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**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE
WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL PRODUCTION FOOD SAFETY**

Paris, 18-20 November 2002

**(Extract from the November-December 2002 meeting of the
OIE International Animal Health Code Commission)**

The OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety held its first meeting at the OIE Headquarters from 18-20 November 2002.

The members of the OIE Working Group and other participants are listed in [Appendix I](#). The Agenda adopted is given in [Appendix II](#). Dr A. McKenzie was appointed Chair of the Working Group.

The Director General of the OIE, Dr B. Vallat, welcomed the members of the Working Group and thanked them for their willingness to continue to be involved in the OIE's new work area on animal production food safety. Dr Vallat noted that the mandate of the OIE in this area included cooperation with other standard-setting organisations, both to avoid contradictory standards and to address gaps which may exist among current standards. He explained that new or revised draft OIE standards could arise from the work of OIE experts or could come from other organisations (especially the Codex Alimentarius Commission [CAC]), and could become OIE standards after consideration and adoption by the International Committee.

Dr Vallat stressed that the Working Group needed to agree on a prioritised list of tasks, to allow several *Ad hoc* Groups or individual experts to address several important issues as soon as possible. He indicated the need to show some progress to the International Committee at the 2003 General Session. He also indicated that early progress in this area of work would demonstrate the benefits of cooperation between organisations with animal health, zoonoses and food safety responsibilities.

Scope

The Working Group noted that its role, as defined in the Resolutions and Recommendations arising from the 2002 General Session, was to coordinate the animal production food safety activities of the OIE and advise the OIE Director General and the International Animal Health Code Commission thereof. It further noted that the OIE's work on animal production food safety had the goal of 'reducing food borne risks to human health by preventing, eliminating or controlling hazards arising from animals prior to primary processing of animals and animal products'.

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In coordinating this work, the Working Group would seek to ensure that stakeholders' consultation and transparency needs are met, that multidisciplinary teams are used appropriately, and that Veterinary Administrations and the OIE adopt a generic framework for managing risks and hazard exposure modelling throughout the food chain.

The Working Group saw one of its main roles as assisting the OIE, at the working level, to establish and/or strengthen both formal and informal relationships with relevant international agencies, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and their subsidiary bodies (especially the CAC) and relevant expert groups, regarding animal production food safety.

Modus operandi

The Working Group noted that its terms of reference included:

- 1) consideration of all food-borne hazards arising from animals before slaughter or first processing of their products,
- 2) a primary focus on food safety measures applicable at the farm level,
- 3) consideration of food safety measures applicable elsewhere, for example during animal transport and harvesting of wild animals for food,
- 4) work criteria and priorities that take into account global food safety priorities and current work programmes of relevant international organisations, especially the CAC,
- 5) the taking into account of the food safety standards developed and under development by relevant international organisations, especially the CAC,
- 6) support for the work of the OIE Specialist Commissions on animal production food safety,
- 7) advising the Director General of the OIE on the implementation of the OIE strategy regarding:
 - a) establishing *Ad hoc* Groups to address specific tasks,
 - b) linking at the working level with the CAC, FAO and WHO,
 - c) ensuring pre-slaughter animal production food safety is integrated in Specialist Commissions' and *Ad hoc* Groups' activities,
 - d) providing technical input into the review of OIE disease notification criteria,
 - e) enhancing communications, information sharing and consultation.

Relationship with *Ad hoc* Groups

The Working Group discussed its relationship with *Ad hoc* Groups and experts set up to work on specific food safety issues. It decided that the OIE would be better served by the Working Group advising the OIE Director General on their membership and terms of reference, and acting in a steering group capacity.

The Working Group recommended that the output of *Ad hoc* Groups and experts be circulated electronically to Working Group members for comment and their agreement, before being placed on the agenda for the subsequent meeting of the Code Commission. Subject to endorsement by the Code Commission, the output would be included in its report to Member Countries.

Relationship with the Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Working Group pointed out that OIE needed to work closely with the CAC, the intergovernmental organisation responsible for setting food safety standards. Such cooperation was necessary to minimise duplication, avoid gaps and ensure the most effective utilisation of available expertise. This cooperation may comprise technical input into the development or revision of a standard of the other organisation or, when appropriate, the joint development of standards and related texts through expert *Ad hoc* Groups and Joint Task Forces, utilising procedures for OIE developed by this Working Group and agreed by the two organisations.

The Working Group emphasised that the OIE was entering into new formal agreements with the WHO and FAO, and believed that a specific agreement should be entered into with the CAC to formalise the above working relationship. Such an agreement would lay out the criteria for determining whether joint standards should be developed, or mutual recognition given to relevant standards adopted by either of the two organisations.

