysis mission in 2010 and a PVS evaluation follow-up mission in 2019. Mongolia further informed that a self-assessment of improvements had been made between 2019 and 2022 and acknowledged that some of the recommendations were still being implemented.

Mongolia indicated that in recent years, the position, capacity, and achievements of the Veterinary Services have strengthened considerably, including a firm and long-term budget commitment to control FMD and other transboundary animal diseases (TADs). The Group agreed that Mongolia's Veterinary Services had the capacity to control FMD.

iii. *Applicability of the official control programme for FMD to the entire territory*

The dossier described the applicability of the official control programme to the whole territory of Mongolia. It aims to establish disease (FMD and PPR)-free livestock compartments to support the national strategic goal to eliminate FMDV circulation in the domestic animal population and to achieve the WOAH officially recognised status of FMD-free where vaccination is not practised at least in one zone of the country by 2030. Mongolia provided the performance indicators and timelines for each of the strategic objectives.

iv. *The detailed plan of the programme to control and eventually eradicate FMD in the country or zone*

Mongolia submitted a work plan for 2025-2029. According to this plan, there are strategic objectives that form the basis of defining the annual work plan as follows:

1. Participation in multilateral cooperation (multi-stakeholder engagement and development of compartmentalisation programmes);

2. Monitoring and evaluation (to provide scientific evidence on progress made and to support decision-making on necessary modifications of the official control programme);

3. Surveillance (integrated Animal Health Surveillance System resourced and functional for early detection and measuring reduction in FMDV circulation);

4. Prevention (cost-effective use of vaccination tactics, preventive measures such as good biosecurity practises by herders and tight border control procedures);

5. Response measures (ensuring the clinical occurrence of FMD is coordinated, effective and continuously evaluated);

6. Competent and stable Veterinary Authority (adequate technical, human and resource capacity, able to design, supervise, implement and evaluate annual work plans on surveillance, prevention and response);

7. Regional cooperation (with neighbouring countries, trading partners and international organisations).

Mongolia stated that after the surge of FMD outbreaks in 2021-2022, the aim to establish an FMD-free zone in Western Mongolia, as described in the previous programme, was no longer considered viable, given the uniqueness of Mongolia's pastoralist livestock production system. The Group commended Mongolia for acknowledging the weaknesses of the previous approach used in the control of FMD and the recent revision of its programme. The Group noted that Mongolia planned to control FMDV circulation to obtain WOAH endorsement by 2025 and establish FMD-free compartments by 2026 that would allow it to gain market access by 2028, followed by reduced reliance on vaccination and ultimately attainment of FMD freedom without vaccination by 2030. The Group considered the timeline ambitious.

The Group met virtually with the Mongolian representatives and suggested adjustments to the work plan to align its language with the language used in the *Terrestrial Code* and to adapt the timeline to be more realistic. The Group indicated that the use of the terminology ‘compartments’ and ‘self-declaration’ in the dossier was not compliant with the WOAH definition of compartments, and self-declarations cannot be published for FMD. The Group also expressed concerns that the country would cease vaccination based on its ambitious timeline rather than based on epidemiological evaluation, considering the recent incursions and spread of FMD that was subsequently controlled by mass vaccination. During the teleconference and in the additional information, Mongolia explained that the date of cessation of vaccination against FMD has yet to be defined and confirmed it is not anticipated in the near future and that mass vaccination is expected to continue for at least three more years followed by continuous vaccination in the areas identified for export. The Group strongly emphasised that the cessation of vaccination should not be time-bounded but related to risk assessment, which was confirmed by Mongolia.

To ascertain the sustainability of the work plan, the Group sought further clarification on secured funding, which Mongolia emphasised will be forthcoming, as there is political support for the official control programme as well as ongoing vaccination into the future. Because of increased interest from trade partners and the potential for export markets, Mongolia’s plan was to establish an FMD-free area in the central part of the country containing beef-fattening farms. Smaller FMD-free compartments were planned for areas bordering neighbouring countries.

