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Page 1 /1

#Press release 7#

Strengthening the Efficiency of Veterinary Laboratories in West Africa

The 8th Annual Meeting of the Regional Animal Health Networks, held in Cabo Verde from 19th to 23rd September 2022, gave room to country focal points from veterinary laboratories to discuss issues specific to their sector.

Strengthening the efficiency of veterinary laboratories in West Africa is a key concern for the region. Efforts are increasingly converging towards a regional approach to the implementation of biosafety and biosecurity in laboratories.

Discussions of the focal points in the region focused on issues such as samples transport, pre- and post-vaccination seromonitoring, biosafety and biosecurity, quality assurance and interlab testing, and antimicrobial resistance, in relation to priority animal diseases such as PPR, CBPP, rabies and foot and mouth disease.

For each concern, experts shared experiences on the successes, the main challenges and the ways forward envisaged in each country, including coordinated solutions to be undertaken at regional level.

The discussions led to recommendations for the 2022/2023 campaign. This includes (i) having reagents and consumables available, (ii) training staff and upgrading and calibrating equipment, (iii) identifying suppliers for the purchase of reagents and consumables, (iv) facilitating the training of laboratory staff for accreditation, (v) creating an emergency stock of equipment, reagents and consumables for crisis situations, (vi) making the network more dynamic and creating sub-networks per disease, and (vii) including a mentoring programme among laboratories.

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 monitoring the implementation of the activity.

To recall, the main objective of the 2022 annual meeting was to take stock of the progress made by ECOWAS Member Countries in the process of eradicating or controlling (vaccination strategies) PPR, rabies, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and CBPP and following-up on the implementation of the action plans for RESEPI and RESOLAB.

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