MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION
OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE STATUS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES
Paris, 9 – 12 October 2012

1. Opening

A meeting of the OIE ad hoc Group on the Evaluation of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Status of Member Countries (hereafter the Group) was held at the OIE Headquarters, Paris, from 9 – 12 October 2012.

On behalf of Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE, Dr Kazuaki Miyagishima, Head of the Scientific and Technical Department welcomed the participants. Dr Miyagishima thanked the Group for accepting to participate in four meetings this year that were considered by the OIE necessary to finalise the revision of Chapter 8.5 in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code) in addition to addressing the increasing number of applications for endorsement of official control programmes for FMD to be evaluated. He emphasised that the actions of the OIE and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were linked more intimately through the commitment of the two Organisations to collaborate together for advancing the global control of FMD. At the global conference on FMD control held in Bangkok from 27 to 29 June 2012 jointly organised by the OIE and FAO, a global FMD control strategy was endorsed with strong support from some donors to provide funding to control the disease. The conference had created a new dynamism to increase communication with a clear, common message from the OIE and FAO.

Dr Miyagishima reminded the experts on the OIE procedures for protecting the confidentiality of information and for declaring potential conflicts of interest. He also informed the Group on the significant changes brought in the OIE Standard Operating Procedures for official recognition of disease status and for the endorsement of official control programmes of Member Countries for FMD (SOP) based on the experience gained to date. He mentioned that the deadline for submitting the dossier was extended to 45 days prior to the meeting of the relevant ad hoc Group compared to 30 days previously to give more time to the experts to study the dossier. In line with this and because the OIE would expect an increase in the number of applications, more experts would be involved to cover sufficiently all the three official languages of the OIE as dossiers could be submitted in any of the OIE official languages. He also informed the Group that the record of evaluations for unsuccessful applications needed to be more detailed so as to improve the communication with the applicant Member Countries, while protecting confidentiality as appropriate. To support the increasing workload, the OIE reinforced the OIE secretariat serving the ad hoc Groups relating to official disease status.

Dr Miyagishima clarified that as a matter of principle, an application for endorsement by the OIE of an official control programme should be handled and assessed independently from the presence or absence of zones located in the same country and already officially recognised as free from FMD. However, any evidence submitted from a country could be verified by the Group one against another across the dossiers before drawing a conclusion.

Finally, the Group was informed that the OIE decided to allocate to this meeting all the applications dealing with official control programme for endorsement to ensure consistent approach in the evaluations.
2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur

The Group was chaired by Dr Alf-Eckbert Füssel and Dr Wilna Vosloo acted as rapporteur. The Group adopted the proposed agenda as agenda for the meeting. Drs Moetapele Letshwenyo and Mehdi El Harrak were absent due to other commitments. One of them provided his comments regarding the evaluation of the official control programmes to be shared with the Group.

The Agenda and list of participants are presented as Appendices I and II, respectively.

3. Revision of Chapter 8.5.

The Group reviewed mainly the surveillance Articles (8.5.44 – 47 and 49) as amended by the ad hoc Group on Epidemiology at its meeting from 2 to 4 October 2012. Owing to lack of time, the Group decided to address the comments provided by the February 2012 meeting of the Scientific Commission at its forthcoming December meeting, building on the discussion so far and all other comments received.

4. Evaluation of a request from a Member Country for recovery of FMD free zone status where vaccination is practised

Turkey

The Group reviewed the dossier submitted by Turkey to apply for recovery of FMD free zone status where vaccination is practised in the Turkish Thrace region. The Group discussed in detail the results of the serological surveillance Turkey conducted in 2012 while analysing the map indicating the random distribution of non-structural proteins (NSP) sero-positive animals detected during the sero-survey carried out in 2012. The follow-up actions put in place by Turkey and described in the dossier to clarify whether these sero-positive animals (e.g. cattle, sheep and water buffalo) were considered as FMDV infection/circulation or as non-specific reactions, were deemed sufficient to rule out FMDV infection/circulation in domestic animals in the Turkish Thrace region. However, the Group regretted that Turkey, instead of conducting more surveillance in wild boar in 2012, mostly made reference to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) report in this subject, which, for a significant part, relied upon the surveillance results obtained in Bulgaria, to show that the disease had most likely died out in the area.