Mongolia submitted an updated work plan addressing the use of ‘zoning and compartmentalisation concept’, implementation of individual animal identification within the compartments, and it was rectified that the country is aiming to attain an FMD-free zone status where vaccination is practised by 2030 for at least one zone in the country.

v. *[Epidemiology of FMD in the country*

Mongolia indicated that the FMD outbreaks between 2000 and 2020 and the epidemiology of FMD in the country revealed that almost all outbreaks were caused by FMDV serotype O, with some sporadic incursions of serotype Asia-1 (in the eastern border region) and serotype A (in the western border region and the eastern region). These FMD outbreaks were the result of new incursions in Eastern Mongolia from neighbouring countries, spreading into the Central and Western regions in the summer and autumn due to migration and pastoralism practices. During migration, free herds were exposed to FMD-infected herds, and by August 2021, more than 560 FMD reports had been filed in Eastern and Central Mongolia. Based on the information in the dossier and reported to WAHIS, the Group noted that the last confirmed outbreaks of FMD were reported in December 2022.

vi. *FMD surveillance*

The Group appreciated the comprehensive surveillance activities that extended and aggregated into the Integrated Animal Health Surveillance System with multiple surveillance components supporting the objectives of early detection and response to new clinical outbreaks, assessment of the extent of virus circulation as well as population immunity, and ultimately proving the absence of FMD virus in specific areas and compartments.

Mongolia stated that a special application in the Mongolian Animal Health Information System (MAHIS) was developed and implemented in August 2022. This Early Warning and Response (EWAR) system involved more than 1,100 soum inspectors, soum epidemiologists and private veterinarians who received training throughout Mongolia. Mongolia further stated that as of 1 August 2024, nearly all clinical examination records of 10,500 herds were recorded in MAHIS. Of these herds, 12 were further investigated, and none of these follow-up investigations confirmed FMD. The Group noted that nationwide application of EWAR was not yet in place due to financial issues, but the Group learned that a request to allocate funding in next year's budget was made.

The Group noted the serosurvey conducted for quantification of the level of FMDV infection at animal and herder levels and for comparison between the three regions, namely East (endemic FMD in last decade), Central (sporadic FMD in last decade) and West (previous absence of clinical FMD in last decade). The serosurvey from March to April 2022 was prior to the implementation of the new nationwide vaccination of cattle and yaks. The serosurvey of 2023 and 2024 gave the opportunity to assess the impact of the FMD control measures. The results indicated clusters of NSP-antibody-positive epidemiological units, which should be further investigated. The Group noted a decrease in the proportion of animals testing positive for NSP-antibodies since the outbreaks occurred during the period 2021-2022. Although the serosurveys were not sufficiently rigorous to demonstrate freedom, they gave valuable information on herd immunity and NSP prevalence. The Group took note that a total of 748 nasal and mouth swab samples were collected from cattle, sheep, and goats in 12 aimags, in 43 soums in 52 epidemiological units in 2024 at the same time as the serosurvey in 2024 and that all swabs tested negative for FMD virus by Realtime RT-PCR and conventional PCR.

Mongolia reported an additional surveillance component, a Herder Helpline, offering herders and veterinary practitioners the option to call on any subject related to animal health. A specially designed telephone questionnaire was developed by the Department of Epidemiology, Information, Research and Statistics. In 2024, the helpline received around 800 calls per month, which the Group saw as a positive passive surveillance method to detect suspect cases of FMD.

The Group considered the information provided on wildlife surveillance insufficient for evaluation. While noting the large numbers of Mongolian gazelles present in the eastern part of the country, including border regions, the Group agreed that their role in the FMD epidemiology remains uncertain.

vii. *Diagnostic capability and procedure*

The Group noted that 21 aimag veterinary laboratories in Mongolia are equipped with ELISA readers and standard PCR equipment, while the State Central Veterinary Laboratory (SVCL), which is the head institution of the National Veterinary Laboratory Network, performs the confirmatory diagnosis of transmissible animal diseases, including FMD. Laboratory personnel assigned to FMD diagnosis and surveillance have been trained in international reference laboratories. The Group further noticed that the laboratory was ISO 17025 accredited as well as their diagnostic methods deployed. Mongolia stated that with respect to TAD inter-laboratory validation tests, no such system exists because SCVL is the only laboratory that can officially confirm FMD and other TADs.

