The Philippines’ experience with the OIE PVS Evaluation: Aquatic

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The Philippines is an archipelagic country with vast fisheries resources that contribute significantly to food security, employment and the generation of foreign exchange. Recognising the importance of health management strategies in assuring the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture production, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the Department of Agriculture requested that the OIE conduct an evaluation of its Aquatic Animal Health Services.

In February 2013, a team of experts of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) conducted the evaluation using the OIE PVS Tool: Aquatic. The evaluation aimed to identify the strengths and weaknesses, establish the current level of performance and to support the strengthening of Aquatic Animal Health Services to meet the OIE standards.

The evaluation included visits to BFAR Central and Regional offices and fish health laboratories, export and import border control stations, aquaculture farms, fish processing establishments, academic institutions, other regulatory agencies and industry organisations, and meetings with government officials, fish and shrimp producers, traders and other stakeholders.

The results of the evaluation supported the need for additional permanently employed aquatic animal health professionals. In the structural reorganisation of BFAR, the proposed permanent veterinary positions are now approved for Aquatic Animal Health Services personnel. To build the level of competence, the Regulatory Board of Veterinary Medicine of the Professional Regulation Commission, has proposed to the Commission on Higher Education the inclusion of aquatic animal diseases in the veterinary medicine curriculum.

In general, the OIE evaluation increased the awareness of key government officials regarding the OIE and their international standards for aquatic animal health. The findings and recommendations were valuable in the development of a comprehensive aquatic animal health management strategy in the country.