

SOLUTIONS AND TOOLS TO IMPROVE VETERINARY LEGISLATIONS: DEVELOPING COUNTRIES' EXPECTATIONS

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The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional economic community having 15 Member States of southern Africa, including the three island states, namely Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. The region is endowed with diverse and rich animal resources with an estimated livestock population in 2007 of 61.6 million head of cattle, 37.3 million sheep, 44.3 million goats, 11.1 million pigs, 2.3 million equines and 232.0 million poultry. During the year 2009, the region produced 5.2 million tonnes of meat (beef, mutton, goat meat, pork and poultry) and 4.8 million tonnes of milk against an estimated demand of 7.5 million tonnes of meat and 12.0 million tonnes of milk. The deficit in demand for livestock products is met through importation, which characterizes the region as a net importer of livestock products, although a few Member States do export beef and beef products.

Livestock production in the region is faced with many challenges and constraints such as animal diseases, animal feeds, low off-takes, pasture degradations, lack of appropriate infrastructure and logistics for livestock services, more specifically for the Veterinary Services, amongst others. Over the years, national budgetary allocations to the Veterinary Services of several Member States have been curtailed due to other priorities, so much so that the status of these services are, at present, at different levels of development, as evidenced by the PVS evaluations which have recently been concluded in 12 out of the 15 Member States of the region.

Although all the Member States have a legislative framework, as per OIE guidelines, which regulates the activities and operations of their Veterinary Services, most of these frameworks require reviews and updating to take account of developments in the field of animal disease control, veterinary public health, food safety and animal welfare.

Almost 70 % of the livestock farmers of the region are smallholders who expect to improve their livelihoods by trading more in livestock products within the region and having access to regional and international markets. Addressing the gaps, especially those linked to primary and secondary legislations, identified during the PVS evaluations will give the Veterinary Services the required tools and the enforcement powers to carry out their mandate of ensuring efficient and effective animal disease control as well as the provision of safe food of animal origin to the population.

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