The Group took note that the SVCL regularly submits samples for confirmation to WOAH Reference Laboratories.

viii. *Vaccination*

Mongolia’s vaccination strategy for 2024-2029 involves the nationwide vaccination of all large ruminants, deer and pigs every six months, in spring and autumn, continuing the successful application of the FMD vaccine campaign used to contain the FMD outbreaks in 2021 and 2022.

The test results showed good vaccination coverage and a steeply declining level of virus circulation. However, the Group noted inconsistent population immunity to serotype A and requested clarifications on the reasons and corrective measures. Mongolia explained that aimags with low immunity to serotype A received a monovalent vaccine to serotype O, supplied through international support in 2023, whilst aimags with immunity to serotype A were vaccinated with a bivalent vaccine. The Group was pleased to learn that Mongolia will only be using the bivalent vaccine in future vaccination campaigns.

The Group noted that a bivalent vaccine (O and A) procured from a WOAH Reference Laboratory in Russia was used. The vaccine had been selected to match the circulating virus isolated in the last FMD outbreaks in Mongolia. Regarding the post-vaccination monitoring, the Group considered that the approach used was indicative of progress made on FMD control and provided a systematic way of monitoring the population's immunity.

The Group questioned Mongolia’s plan to reduce the frequency of vaccination in animals with a proven low level of FMD virus circulation, and Mongolia clarified that it would develop alternative vaccination practices based on disease incidence and that it would use alternate vaccination strategies also for the compartments and the regions supplying animals for the compartments.

ix. *Emergency preparedness and response plan*

The Group noted that the national contingency plan had been reviewed and modified in 2021 to address the risks identified in the risk assessment that was carried out based on the analysis of the most important risk pathways for FMD virus transmission and outbreaks that occurred during the period 2021-2022. It was noted that the National Contingency Plan had been distributed to all public and private veterinarians as official instructive guidance for clinical diagnosis, sampling, disinfection, and control of FMD.

x. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.5.*

The Group agreed that the format of the dossier was compliant with the questionnaire in Article 1.11.5.

Conclusion

The Group appreciated the well-written dossier, which clearly sets out the risks, the surveillance and control measures that have been implemented and planned. The dossier demonstrated a strong commitment to FMD control and a desire to take advantage of future accomplishments to facilitate export and trade of commodities. Considering the information submitted in the dossier and Mongolia's answers to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 8.8. and the questionnaire in Article 1.11.5. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group, therefore, recommended that Mongolia's official control programme for FMD be proposed for endorsement.

Nevertheless, the Group would draw the attention of Mongolia to the following recommendations (also detailed in the relevant sections above):

- Continue maintaining the measures taken to prevent the incursion of FMD and its early detection, including plans to maintain and repair the fences at international borders and prevent the grazing of livestock near such borders.

- Further strengthen individual livestock identification, considering that traceability of animals is critical, particularly considering the large-scale movements of susceptible livestock in Mongolia.

- Continue mass vaccination of cattle until there is high confidence that the risks of an incursion and subsequent spread are strongly reduced.

- Provide an update on the progress of the implementation of the compartments to WOAH during the annual reconfirmation.

7. Streamlining the annual reconfirmation procedure.

The Group acknowledged the efforts from WOAH to streamline the annual reconfirmation procedure and recognised the importance of maintaining compliance with the *Terrestrial Code* requirements. The Group highlighted that while certain requirements supporting a country's FMD-free status may vary from year to year, others are likely to remain unaltered, with changes occurring only in specific circumstances. Therefore, the Group distinguished between information that requires yearly documented evidence to maintain the FMD-free status and information that could be requested a single time or in cases of substantial changes.

