



Regional workshop on the harmonization of emergency preparedness and control plans against highly pathogenic avian influenza in Africa

Bamako (Mali), March 18th – 19th, 2006

By initiative of the AU - IBAR/PACE and in collaboration with OIE, FAO and USDA - APHIS¹, a regional workshop on the harmonization of emergency preparedness plans against avian influenza was organized from March 18th to 19th, 2006 in Bamako (Mali) intended for the countries in West and Central Africa taking part in the PACE programme.

The representatives of thirteen countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) and of various international or regional organizations or institutions (OIE, FAO, WHO, OCHA², AU-IBAR, ECOWAS, WAHO³, USDA-APHIS, EISMV⁴) took part in the workshop. This meeting followed the meeting of the Group of experts of the ECOWAS Member States and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania regarding the *Sub-regional Mechanism for Coordination of the Prevention and Response against Avian Influenza*, which was held on March 16th and 17th, 2006. The opening ceremony of this meeting took place in the presence of Mr. Oumar Ibrahima TOURE, Hon. Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries of the Republic of Mali.

The work conducted in plenary sessions and group sessions enabled the participants to discuss the following points:

- the current situation of avian influenza in the world and in Africa;
- the progress-status of the regional FAO/TCP on avian influenza and the experiences gained in Vietnam in terms of vaccination against avian influenza;
- the preventive and control strategies regarding avian influenza, as recommended at the regional level;
- the analysis of the strong points and the weaknesses of the national emergency preparedness and action plans against highly pathogenic avian influenza;
- the core elements to be taken into account when developing a plan to prevent and fight avian influenza.

As an outcome of these working sessions, the participants adopted four recommendations and launched an appeal to the Governments and the Development Partners to support the funding of the emergency preparedness and action plans against avian influenza.

¹ USDA APHIS : United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

² OCHA : Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations agency)

³ WAHO : West African Health Organization (ECOWAS agency)

⁴ EISMV : Ecole Inter Etats des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinaires de Dakar (Dakar Inter-State School of Veterinary Science and Medicine)

1. Recommendation regarding the streamlining of the emergency preparedness and action plans against highly pathogenic avian influenza

CONSIDERING THAT

There is need for harmonisation of the emergency preparedness plans (EPP) for the prevention and fight against highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), as worked out by the various countries, in order to improve the coordination of strategies, methodologies and means expected to be implemented by the States in order to effectively fight this crisis.

The analysis of EPP regarding avian influenza revealed some insufficiencies:

- the plans are conceived mainly as projects and not as flexible action plans, which can be tailored according to the evolution of the epidemic in the country and the various possible scenarios,
- the lack of overall coherence between the various headings of the plan and the proposed strategies,
- the recurring absence of descriptions of already committed means and additional needs as well as clearly identifiable funding sources (State, Development partners),
- the absence of planning of the much needed decentralisation of means to the regions and districts (stockpiles of personal protection equipment, operational means, drugs..)
- the budgets are generally presented without a clear linkage to regionalized needs, nor detailed needs for priority interventions.

The recent establishment of a technical platform OIE/FAO/AU-IBAR/PACE in Bamako, which constitutes a framework for dialogue and harmonization of monitoring and evaluation strategies of the operations conducted to fight avian influenza in West and Central Africa, also constitutes the first step towards a Regional Animal Health Centre as defined by the Beijing Conference in January 2006.

THE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDS:

1) That plans be structured and presented so as to render the documents practical and complete for its users, and readable and coherent for the Governments and the Development Partners. This requires that the following points be taken into account :

- Structuring of the plans under large headings, detailed and coherent between them (national context, coordination task force, surveillance system, rapid response system,...),
- Detailed breakdown of the already mobilized means, and the identified funding sources, including the State budget,
- Inventory of the current capacities to respond to an avian influenza epidemic (means that are immediately available),
- Identification of the priority actions and their planning on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis,
- Development of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) component within the plans and the modalities for its periodic progressive update in keeping pace with the evolution of the epidemic,
- Establishment of a compensation fund and the definition of the approach to farmers' compensation.

