

OIE WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL PRODUCTION FOOD SAFETY

1. Introduction

The OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety (hereinafter referred to as the Working Group) was established in 2002, following a request from OIE's International Committee to strengthen OIE's activities in the food safety area and further develop collaboration with the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). The Working Group's role is to coordinate OIE activities related to animal production food safety and to advise the Director General and the relevant Specialist Commissions on issues in this area. The Working Group met for the seventh time at the OIE Headquarters on 6-8 November 2007. The following is a summary of the main discussions and results from the meeting; the full report is included in the March 2008 Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Terrestrial Code Commission) report, which has been distributed to all OIE Delegates and has been published on the OIE website (www.oie.int). The Working Group received an update on OIE, Codex, FAO and WHO activities relevant to its work and then addressed the following main topics.

2. Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety

The Working Group reviewed a draft document on the *Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety*, which is to be included in the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (hereinafter referred to as the *Terrestrial Code*), in the context of providing guidance to OIE Member Countries and Territories. The text had been reviewed and endorsed by the Terrestrial Code Commission at its meeting in September 2007. Some members of the Working Group queried whether the term 'uniquely equipped' in the background section of the paper was too exclusive in relation to the role of other professionals in food safety. Concerns were raised that the paper may send a message that only veterinarians are qualified to work in food safety. Several members made comments in support of the original text in relation to the uniqueness of the veterinary qualification. The Members agreed to modify this section to clarify the role of other professionals and to make some minor changes to improve the clarity of the text. The text has been placed on the OIE website.

3. Guide to Good Farming Practices (GGFP)

The Working Group reviewed the document prepared by the *ad hoc* Group on the Guide to Good Farming Practices. The Working Group agreed that the Guide should address the issue of cost-effectiveness, and consideration to the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the farming systems in developing countries and to the particular health situation in the section on Implementation. The Working Group agreed to amend the section on Hazards to recognise that some of the listed hazards had impacts on food safety only indirectly. It also recommended that radionuclides be grouped together with chemical hazards. It agreed that there was some redundancy and duplication in the document and recommended how it be restructured. The Working Group noted that risks associated with animal manure and other wastes had not been adequately addressed and proposed an additional text for consideration. The Working Group recommended that the OIE and FAO support developing countries in their efforts to raise awareness and provide training to farmers and other stakeholders to assist them in complying with the Guide. In particular, resources should be made available through international projects directed to developing countries with the goal of improving the infrastructure of the food production sectors and the performance of the Veterinary Services. The Working Group also proposed a number of other changes and recommended that the OIE/FAO *ad hoc* Group revisit this document electronically, taking into account the Working Group's recommendations. The Working Group noted that the GGFP will serve as a generic guide for Members and as such it does not contain detailed technical recommendations. More specific guidelines will be developed, in particular for developing countries. These will be prepared by technical agencies such as FAO with the objective of making applicable the implementation of good farming practices in these socio-economic and cultural contexts.

4. **Animal Identification and Traceability**

The Working Group noted the work completed by the *ad hoc* Group on Animal Identification and Traceability and did not propose any additional amendments to the proposed text. Bearing in mind potential future standard-setting work of Codex on product traceability, the Working Group recommended that OIE and Codex maintain close collaboration on this topic. The Working Group was informed about the OIE's intention to hold an International Conference on Animal Identification and Traceability in early 2009, in technical collaboration with Codex, as a mechanism to provide countries with technical information on systems for identification and traceability and recommended that the Director General of the OIE should accept collaboration with the FAO.

5. **Terrestrial Animal Feed**

The Working Group reviewed the revised draft document entitled "*Guidelines for the Control of Hazards of Animal Health and Public Health Importance in Animal Feed*", which contained the comments of OIE Members and the Terrestrial Code Commission meeting held in September 2007. The Working Group addressed the revised Guidelines from a food safety perspective, bearing in mind the need to maintain consistency with the Codex Code of Practice on Good Animal Feeding. The Working Group noted the Terrestrial Code Commission's proposed modification of the scope and suggested that the intention be clarified as the new text could generate some confusion as to whether terrestrial animals other than livestock (e.g. pet animals) were covered. In addition, the reference to 'food' in the sentence 'These guidelines deal with food or feed for terrestrial animals (i.e. livestock and poultry)' was felt to be confusing and the Working Group recommended to delete the word food. The Working Group proposed a number of modifications to the Definitions section. Under the section on General Principles, the Working Group recommended changing the placement of the text on contingency plans and the addition of text to clarify the intent. The Working Group reviewed the revised text on labelling, in light of Codex recommendations on this point. In relation to contamination, the Working Group recommended that attention should be focused on contamination in general with reference to cross contamination only where necessary. The Working Group also made some other minor amendments to the text.

6. **Aquatic Animal Feed**

The Working Group discussed this item in light of its discussion on terrestrial animal feed. Members considered that the food safety issues associated with feeding aquatic animals should be addressed and agreed that it would review any further text covering food safety that might be produced through the OIE procedure. The Working Group recommended that the guidelines on terrestrial and aquatic animal feed should be as closely aligned as possible. The Working Group recommended that OIE expert(s) further review the Guidelines on Feeding Terrestrial Animals, in addition to Codex guidance on animal feeding and FAO publications on aquaculture, with a view to developing text on the food safety implications of aquatic animal feed. In addition to the Codex and FAO publications referenced in the draft Guidelines for the Control of Aquatic Animal Health Hazards in Aquatic Animal Feed, the expert(s) should examine recommendations relevant to feed in texts recently developed by the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods and the Codex Committee on Fish and Fishery Products (section on aquaculture feed). The Working Group recommended the OIE should continue to closely monitor developments on aquatic animal feed in Codex.