The Group agreed to recommend to Turkey - as matter of priority - that Veterinary Services should interact with other relevant bodies in order to carry out surveillance during the hunting seasons to prove the absence of FMD. The Group also agreed to encourage Turkey to continue monitoring the FMD situation in domestic animals and wildlife in the Turkish Thrace region.

The Group considered the surveillance conducted adequate to demonstrate the absence of evidence of virus infection/circulation in the Turkish Thrace region and therefore decided to recommend to the Scientific Commission the reinstatement of FMD free zone where vaccination is practised in the Turkish Thrace region.

5. Evaluation of requests from Member Countries for endorsement of official control programme for FMD

The Group noted that the OIE had received a total of five applications for endorsement of official control programme for FMD, to be evaluated at this meeting.

The Group noted that the Article 8.5.48 of the Terrestrial Code for endorsement of official control programme for FMD clearly indicated the provisions needed to apply for an OIE endorsed official control programme for FMD but did not refer to the PCP and its five Stages. According to the PCP, Member Countries could submit to the OIE their official control programme for endorsement only when they have reached Stage 3. The Group reiterated the importance for a country to carefully consider the most appropriate timing to submit its official control programmes to the OIE in the light of the progress made by the country. The Group noted that although the use of the PCP was not obligatory, it could be used by countries to self-evaluate their state of progress.
The Group noted that three of the five applicant Member Countries were at the very early stages of the implementation of their national control programme for FMD and had put into practice few measures in accordance with Article 8.5.48. The assessment carried out by the Group concluded that the progress in their control strategy did not meet the requirement for endorsement. It was therefore considered premature for the three applicants to submit their official control programme for endorsement. In addition, the Group noted that although the applicants followed the structure of the questionnaire in their submissions, the documentation given was not enough detailed for conducting an appropriate assessment of the dossiers in accordance with the relevant articles of the *Terrestrial Code*. For these applications, the Group agreed that instead of providing general or specific feedback on each point in the documentation, the OIE should draw the attention of the applicant countries to all the necessary references in the *Terrestrial Code* and any relevant additional documentation which the countries needed to fully comply with. These countries would then be requested to review their status objectively and holistically before re-submitting an application in several years’ time.

The Group recommended that the OIE encourage the three applicant Member Countries to provide, in future, more detailed and complete information to enable the OIE to conduct a thorough assessment of dossiers in accordance with the requirements laid out in Article 8.5.48, through the use of the questionnaire provided in Article 1.6.8 of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group also agreed that all applicant Member Countries should be made aware that they could seek advice/assistance from the OIE Regional/Sub-regional Representations regarding the preparation and submission of dossiers.

As regards the two remaining applications, the Group decided to request supplementary information so that it can complete its assessment at its December meeting.

6. **Other matters**

The Group requested that all dossiers submitted in French or Spanish languages be translated (not only the executive summary part but at least the main body of application) into the main working language of the Group so that decisions would be based on the inputs from all members of the Group. Noting the financial implications of this process to the OIE, the Group agreed that Member Countries were welcome to supply translation on a voluntary basis together with the original dossier.

The Group expressed the need to extend the meeting planned in December 2012 to a five-day meeting to allow for the finalisation on the *Terrestrial Code* Chapter and the assessment of the Member Country applications.

7. **Adoption of report**

The *ad hoc* Group reviewed and amended the draft report provided by the rapporteur. The Group agreed that the report captured the discussions but should be circulated to the entire Group for final comments.

…/Appendices
Annex 12 (contd.)

Appendix 1

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Agenda

1. Opening
2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur
3. Revision of Chapter 8.5.
4. Evaluation of a request from a Member Country for recovery of FMD free status where vaccination is practised
5. Evaluation of requests from Member Countries for endorsement of official control programme for FMD
6. Other matters
7. Adoption of report
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