

## REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS – MIDDLE EAST

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The Arab-Maghreb Union (AMU) comprises Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

With a population nearing 90 million inhabitants in a geographic area of 5.7 million square kilometres, the entire Maghreb region is subject to the same climate conditions and constraints in terms of natural resources.

Agriculture is one of the vital pillars economically and it takes on a considerable socio-economic dimension in view of its importance in feeding the population, its substantial contribution to gross domestic products and its significant share of foreign trade.

Animal resources take on particular importance within this sector through the preponderant role they play in the economic and social life of North African countries, as much for the employment they provide in rural areas as from their contribution to achieving food security.

This importance attracted the focus of North African authorities as from the creation of the UMA in 1989. The inter-ministerial commission in charge of food security received the assignment of supervising joint action in the Maghreb for the development and management of animal resources at the time it was set up in January, 1990.

This institutional framework was reinforced by the implementation of a North African veterinary committee whose mission is to determine, programme and coordinate the execution of North African action plans in the areas of animal health, exchanges of animals and animal products.

The cooperation agreement in the veterinary domain adopted by the AMU Presidential Council at the Ras summit in Libya in March, 1991, already included the legal framework for joint Maghreb action. It aims to safeguard and improve animal resources through harmonisation of veterinary legislation in North Africa.

The provisions of this agreement were consolidated through the adoption of a certain number of directives to regulate the movement of animals and to specify what terms would be required with relation to health standards for developing trade.

In addition, the AMU Regional Food Security Project adopted by the ministerial commission with the food safety dossier in 2004 gave fundamental priority to reinforcing capacities for seeking better synergies in monitoring and control, and in the fight against transboundary animal diseases.

The recrudescence of transboundary diseases, including those with zoonotic features, has impelled North African authorities to increase cooperation to consolidate their capabilities of monitoring and early warning.

The North African transboundary disease monitoring network was put in place in 2006 in order to improve prevention and control of epizootics in the Maghreb region. This is the framework for gathering and disseminating information.

Since April, 2009 it has been linked to the Euro-Mediterranean network EMAHN, to increase cooperation between UMA and the countries on the Northern shore of the West Mediterranean that are confronted with both diseases and shared risks.

All of these actions are intended to control animal health, which remains one of the greatest preoccupations of Member States for ensuring harmonious and sustainable animal resources, an essential component of food security.

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