2) That emergency preparedness plans for the prevention and control of avian influenza be streamlined with regard to the following aspects :

- Control strategies,
- Linkages to be established between animal health, public health and environmental services,
- Development and implementation of common field operations (stamping out, vaccination, information and communication, etc...) with the support of the Bamako-based technical platform OIE/FAO/AU-IBAR/PACE.

2. Recommendations regarding the use of vaccines and vaccination strategies

CONSIDERING THAT :

Vaccination represents one of the tools in a diversified strategy with several control options against avian influenza, which includes, amongst others : stamping out, bio-security, bio-confinement, information and communication, surveillance and laboratory diagnosis, in order to reduce virus shedding of the H5N1 strain and halt the further spread of the virus.

Mass vaccination of poultry against highly pathogenic avian influenza would be difficult to implement in Africa, because of the importance of the traditional livestock system, but also because of its high economic cost and required logistics.

The decision to vaccinate depends upon several considerations of epidemiological, technical and socio-economic nature, amongst others.

The various currently available vaccines on the market are administered by injection and most vaccination protocols require a primo-vaccination, followed by a booster-vaccination.

THE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDS:

- 1) To consider a strategic vaccination approach which targets birds present inside a “buffer zone”, demarcated around an outbreak-site, as well as in other risk areas.
- 2) The establishment of an emergency stockpile of vaccines, sufficient to meet the needs for vaccination of at least 20% of the country's domesticated poultry population and the procurement of the equipment needed to conduct the vaccination operations.
- 3) To take the need for vaccination of people expected to intervene in avian influenza outbreaks into account.
- 4) That the technical platform OIE/FAO/AU-IBAR/PACE prepares practical guidelines on vaccination against avian influenza, to be submitted to the African countries within three months.

3. Recommendations regarding the other prevention and control strategies against avian influenza

CONSIDERING THAT

The outbreaks of avian influenza appeared in West and Central Africa and their evolution could possibly lead to an endemic situation in the region;

The need for urgent action to prevent the appearance of the epizootic in the now still disease-free zones, and to circumscribe and eradicate the disease where it already appeared;

The threat of a human pandemic and its consequences, is of major concern for all populations, the scientific community and the decision-makers;

All the countries worked out preventive and control strategies against highly pathogenic avian influenza and that these strategies must be in coherence with the overall global and regional strategies, but also be streamlined between countries.

THE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDS :

- 1) That countries carry out a broad information and public awareness campaign on the disease, the measures to be taken to prevent its introduction, its spread and the risk factors for human contamination.
- 2) That the fight against the disease be based on the various existing tools, which include stamping out, targeted vaccination, preventive de-stocking etc, and that the epidemiological and economic context be taken into account when applying these tools.
- 3) That the multi-sector dialogue be strengthened at all levels, so as to gain ownership of the preparation of risk management of a human pandemic.
- 4) That AU-IBAR/PACE submits an explanatory note on prophylactic measures, amongst which preventive de-stocking, to the countries within three months.

4. Recommendations regarding the monitoring of avifauna

CONSIDERING THAT :

The role of migratory birds in the epidemiology of avian influenza is still poorly understood and that FAO finances several TCP's on emergency assistance for early detection and prevention of avian influenza in Africa, one of the objectives being to contribute to a better understanding of the role of wildlife in this epidemic.

The management of avifauna in the infected areas, has not been the focus of precise recommendations so far.

THE WORKSHOP RECOMMENDS:

The pursuit of research into the role of avifauna in the spread of avian influenza and the development, by all services and institutions involved, of precise recommendations regarding the management of avifauna in infected areas.

5. Appeal to fund the emergency preparedness and action plans

CONSIDERING THAT :

Political authorities, public administrations, poultry sector professionals and all concerned actors, in the majority of African countries, have been mobilized to face the avian influenza crisis.

The emergency preparedness plans and action/control plans against avian influenza, worked out by the countries and streamlined at the regional level, enable an assessment of the funding requirements for the most urgent operations to implement.

THE WORKSHOP LAUNCHES AN APPEAL :

- 1) To the Governments, in order for internal resources to be mobilized without delay to support the planned actions.
- 2) To the Development Partners, to urgently materialize the announced financial commitments so as to enable the African countries to strengthen their control operations against avian influenza and to react in the shortest possible timeframe so as to prevent that an endemic situation be established in Africa.

Done in Bamako, March 19th , 2006.