

PACE Programme: 12th Advisory Committee Meeting

26-27 April 2006

Bamako, Mali

Advisory Committee Members present:

Chairman: Dr B. Vallat (OIE¹)

Secretary: Dr D. Sibartie (OIE)

Members: Dr M. Traore (AU/IBAR²)

Dr P. Steinmetz (EC³, Brussels)

Mr O. Moller (EC³, Nairobi)

Dr T. Barrett, (IAH/ WRL⁴ for Rinderpest, Pirbright)

Dr A. Diallo (FAO⁵-IAEA⁶)

Dr J. Domenech (FAO-AGAH⁷.)

Dr E. Camus (CIRAD/EMVT⁸ WRL for CBPP⁹)

The Advisory Committee (AC) of the Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics (PACE) met on 26 and 27 April 2006 in Bamako, Mali.

The meeting was open by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries on behalf of the Minister of Livestock and Fisheries of Mali in the presence of the OIE Director General, the representative of the European Commission in Mali, the Director of AU/IBAR, other AC members, representatives of donor organisations and invited guests.

Presentations were made by the PACE personnel and their collaborators, National PACE Coordinators, OIE, FAO and Muguga/KARI/Pirbright Laboratory as follows:

- Progress in the implementation of PACE Programme (PACE Coordination Unit),
- Financial situation of PACE (Finance Unit),
- Reports of National Coordinators on the implementation of the PACE Programme (Burundi, Cameroon, Gambia, Mali and Nigeria),

¹ OIE: World Organisation for Animal Health

² AU/IBAR: African Union/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

³ EC: European Commission

⁴ IAH/WRL: Institute for Animal Health/World Reference Laboratory

⁵ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

⁶ IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency

⁷ AGAH: Animal Health Service

⁸ CIRAD/EMVT: Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement/Élevage et Médecine Vétérinaire des Pays Tropicaux.

⁹ CBPP: Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia

- Coordination of activities in the fight against avian influenza (Epidemiology Unit),
- Implementation of the three regional FAO Technical Co-operation Programmes (TCPs) on avian influenza in Africa (FAO),
- Regional OIE/FAO/IBAR Animal Health Centre particularly for the coordination of measures against avian influenza in Central and Western Africa (OIE),
- Update on the emergency funds for vaccines against avian influenza (OIE),
- Progress achieved in rinderpest accreditation along the OIE Pathway (Epidemiology Unit),
- Update on SERECU activities (SERECU Coordinator),
- Evaluation of PPR vaccine as heterologous vaccine against rinderpest (Muguga KARI/Pirbright),
- Results of the previous evaluation of national components of PACE (Epidemiology Unit)
- PACE interim programme (Coordination Unit)

The AC expressed appreciation for the excellent quality of presentations by the various speakers and complimented AU/IBAR/PACE for the actions taken in the follow up of the recommendations of the 11th AC meeting.

The AC discussed various issues raised and made the following recommendations:

1. Experimental trials on the use of PPR vaccines against rinderpest.

The AC appreciates that the long awaited trial to test the suitability of the PPR vaccine for use as a marker vaccine for rinderpest has finally been carried out but notes that the experiment gave inconclusive results although there is clear evidence that a proportion of vaccinated cattle are protected from rinderpest on challenge. The number of animals used in the trial did not allow statistically valid conclusions to be drawn and it would be a pity to halt the trial at an inconclusive stage.

The AC considers that a definitive conclusion must be obtained from these experiments not only for its scientific value but also because of the potential impact that the use of PPR vaccines to protect cattle against rinderpest could have on the export of live cattle from the Horn of Africa to some importing countries of the Middle East.

By repeating the trial with a larger number of animals and using the highest dose of vaccine it should be possible to obtain scientifically valid data that could be used to decide on the future use, or not, of the PPR vaccine as a marker vaccine to control the spread of rinderpest and to update the OIE Pathway on the recognition of rinderpest free status.