The Group noted that the Secretariat would compile the outcome of this consultation exercise conducted with all *ad hoc* Groups evaluating applications for the different diseases that are part of WOAH's procedure for official recognition of animal health status. The outcome of this exercise will be presented to the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases at its upcoming meeting in February 2025.

8. Adoption of the report

The Group reviewed and amended the draft report. The Group agreed that the report would be subject to a short period of circulation to the Group for comments and adoption. Upon circulation, the Group agreed that the report captured the discussions.

…/Appendices

Appendix 1 Terms of reference

***AD HOC* GROUP ON THE EVALUATION**

OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE STATUS AND

ENDORSEMENT OF OFFICIAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES OF MEMBERS

Paris, 4 to 7 November 2024

Purpose

The purpose of the *ad hoc* Group on the evaluation of foot and mouth disease (FMD) status and endorsement of official control programme of Members (the Group) is to evaluate applications for official recognition of FMD free status and for endorsement of the FMD official control programme of Members.

Background

In accordance with the procedure for official recognition of animal health status, Members can be officially recognised by WOAH as having an FMD free status or an official FMD control programme endorsed by the WOAH through the adoption of a resolution by the World Assembly of Delegates (the Assembly) in May every year. A Member wishing to apply for the official recognition of its FMD free status or its official FMD control programme endorsed by WOAH should complete and submit the relevant questionnaire laid out in Chapter 1.11. of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (*Terrestrial Code*) and comply with all requirements specified in the *Terrestrial Code*. The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) is responsible for undertaking, on behalf of the Assembly, the assessment of Members' applications for their compliance with WOAH standards. The assessment carried out by the Scientific Commission is based on the recommendations formulated by a relevant *ad hoc* Group. *Ad hoc* groups are convened under the authority of and report to the Director General.

Specific issues to be addressed

The Group will evaluate Members' applications in detail on their compliance with the requirements specified in the *Terrestrial Code* for FMD. Based on the evaluations, the Group will provide its conclusions and recommendations to the Scientific Commission.

Prerequisites

The Group members should:

- Sign the Undertaking on Confidentiality of information (if not done already);
- Complete the Declaration of Interest Form;
- Understand that the membership of the Group may be retained between its meetings to ensure continuity of the work.

Actions to deliver

<u>Before the meeting</u>

Upon reception of an application from a Member, the Status Department (SD) conducts a preliminary screening to check the conformity of the dossier (structure of the dossier in accordance with the SOP and with the questionnaire under Chapter 1.11. of the *Terrestrial Code*, main sections of the questionnaire, regular notification to WOAH, payment of the fee, Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) report, etc.). If an information gap is identified, the SD requests additional information from the Member.

As the PVS reports are bound by the rules on confidentiality of information of the WOAH, the SD and experts will consider for the evaluation the available PVS report(s) if not obsolete (PVS reports from more than five years ago) or confidential.

The SD will send the working documents to the Group, including the dossiers received from applicant Members, at least one month before the Group meeting (i.e., **4 October 2024**).

The experts can request support from the SD at any time.

The SD suggests the nomination of a Chair and Rapporteur for the Group's consideration.

The SD can suggest a preparatory meeting with the Chair, the Rapporteur or all experts to address specific points in advance, if needed.

The experts are expected to:

- Be familiar with Chapter 1.11. and the recently revised Chapter 8.8. of the *Terrestrial Code*;
- Evaluate and study in detail all dossiers provided by WOAH;
- Take into account any other information available in the public domain that is considered pertinent for the evaluation of the dossiers;
- Summarise the dossiers according to the *Terrestrial Code* requirements by completing the summary tables provided by the SD (the summary tables will be provided at a later stage along with the working documents for the meeting). Experts are expected to capture and summarise in each corresponding section of the summary table the main gaps as well as strengths identified during the assessment of the dossiers, using extracted texts or reference to pages/annexes from the application;
- Draft questions to the applicant Members whenever the analysis of the dossiers identifies incomplete or unclear information;
- Submit to the SD the completed summary tables for each application together with possible questions for the applicant Members at least 10 days before the meeting and preferably by **25 October 2024;**

The SD will compile the summary tables and the questions to be forwarded to the applicant Members before the meeting. All subsequent information and material provided by a Member will be forwarded to the Group.

