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○○○ Chair: Dr Juan Lubroth

OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SITUATION FOR FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE



FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE CONTROL STRATEGIES IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST – THE CURRENT SITUATION

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FMD is endemic in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), remaining a significant drain on the budgets of the national veterinary services of each country and on the livelihoods of livestock owners across the region.

Despite using modern and effective vaccines, periodic devastating epidemics occur, usually originating from neighbouring regions: West Asia, East and West Africa (Sub Sahara area) and spreading rapidly across national and regional borders.

Presently in the region, serotypes A and O are the main circulating strains:

- The A Iran 05 toptotype is the predominant serotype A lineage circulating currently in the Middle East, from Pakistan to Libya. New variants have also been identified in Turkey recently;
- Since 2006 another A strain (A Egypt 06), from East Africa, is well established in the Mediterranean region. Its introduction in Egypt was probably made through the trade in live cattle from Ethiopia;
- The O PanAsia II, belonging to the ME-SA toptotype, was first recorded in 2003 in India and is now widely spread in all the Middle East, liable for high mortalities in young ruminants during winters.

To control the disease in the region, vaccination in large ruminants, sometimes also in small ruminants, is the common strategy adopted. These vaccination programs use vaccines from a wide variety of sources, including producers based within the region and international suppliers from Europe, Russia and India.

The lack of relevant and harmonized surveillance programs with well trained staff, the lack of early warning and rapid response systems in most countries of the region and the lack of transparency and collaboration between countries are important factors hampering the well control of the disease, principally the correct disease diagnosis and the development of specific matching vaccines.

The extensive land border in the region and the importance of transhumance and animal movement between neighbouring countries, notably in order to satisfy people needs during Muslim special events (Hajj and Ramadan) make the disease control even more difficult. Furthermore, some countries are not able to secure funding within their budgets for FMD surveillance and control programs.

The MENA region is much more complex than other regions, regarding its geographical location, at the crossing of three continents, and shall be recognized as a high risk area for the spread of FMD virus to neighbouring regions, especially Europe.

Thus the implementation of a harmonized and coordinated program to control the disease shall be a priority, position regularly wished by regional countries.

The newly created OIE – FAO Regional Animal Health Centres, in Beirut and Tunis, under the auspices of Regional Steering Committees of the GF-TADs shall be the relevant structures to carry such program in the frame of a global strategy.