Relationship with other partners and stakeholders

To ensure effective consultation and appropriate transparency in OIE's work on animal production food safety, the Working Group recommended that, at appropriate stages in discussion on particular issues, OIE seek input from other partners and stakeholders, including through public meetings.

The Working Group recommended that the OIE develop a protocol for achieving the above ends.

Multidisciplinary inputs

Given the broad scope and potential impact of the issues under consideration and to ensure practicable and science-based outcomes, the Working Group in its work and in setting up *Ad hoc* Groups will seek input from a wide range of relevant scientific disciplines.

Priorities for addressing hazards of public health importance arising from animals

The Working Group identified a need for the CAC and the OIE to jointly review their current standards and to identify gaps and areas of duplication. The Working Group recommended that public input into the outcomes of the review be sought.

The Working Group identified the following issues as of interest in the conduct of this review:

- 1) Horizontal issues covered or under discussion by both organisations
 - risk analysis
 - surveillance and monitoring
 - traceability
 - equivalence
 - evaluation of Veterinary Services / Competent Authorities
 - testing, inspection and certification procedures
- 2) Zoonoses not currently appropriately addressed in the *International Animal Health Code*
 - tuberculosis
 - brucellosis
 - cysticercoses
 - trichinellosis
- 3) Zoonoses not always affecting animals
 - campylobacteriosis
 - salmonellosis
 - listeriosis
 - conditions arising from enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*

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- 4) CAC texts addressing issues of common interest:
- draft Code of Practice for Meat and Poultry Hygiene
 - General Principles of Food Hygiene
 - Code of Practice for Milk and Milk Products
 - draft Code of Practice for Animal Feeding
 - Use of Veterinary Drugs
 - draft Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products
 - draft Code of Practice for Aquaculture.

The Working Group identified the need for immediate work to update the current *Code* chapters on tuberculosis and brucellosis (and, subject to adequate resources, cysticercoses) to address more fully animal production food safety aspects.

The Working Group identified a need for procedures for the development, adoption and publication of joint standards (where appropriate), for the mutual recognition of standards adopted by either organisation and for the establishment of linkages between standards dealing with related subject areas. The Working Group considered that the current CAC work on general principles for meat and poultry hygiene would provide an opportunity to evaluate the above options and identify suitable strategies.

Work programme for 2003

The Working Group recommended that the work programme for 2003 comprise:

- Joint review by the CAC and the OIE of the current standards of both organisations, and identification of gaps and areas of duplication
- Prioritising work on standards identified in the review process
- Preparation of a communications plan, including the organisation of a public meeting, to share the new cooperation strategy and the Working Group's activities
- Establishment of procedures for developing common standards or linked standards dealing with related subject areas, using the current CAC work on general principles for meat and poultry hygiene as a test case
- Using multidisciplinary expertise, updating of current *Code* chapters for brucellosis and tuberculosis (and, subject to adequate resources, cysticercoses) to address more fully risk management for animal production food safety.

For brucellosis and tuberculosis (and cysticercoses), the *Ad hoc* Groups would need to address all pathogenic strains of the causative organisms arising in animals of relevance to animal health or food safety, and examine risk management options for live animals, genetic material and all animal commodities. In their work, the *Ad hoc* Groups should take account of existing CAC standards and texts, and of food-borne illness data and related information.

Other issues requiring consideration

The Working Group discussed the following issues for placing on a future work programme and which may benefit from a coordinated approach:

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- Improving awareness regarding animal production food safety for farmers and veterinarians
- Antibiotic resistance
- A code on 'good farming practices'
- Animals derived from modern biotechnology.

Communications plan

As animal production food safety was a new area of work for the OIE and involved the development of a new working relationship with the CAC, the Working Group believed that OIE Member Countries need to be kept informed of work in progress. This will be elaborated further during the Working Group's presentation at the 2003 General Session.

Other business

The Working Group discussed the new international Internet portal on food safety, animal and plant health being developed by FAO. It recommended that the OIE should make all endeavours to ensure a coordinated approach for effective integration of information from all relevant sources to benefit the wide range of stakeholders wishing to use the information.

Next meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on 8-10 July 2003 in Rome (Italy).

.../Appendices

**MEETING OF THE OIE
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Agenda

1. Introduction

- discussion at OIE General Session
- other relevant discussions

2. Working Group update

- Members' activities since last meeting
- relevant Codex activities

3. Draft statement of policies and principles

4. Working Group *modus operandi*

- terms of reference
- relationship with Codex
- relationship with NGOs and industry groups
- use of external expertise

5. OIE *International Animal Health Code*

- introductory text
- review of relevant current chapters
- new hazards

6. Operational Plan for 2003: Priorities and resources

7. Communications Plan

8. Other business

9. Next meeting
