

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVE: THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (2005), THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS, AND VETERINARY LEGISLATION

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This session presents some key activities and instruments involving the World Health Organization (WHO) which are relevant in drafting and adopting effective veterinary legislation.

The Codex Alimentarius is a joint initiative established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO to harmonize international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice. Codex standards, although non-binding, serve as the bases for many national food standards and related regulations, with the dual purposes of protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. In the international legislative context, the Codex standards and guidelines are also the references for food safety in the SPS Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime.

FAO and WHO jointly published the *Guidelines for strengthening national food control systems* (referenced below), which as part of its comprehensive guidance, includes specifically Guidelines for Developing a National Food Law (Annex 6) and other guidance relevant to national legislation.

The WHO International Health Regulations (2005) ("IHR" or "IHR (2005)", www.who.int/ihr) are a global, legally-binding framework against the international spread of a wide range of diseases/risks - including those that are biological or chemical in nature, and transmissible by persons, international transport, goods/cargo, animals, food products, vectors or the environment. The IHR bind 194 States Parties, and have many provisions potentially relevant to zoonoses and other animal-related health risks to humans, including: notification and verification to WHO of specific events; surveillance and response support by WHO; requirements for applying health measures to international trade/transport/travellers; sanitary requirements for certain international ports and airports; development of minimum capacities in all countries for surveillance, assessment and response. There are also important provisions on coordination with other international regulatory regimes and intergovernmental organizations (including OIE).

Awareness of these related IHR rights and obligations, and intersectoral collaboration on these issues (where IHR-related legislative assessment is also ongoing) are important to drafting of key parts of

effective veterinary legislation. See related step by step guidance below.

- WHO. IHR (2005): A brief introduction to implementation in national legislation (WHO 2009), at http://www.who.int/ihr/Intro_legislative_implementation.pdf

- WHO. IHR (2005): Toolkit for implementation in national legislation: Questions and answers, legislative reference and assessment tool and examples (WHO 2009), at http://www.who.int/ihr/Toolkit_Legislative_Implementation.pdf

- FAO/WHO. Assuring food safety and quality: guidelines for strengthening national food control systems (FAO/WHO 2003), at http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/fs_management/guidelines_foodcontrol/en/index.html

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