The AC strongly recommends that the trial be repeated and that the project management be strengthened and funds made available for full time expert nominated by PACE and independent monitors from Reference Laboratories to evaluate each stage of the work. This

monitoring will be especially important at critical points in the trial – at vaccination and at challenge – to verify correct collection, labeling and storage of the samples. It will also be essential that accurate records are kept and that the data are computerised and sent to all the scientists concerned for their comments. Timely analysis of the serum samples and monitoring of the PBL for signs of vaccine replication infection should be carried out before proceeding to the challenge step. In the repeat trial it is also recommended that a small number of control sheep and goats be vaccinated to ensure the vaccine's efficacy in those species. A protocol to carry out a repeat trial on a larger number of animals has been drafted and will be reviewed by selected AC members and PACE scientists. The new protocol will be attached to the final AC report.

2. Final eradication of rinderpest

Eradication of rinderpest in Africa remains an essential step in the accomplishment of the GREP Programme which aims at the eradication of the disease from the world by 2010. Considerable progress has been achieved during the PARC and PACE periods leading to the virtual disappearance of rinderpest from Africa although the absence of infection in the Somali Ecosystem still remains to be proved. This significant achievement remains unprecedented in the history of animal diseases in that it may be the first time that an animal disease will be eradicated from the planet.

The PACE Programme ends at the beginning of 2007 and the final eradication of rinderpest in the SES according to the GREP programme and the OIE Pathway will not be possible by that time. It is therefore imperative that the international community ensure the absence of the disease in the SES according to the OIE Pathway. This will require that steps be taken to allow the SES to embark on the OIE Pathway during the next 5 years.

Conscious of the fact that significant resources have already been deployed in the PACE Programme and that achievements have been significant, the AC urges the international donor community to provide the necessary resources to implement a new project focused on ensuring the final eradication of rinderpest in the SES and thus in the world.

3. Financial situation

The AC notes that all operational activities of PACE have to be closed before 31 October 2006 and that all funds have to be utilised before the end of the Financing Agreement on 28 February 2007. The AC emphasises that closure and decommitment of balances of funds from old contracts (including grants contracts with CIRAD and IAHPirbright and the Technical Assistant contract with FAO) and decommitment of balances from contracts and programme estimates be given urgent attention.

The AC recommends that all retrieved funds be used by PACE to fund priority activities to be determined by PACE/IBAR. In case the new project for the continuation of SERECU activities (see recommendation 2) is not yet approved or secured by October 2006, part of these funds could be used if necessary, for financing SERECU activities and regional and sub-regional coordination units in the framework of the Regional Animal Health Centres.

4. Emergency funds for avian influenza

The AC expresses satisfaction about the acceptance in principle by the EC of its previous recommendation to allow the disbursement of part of the funds lodged at the OIE for emergency use in case of rinderpest outbreaks, to be used towards the purchase of avian influenza vaccines. It notes however that there is a strict deadline applicable to the use of such funds.

The AC urges the EC to confirm this decision on the basis of the exchange of letters between OIE and IBAR, as soon as possible. Considering that avian influenza will not be eradicated from Africa in the near future, the AC also recommends that the EU consider the possibility of using part of the money pledged within the Alive mechanism to top up this sum as and when required in order to ensure regular supplies of vaccines.

5. Coordination and harmonisation of animal disease information systems

The AC notes the departure of the officer responsible for the PACE Animal Resource Information System (ARIS) and acknowledges that the recommendation made during the 11th AC meeting on the organisation of a seminar on animal health information systems could not be held.

The AC stresses the importance of coordination and harmonisation of data regarding animal diseases and re-iterates its recommendation that a common seminar be held under the aegis of OIE, IBAR, and FAO and FAO-IAEA Joint Division on a cost sharing basis, to discuss the existence and implications of current animal disease information systems with a view to harmonising the systems in Africa.

6. Creation of the joint OIE/FAO/IBAR Regional Animal Health Centre

The AC considers the creation of a joint OIE/FAO/IBAR Regional Animal Health Centre to coordinate regional animal health activities as a great achievement particularly with respect to the coordination of control measures against avian influenza in Africa. It is further encouraged by the unanimous support expressed by donors present at the meeting.

