OIE 72nd General Session

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE OIE WORKING GROUP ON ANIMAL PRODUCTION FOOD SAFETY

Introduction

OIE was requested by its International Committee to strengthen its activities in the food safety area and had noted the Director General’s informal discussions with the Chairman of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) on collaboration in relevant areas, to ensure a seamless interface between the two standard-setting organisations. The Director General set up an Ad Hoc working group to provide recommendations on ways the OIE could work more effectively with the CAC, the scope of OIE involvement in food safety and priorities for that work, and on a modus operandi for the OIE’s work. The group met in April 2002 and formulated recommendations.

The recommendations were discussed at the OIE General Session in May 2002 and as a result a permanent working group (Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety) was set up with terms of reference aligned with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc working group. The Working Group’s role, is to coordinate the animal production food safety activities of the OIE that have a goal of ‘reducing food borne risks to human health by preventing, eliminating or controlling hazards arising from animals prior to primary processing of animals and animal products’, and advise the OIE Director-General and the Code Commission thereof.

Permanent Working Group

The OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety held its first at the OIE Headquarters in November 2002. The Chair of the Working Group reported back to Member Countries at the 2003 General Session on this meeting. There have been a further two meetings since the 2003 General Session, the second meeting held in Rome in July 2003 and the third meeting at the OIE Headquarters 1-2 April 2004. A record of the July 2003 and the April 2004 meetings have been circulated to Member Countries.

Important milestones/achievements

1. **Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene**

   OIE provided inputs into the Codex Committee on Meat Hygiene meeting held in February 2004. Key inputs covered recognition that meat hygiene served both animal health and public health objectives and this duality of functions needed to be recognised. Also important was the need for cross referencing of relevant OIE texts specifically that relating to certification.

   There was general support for the OIE comments and these were discussed and appropriate text included in the Draft Code of Practice on Meat Hygiene.

2. **Review of the Tb Chapter of the Terrestrial Code**

   The Working Group regard the revision of the tuberculosis chapter as a high priority and believe that a risk-based approach to the food safety aspects of the chapter are fundamental in the review. Given that fact there was agreement that the measures
recommended must be practicable and be able to be applied in Member Countries as a basis for international trade.

The Working Group also recommended that the OIE adopt a broader view of the term ‘competent authority’ in the Terrestrial Code to incorporate other authorities with the relevant responsibilities where these were not under the jurisdiction of Veterinary Administrations. In this context it was also noted that these comments on ‘competent authorities’ were also relevant to the BSE Chapter of the Terrestrial Code and it was important that all jurisdictions having an interest in animal health and zoonoses recognised OIE standards as representing wider interests than those of Veterinary Administrations.

3 Good Farming Practices

The Working Group is developing a paper designed as guidelines for good farming practice. The paper adopts a farm-level animal production approach to address public health risks at the farm, at this stage generically, with the opportunity to add specific references later to address particular issues or situations in specific regions or countries.

The ‘guidelines’ describe what might be seen as an ideal in specific farming situations but might not necessarily be seen as applying to all situations in all Member Countries where risks might be different and animal husbandry practices varied. As such the final version will likely be used by countries like a ‘recipe book’ from which relevant components could be used in the development of on farm programmes to suit specific situations.

4 Veterinary Services and Meat Hygiene

The paper developed by the Working Group on “Role and functionality of veterinary services in meat hygiene throughout the food chain” was circulated for Member Country comment. The paper was primarily written to provide Veterinary Services with a bridge between the work of OIE and Codex relating to meat hygiene where there was a need to meet both animal and public health objectives. This followed recognition of the gap in Codex and OIE standards relating to the duality of objectives that Veterinary Services often have in meeting both animal and public health objectives.

The Working Group will modify the paper following Member Country comments and it will serve as a guidance document for the Director-General for further work in this area.

Associated with this paper was the development of another paper by the Working Group entitled ‘Control of hazards of public health and animal health importance through ante- and post-mortem meat inspection’. This will be further developed to provide more detailed guidance in the use and development of a risk based approach in ante and post-mortem inspection, and will be circulated to Member Countries in due course as part of OIE procedures.

5 Resources for the Working Group
The Director General has recruited additional resource to help service the Working Group. This will provide added impetus to the initiatives and work plan.

**Future Work Programme**

The Working Group discussed the substantive work plan previously identified and decided on the following priorities for the short term:

**Horizontal issues**

- traceability
- testing, inspection and certification – the Working Group recommended that the OIE work with Codex (especially CCFICS) and other relevant international organisations (such as the IDF) to review international standards with a view to maximising harmonisation

**OIE texts**

- *Code* chapter on bovine tuberculosis – underway
- *Code* chapter on bovine brucellosis – the Working Group recommended that the OIE commence scientific review, pending International Committee approval of the approach adopted for bovine tuberculosis
- salmonellosis – take into account Codex and WHO work

**OIE input into Codex texts**

- upcoming Codex meetings on animal feeding, veterinary drugs and milk and milk products
- improvement of the current level of OIE input into Codex texts and development of a method for the most effective utilisation of Codex expertise in the work of OIE *ad hoc* Groups

**Antimicrobial resistance**

**Development of other documents**

- good farming practices
- framework document on ‘Control of hazards of public health and animal health importance through ante- and post-mortem meat inspection’.

Andrew McKenzie
Chairman
Animal Production Food Safety Working Group