7. **Revision of OIE Model Veterinary Certificates**

The Working Group discussed the report of the *ad hoc* Group on Model Veterinary Certificates, the comments of OIE Members and the text modifications proposed by the Terrestrial Code Commission at its meeting held in September 2007. The Working Group recommended that the amendment of Article 1.2.1.1 proposed by the Terrestrial Code

Commission be modified to read: 'Safe *international trade...*', which seemed to be the normal OIE usage. The Working Group recommended that the OIE ensure that their recommendations on international veterinary certification are as closely aligned as possible with relevant recommendations of Codex (specifically those developed by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems). The Working Group also recommended that the OIE take steps to encourage the use of electronic certification, where possible, and other systems helpful in preventing fraud which is a key consideration for safe international trade. With this in mind, the *ad hoc* Group on Model Veterinary Certificates should, at its February 2008 meeting, review the Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001), as revised in 2007. The Working Group noted the good collaboration between OIE and Codex on matters relating to international health certification and encouraged both organisations to continue their efforts to harmonise approaches.

8. **Salmonellosis**

The Working Group discussed the draft Guidelines on the Detection, Control and Prevention of *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *S. Typhimurium* in Poultry Producing Eggs for Human Consumption, which had been prepared by the OIE *ad hoc* Group on Salmonellosis, and the comments of OIE Members on this draft document. The Working Group noted that the *ad hoc* Group on Salmonellosis will meet again in February 2008 and recommended that the Group should review Codex recommendations on this topic, as revised in 2007. It also noted that the OIE recommendations provided specific advice on measures to be taken on farm which complement the Codex recommendations that address the entire food chain including the measures to be taken post-farm. Therefore, the Working Group urged the OIE and Codex to ensure that recommendations are consistent wherever possible and that any unnecessary duplication is eliminated. The Working Group recommended that the *ad hoc* Group clarify what is meant by environmental sampling in Article 3.10.2.7 and review Article 3.10.2.8. to make the recommendations more operational and clearly differentiate between what is common practice and what are clear recommendations, in particular the section on Vaccination. The Working Group recommended that the OIE develop a definition for 'pest' – either for use in this Appendix or for use generally in the *Terrestrial Code*. The Working Group provided comment on some of the general food safety related issues raised by Members and made a number of recommendations to modify the text, including the addition of certain definitions from the Codex Code of Practice. The Working Group reviewed the terms of reference for the *ad hoc* Group that will be convened to develop recommendations on *Salmonella* detection, prevention and control in broiler chickens and made several recommendations.

9. **Tuberculosis and Brucellosis**

The Working Group discussed the report of the Terrestrial Code Commission on tuberculosis and noted the amendments proposed by the Commission, most of which were not directly relevant to food safety. The Working Group also noted the status report on brucellosis.

10. **Antimicrobial Resistance**

The Working Group was informed about progress in the area of antimicrobial resistance over the last year and that the OIE has finalised its list of Critically Important Antimicrobials, which is now available on the OIE website. The fourth joint FAO/WHO/OIE Meeting on Critically Important Antimicrobials, to be held on 26 November 2007, was an important forum to discuss the appropriate balance between animal health needs and public health concerns in the use of antimicrobial products. There was also an associated stakeholders meeting. The Working Group also noted that, in addition to the work being undertaken by FAO/WHO/OIE and FAO/OIE meetings, the Codex Task Force has started work in 3 areas: risk assessment policy, risk management measures and risk profiling. The new Codex work would have due regard to the existing work by the OIE/FAO/WHO.

11. **Biotechnology**

The Working Group noted the status of work in Codex regarding biotechnology. As mentioned in the report of the 7th Session of the Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology (ALINORM 08/31/34), the Codex Draft Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Animals is at Step 5/8 of the Codex procedure. This guideline identifies the health status of the recombinant animal as one of the factors that is relevant to the safety assessment of recombinant-DNA animals. It was understood that the assessment of animal health status fell within the OIE mandate and was not covered by the Codex guideline. The Working Group noted the report of the 12-14 June 2007 meeting of the OIE Biotechnology *ad hoc* Group and noted that this Group will next meet on 26-29 November 2007. In response to the recommendations of an FAO/WHO expert group, the status of food derived from animals treated with recombinant DNA vaccines will be addressed. The Working Group accepted the invitation for its Chair to be present at this meeting and he will report back to the next Working Group meeting.

12. **Revised version of WHO publication 'Terrorist Threats to Food'**

Dr Schlundt (WHO) briefly summarised the amendments made to the publication *Terrorist Threats to Food* and indicated that WHO's intention is to publish the revised publication as soon as possible.

13. **Work Programme for 2008 and next meeting**

The Working Group reviewed the work programme for 2007 and updated it, based on the progression of relevant texts in the past 12 months and the discussion at this meeting. Priorities for 2008 include: a) identification and tracing of animals and animal products that have resulted from biotechnological intervention; b) food safety implications of the use in food producing animals of vaccines derived from recombinant biotechnology; c) food safety implications of feed for aquatic animals; d) OIE International Conference on the Identification and Traceability of Animals and Animal Products to be held in technical collaboration with Codex in Buenos Aires in early 2009; e) Salmonellosis in broilers; f) Campylobacteriosis in broilers (on work programme for 2009 pending progress in Codex) and, g) Cysticercosis. The Working Group plans to hold its next meeting in November 2008.