During the meeting

- Agree on the appointment of the Chair and Rapporteur of the meeting (the Chair will lead the discussion and the Rapporteur will ensure that the report reflects the discussion and captures the detailed assessment of the dossiers);
- Mention any potential conflict of interest and, if relevant, withdraw him/herself from the discussion;
- Contribute to the discussions;
- Provide a detailed report in order to recommend, to the Scientific Commission, the Member(s) and/or zone(s) to be recognised (or not) as free from FMD and the official control programme of Member(s) to be endorsed by WOAH and to indicate any information gaps or specific areas that should be addressed in the future by the applicant Members.

If during the meeting the Group decides that additional information should be requested from an applicant Member before an informed conclusion can be drawn, the SD can request it and forward the additional information to the Group at a later date. The Chair is responsible for coordinating the finalisation of the assessment and for ensuring that the views of all members of the Group are taken into consideration.

Should the Group not be able to complete its Terms of Reference during this meeting, experts' contributions will be solicited after the meeting, including by meeting if needed.

After the meeting

The SD will circulate the draft report after the meeting is over. Experts are expected to contribute to the finalisation of the report within approximately one week.

The SD will circulate the final version of the report to the Group once endorsed by the Scientific Commission and is published online.

Deliverables

A detailed report to recommend to the Scientific Commission whether an applicant Member(s) should be (or not) recognised with an official FMD free status or an official FMD control programme endorsed by WOAH. The report should indicate any information gaps or specific areas that should be addressed in the future by the Members.

Reporting / timeline

WOAH will circulate the draft report no later than 18 November 2024 and the Group will finalise its report within ten days (indicative deadline: 2 December 2024).

Appendix 2 Agenda

AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION

OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE STATUS AND

ENDORSEMENT OF OFFICIAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES OF MEMBERS

Paris, 4 to 7 November 2024

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1. Opening
2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur
3. Evaluation of applications for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is not practised
    a. Bolivia
    b. Brazil
4. Evaluation of applications for the official recognition of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised
    a. Argentina
    b. Korea (Rep. of)
    c. Russia
    d. Other application
5. Evaluation of an application for the recovery of FMD-free zonal status where vaccination is practised
6. Evaluation of an application for the endorsement of an official control programme for FMD
    a. Mongolia
7. Streamlining the annual reconfirmation procedure
8. Adoption of the report

Appendix 3 List of Participants

AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION
OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE STATUS AND
ENDORSEMENT OF OFFICIAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES OF MEMBERS

Paris, 4 to 7 November 2024

MEMBERS

Dr Jose L Gonzales Rojas Department of Epidemiology, Bioinformatics and Animal Studies Wageningen Bioveterinary Research THE NETHERLANDS	Dr Kris de Clercq Past Vice President of WOAH Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases BELGIUM	Dr David Paton The Pirbright Institute UNITED KINGDOM
Dr Livio Heath Agricultural Research Council Onderstepoort SOUTH AFRICA	Dr Manuel J Sanchez Vazquez FMD Center/PAHO-WHO Centro Panamericano de Fiebre Aftosa BRAZIL	Dr Wilna Vosloo CSIRO Health and Biosecurity Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness AUSTRALIA

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

Dr Arjan Stegeman
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WOAH HEADQUARTERS

Dr Min Kyung Park Head Status Department disease.status@woah.org	Dr Manoel Tamassia Deputy Head Status Department	Dr Mauro Meske Disease Status Officer Status Department
	Dr Marija Popovic Disease Status Officer Status Department	