



Aquatic Animal Health Programmes their benefits for global food security

(Panama), 28-30 June 2011

Concept Note for the OIE Conference

Background

The OIE First Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health held in Bergen, Norway in 2006 was a very successful event, which helped to raise awareness about the importance of aquatic animal health and to build a framework for improved cooperation between Competent Authorities, scientists and stakeholders. Recognising the value of the first global conference, OIE Members recommended that the OIE hold a follow up event in due course. Five years have passed and it is time to assess where we are with respect to aquatic animal health globally.

Aquaculture is one of the world's fastest growing industries. Aquaculture already provides nearly 50% of the food derived from aquatic animals consumed by humans globally and aquaculture products are a key source of high quality animal protein for the growing human population.

As aquaculture develops and expands in all regions of the world, there is an increasing need for improved aquatic animal health to increase production and to facilitate safe trade in aquatic animals and their products. The goal is to help feed the global population while avoiding risks to human health and aquatic animal health and the aquatic environment.

For over 40 years the mandate of the OIE has included aquatic animals. Mindful of its role as one of the three reference standard-setting organisations of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the OIE constantly encourages Members to meet the obligations of OIE membership and to implement OIE standards in line with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (the SPS Agreement). The capability of Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services to implement these standards is essential to safeguard health and facilitate trade. However, with most aquaculture production originating in developing countries, there is an ongoing need to build capacity to help support implementation of the international standards by all OIE Members.

Proposal

The OIE proposes to hold a Global Conference on "Aquatic Animal Health Programmes: their benefits for global food security" in Panama on 28-30 June 2011. The OIE is grateful for the support of the Government of the Republic of Panama, notably MIDA (the Ministry of Agriculture Development); MINSA (the Ministry of Health), AUPSA (the Panama Food Safety Authority); ARAP (the Authority for Aquatic Resources); OIRSA (the International Organisation of the Americas for Agriculture Health) and OSPESCA (the Central American Fishing and Aquaculture Sector Organisation).

This major international conference will help to demonstrate the importance that the OIE and the international community place on the contribution of aquatic animal health programmes to alleviating poverty globally. The conference will also help to raise awareness of the role of Aquatic Animal Health Services and, as appropriate, Veterinary Services, in assuring the production of aquaculture products that are safe for human consumption and appropriately certified to meet international trade requirements.

The conference will highlight the contribution of aquatic animal health programmes to improving productivity and consequently the availability of high quality protein and other food, particularly to people in developing countries. Issues relevant to the relationship between aquatic animal health, food safety, public health and related implications for environmental sustainability will also be discussed.

In addition to the presentation of up to date research findings, the conference will address the role and responsibilities of key players in the production chain, including producers, food processors, private veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals, and their interactions with Aquatic Animal Health Services and, as appropriate, Veterinary Services.

The Conference will feature presentations from speakers representing national Veterinary Services and other Competent Authorities (where responsibility for aquatic animal health is shared between authorities), international organizations, and aquatic animal health experts. In interactive sessions, participants will be invited to share their experiences and to identify future needs and priorities for the OIE to address.

Approximately 500 participants are expected to attend the Conference, including:

- OIE National Delegates and designated Aquatic Animal Focal Points
- Other national government representatives
- OIE Collaborating Centers and Reference laboratories
- Representatives of relevant International Organisations having official agreements with the OIE
- Representatives of other international organisations, private sector consultants and experts in aquatic animal health, the environment, food and feed safety.

The conference will take place over 2 1/2 days. It will include Ministerial Statements and keynote speakers on day 1; technical presentations on days 1, 2 and 3; and a panel discussion and the Conference Recommendations on day 3. Simultaneous interpretation in English/French/Spanish will be provided for all plenary sessions.

Participants will be invited to submit peer-reviewed scientific posters.

Objectives and Topics

The conference will provide a forum for OIE Members and other participants to exchange the latest information on a science-based approach to the management of aquatic animal health and food safety at the production level. Participants will be able to share valuable experience in the prevention, detection and control of aquatic animal diseases, safeguarding food safety, and related contributions to sustainable management of the aquatic environment.

The objectives of the conference are:

- to raise awareness of the requirements for effective aquatic animal health management, covering all matters under the OIE mandate,
- to highlight the contribution of aquatic animal health programmes to improving the productivity of the aquatic animal sector and thereby global food security;
- to raise awareness of OIE standards and recommendations on the use of veterinary products in aquatic animals;
- to identify practical steps to address any risks arising from aquatic animal production for food safety, public health and the environment
- to raise awareness of the need to improve the education of veterinarians and other aquatic animal health professions on aquatic animal health, including disease surveillance, control and reporting.
- to brainstorm on the challenges and the tools needed to reinforce good governance in the aquatic animal production sector; and

- to provide practical guidance on how OIE Members (particularly developing countries) can mobilise governments and donors with the goal of improving Veterinary Services and other Competent Authorities to meet the OIE standards for competent services and good governance.

The Conference will address the following topics:

- analysis of the global aquatic animal health situation
- roles and responsibilities of Aquatic Animal Health Services and Veterinary Services, including OIE national Delegates and focal points, in aquatic animal health management;
- roles and responsibilities of national and international laboratories for disease diagnosis and reporting and related scientific research;
- effective communication amongst all concerned sectors;
- understanding the OIE role and mandate and the relationships between authorities where there is a shared responsibility for aquatic animal health;
- OIE Members' experiences in aquatic animal health management, including the challenges and priorities of developing countries;
- awareness of the OIE standards and recommendations for aquatic animals and practical advice on how to comply with the standards;
- requirements for aquatic animal feed and for the use of veterinary products in aquatic animals;
- the education of veterinarians and aquatic animal health professionals in the public and the private sector on their role and responsibilities;
- improvement of governance of Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services using the OIE PVS pathway;
- future needs and priorities to support decision makers, international organisations and donors with the objective of strengthening the governance and management of the aquatic animal production sector especially as this relates to animal health, food safety at the production level, and relevant contributions to safeguarding the environment.
