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#Press Release 6#

Improving Epidemiological Surveillance of Priority Animal Diseases in West Africa

The 8th Annual Meeting of the ECOWAS Regional Animal Health Networks (RAHN) held in Cabo Verde from 19th to 23rd September 2022 provided an opportunity for the country focal points of the Epidemiological Surveillance Network (RESEPI) to meet and gather ideas for improving the epidemiological surveillance of priority animal diseases in the ECOWAS region.

Discussions among experts focused on the evaluation of the epidemiological situation of CBPP, PPR, rabies and foot and mouth disease, risk analyses already conducted, the capacities of Member States' veterinary services in terms of geographic information systems and mapping, and the sharing of information on animal health.

Apart from Cameroon (a non-ECOWAS Member country but invited to the 8th RAHN) where good progress has been made in the collection and sharing of information, the various presentations highlighted the levels of prevalence of epidemics in the countries. Above all, they highlighted the major needs in terms of data collection, improvement of geographical information systems, training in risk analysis, and equipment and means of transport (in Cabo Verde for instance, only one plane provides a link between the islands). There is also a limited number of well-trained staff (case of Guinea), the absence of control and surveillance plans in some countries, or simply a lack of financial resources.

Exchanges made it possible to identify activities to be carried out and recommendations to be made to the various stakeholders for the 2022/2023 campaign. This includes (i) developing/updating a basic risk surveillance plan, (ii) supporting Member States in building capacity for risk assessment and mapping, (iii) strengthening the RESEPI network within countries to support strategic animal health monitoring and emergency preparedness and response plans (iv) supporting the sharing of animal health data and the harmonisation of data collection tools and (v) establishing the coordination and implementation of the training programme for veterinary professionals in the field of epidemiology (ISAVET).

The resulting Action Plan highlights the planned activities, the expected results, the implementation strategy, a coordinator responsible for the implementation of the activity, the potential source of funding, the timeframe for implementation and the institution responsible for the monitoring implementation of the activity.

The Epidemiological Surveillance Network (RESEPI) complements the regional institutional framework which includes the Regional Veterinary Committee (RVC) established by the ECOWAS Commission in 2010 and the Veterinary Laboratory Network (RESOLAB-Laboratory Network), thus enabling the ECOWAS Commission, through RAHC, to coordinate animal health initiatives in the region.

To recall, the annual meeting of the animal health networks (CVO, RESOLAB and RESEPI) is institutionalised and organised by RAHC in collaboration with FAO, AU-IBAR and their traditional partners to serve as a platform for exchanges, evaluation of the level of implementation of activities during the past year, discussions on challenges and solutions to be envisaged and planning of future actions.



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For further information, please contact:

Email: fdabire@araa.org, Web Site: www.araa.org

Facebook: [araaraaf](#), [ecowas.agriculture](#), Twitter: [ARAA_CEDEAO](#), [Ecowas_agric](#)

AND

Directorate of Communication, ECOWAS Commission

Telephone: +234 8102507938 - Email: soulate@ecowas.int

Twitter: [@ecowas_cedeao](#) - Facebook: [Ecowas_Cedeao](#)

www.ecowas.int