



○○○ Chair: Dr Carlos Correa Messuti

PERSPECTIVES FOR MOVING TOWARDS GLOBAL CONTROL OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE - CONTRIBUTION

- Alain Vandersmissen
European Commission, Brussels, Belgium

The global response to the H5N1 highly pathogenic Avian Influenza crisis crystallized during the second half of 2005. It rapidly developed into an unprecedented international mobilization to deal with the crisis at two complementary levels: (i) animal health and poultry production -at backyard, mid-scale or industrial levels- and (ii) prevention of a potential global pandemic of human influenza and preparation to mitigate its impact.

The response was based on the articulation of actions at: (i) national level with the set up of structures for interministerial coordination and preparation of national integrated action plans, (ii) sub-regional and regional levels with involvement of intergovernmental bodies and (iii) global or international level with the activation of swift networks of key political actors, donors and international organizations.

Although major actors, among them the European Commission, focused on the socio-economic impact of the crisis and on the need to prevent and mitigate its negative consequences on livelihoods and development, the dominant driving rationale underlying the global response was security. H5N1 is a dossier that has been rapidly and unanimously “securitized” -meaning incorporation in a non-traditional security basket-, largely as a consequence of the SARS crisis of 2003. The interest of the public in developed countries evolved in parallel with the degree of political sensitization, and rapidly vanished once HPAI was not felt any more as a major risk to their security.

The novel flu crisis came timely to revive the interest of political personnel, institutions and the general public for the potential impact of infectious events, but again only because of the risk the flu epidemics represented for security.

The global control of Foot and Mouth Disease has to be apprehended in a different context. Although the impact of the disease on international trade, economies and livelihoods, especially of the poor, is important, the disease is not perceived as a risk to health and global security. The timescale to achieve freedom of FMD with vaccination is much longer than for animal diseases previously addressed globally -including Rinderpest- and control is a complex challenge.

Under these circumstances, the model of global networking set up in response to AI is most probably not replicable as such for FMD. Advocacy at political, policy and donor level can and should however focus on the relations between FMD and the economies of developing countries, trade facilitation, livelihoods and poverty alleviation, and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

Cross-sectoral approaches for action recently developed and promoted by the international community, like “One Health” -that addresses in a comprehensive manner the risks at the interface between animals, humans and ecosystems- offer a new opportunity to integrate the control of hazards like FMD in the agenda of major actors in official development assistance.