The AC therefore urges that OIE, FAO and IBAR pursue, within their respective mandates, appropriate negotiations to seek funding for the sustainability of the Centre within the framework of the Alive Platform. It also asks the AU/IBAR to raise this issue at the forthcoming donor conference on avian and human influenza scheduled to be held in Vienna in June 2006.

7. Validation of integrated country plans

The AC takes into account the recommendation made during the international Conference held in Beijing in January 2006 on a harmonised process for the control of avian and human influenza stressing the need for countries to prepare integrated country plans and evaluate their Veterinary Services using the OIE 'Performance, Vision and Strategy' (PVS) tool. It is also understood that these plans including emergency measures be properly validated by specialised technical agencies.

The AC recommends that the national plans for Africa be harmonised and supported by the recently created joint OIE/FAO/IBAR Regional Animal Health Centre before submission to potential donors in order to ensure subsequent approval by the international community.

8. Final evaluation of PACE Programme

The AC notes that the terms of reference for a final evaluation exercise of the PACE programme, as stipulated in the Financing Agreement, have already been prepared by the PACE Coordination Unit.

The AC recommends that appropriate consultants capable of carrying out the evaluation exercise be nominated as soon as possible. It is also recommended that the consultants suggest appropriate communication tools to publicise the achievements of the PACE programme. It is also proposed that a document be produced by the PACE team to highlight the positive experiences of the PACE Programme.

9. Internal evaluation of national components

The AC recommends that more weight be given to the criteria relating to the allocation of national budgets for the sustainability of epidemiological surveillance systems (ESS).

The AC further congratulates the team for the document on the national programme reviews and country posters preparation and recommends that this document be used as a relevant communication tool.

10. Socio-economic survey

The AC recognises that costs of prevention versus costs of crises are currently assessed through grants from World Bank to the OIE.

The AC recommends that existing surveys carried out by FAO and PACE be used to prepare relevant documentation for Governments and donors

11. PANVAC

The AC appreciates that PANVAC is now an AU institution with a substantive Director and budgetary provisions and prides itself at having contributed to its revitalisation. In view of the expertise acquired by that institution in the quality control of rinderpest and CBPP vaccines and in fostering partnerships with vaccine producing laboratories in Africa, PANVAC can be considered as a perfectly suitable institution to deal with quality control of veterinary biological products and drugs.

The AC recommends that before the end of the PACE programme, a study be carried out to prepare an ambitious project that will enable PANVAC to fulfil the commitments expected of it for a period of 5 to 10 years.

12. Post PACE

The AC recommends that AU/IBAR make an urgent request to donors including EC and EU member states for the preparation of a continental programme for strengthening animal health

capacities, taking into account PACE achievements and evaluation recommendations as well as the international recommendations of the OIE/FAO on avian influenza prevention and control strategies.

The AC also recommends that the Alive Platform prepare a request to donors, including EC and EU member countries in order to support AU/IBAR, Regional Animal Health Centres and national Veterinary Services of Sub-Saharan countries during the relevant period while awaiting the implementation of the new programme in order to avoid further weakening of current veterinary infrastructure created during the JP15, PARC and PACE periods. In order to facilitate this process, and according to the Kigali ministerial meeting recommendations, AU/IBAR in conjunction with regional economic communities is requested to make appropriate contacts with concerned countries in order to plan for subsequent national political commitments.

In this context, a meeting should be organised within the framework of the General Assembly of Alive scheduled to take place in October 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya where a broader community of donors will be invited.

13. Staff changes

The AC understands that staff changes are envisaged in the organisation of the PACE Unit and Animal Health Department.

The AC recommends that changes to be made do not disrupt the sustainability of the current management of the PACE Programme, its final evaluation and the preparation of new projects.

14. Thirteenth AC Meeting

The thirteenth AC Meeting will be held on 26 and 27 October 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya.