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Health and Food Safety Directorate General

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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANTS, ANIMALS, FOOD AND FEED HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 17 JANUARY 2018 - 18 JANUARY 2018 (Section *Animal Health and Welfare*)

CIRCABC Link: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/d36ff9ae-0fd1-41e0-8ee0-8fec085e3c37>

A.01 General Information by Member States.

No item raised.

A.02 Outcome of the evaluation procedure of the eradication, control and surveillance programmes submitted by Member States for Union financial contribution for 2018 and following years.

The Commission informed, as per Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 652/2014, the Member States on the list of national programmes technically approved and the final EU co-financing amount allocated to each EU co-financed programme for 2018. The presentation, finalising the document presented at the PAFF Committee of 30 November 2017, was clear. The Commission replied to the questions asked by some Member States. The document SANTE/11788/2017 Rev1 presented will therefore be slightly amended: a version Rev2 taking into account the remarks made will be published.

A.03 Information concerning a declaration from Italy on disease free status for viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS) and infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN) of the independent compartment of Cappa Mariano Loc. Cappovallazza, in the municipality of Ussita.

The Commission informed the forum about one declaration from Italy, Region of Marche concerning disease-free status as regards IHN and VHS of a compartment independent of the surrounding health status near the town of Ussita. The compartment produces rainbow trout for human consumption. The declaration concerns a new establishment having been populated with fish and eggs originating from free areas and complies with the format and data requirements of the relevant EU Decisions 2009/177/EC and (EU) 2015/1554, respectively. The Commission explained that more details are available on the national site of Italy, in accordance with the EU rule. The Commission reminded the delegates to the procedural aspects i.e. the declaration will automatically take effect in 60 days from the date of meeting unless significant objective concerns are raised in writing by the Member States.

Link to the presented declaration will be placed to the following SANTE web page:
http://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/live_animals/aquaculture/declarations_en.htm

A.04 Information concerning a declaration from Spain on disease free status for viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS) and infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN) of the dependent compartment of Viveros de los Pirineos in the municipality of El Grado.

The Commission informed the forum about one declaration from Spain concerning disease-free status as regards IHN and VHS of a compartment dependent of the surrounding health status, on the River Cinca. The compartment produces rainbow trout and brown trout, only fattening young stock without brood stock. The declaration is based on four years of targeted surveillance with reduced sample size without any detection of the pathogen and complies with the format and data requirements of the relevant EU Decisions 2009/177/EC and (EU) 2015/1554, respectively. The Commission explained that the declaration will be made available to the delegates via the CIRCABC site of this Committee, given some temporary problems Spain is experiencing in making the declaration available electronically to the other Member States, in line with the requirements of Directive 2006/88/EC. That is caused by national rules and considerations in handling of sensitive data contained in such declarations. Spain confirmed that the vet authorities are already working to solve the issue with lawyers and IT experts. The Commission asked the delegates of the Member States to inform their aquaculture experts about this declaration and also to exercise the necessary due care when handling the declaration as it may contain personal or business data, protected by law. The Commission asked the delegates to handle such issues in the future, before submitting declarations to this forum. The Commission also reminded the delegates to the procedural aspects i.e. the declarations will automatically take effect in 60 days from the date of meeting unless significant objective concerns are raised in writing by the Member States.

Link to the presented declaration will be placed to the following SANTE web page: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/live_animals/aquaculture/declarations_en.htm.

A.05 Information from Slovenia concerning the withdrawal of a surveillance programme for viral haemorrhagic septicaemia (VHS) and infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN) in relation to the zone of the river Temenica from its source to the outlets of the fish farm Temenica.

The Commission briefly explained the background for withdrawal by Slovenia (outbreak of VHS in the zone).

A.06 Study on preparation of best practices on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

The Commission presented the context, scope, approach and the main study outcomes aiming to improve the protection of animals at the time of killing in specific areas identified by DG SANTE audits. Member States were encouraged to use and further disseminate the study outcomes. Considering the extensive and useful information provided by the study, the Commission is currently working to develop practical educational materials based on key study aspects. The final study report is published on the following link: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ea4ef3e9-cda5-11e7-a5d5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-50426070>.

A.07 Update on the epidemiological situation for African swine fever.

The Commission presented the latest developments on African swine fever (ASF). Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Romania provided updates on the current situation of ASF. Slovakia, Hungary and Finland provided presentations on the measures that are taken to prevent the entry of the disease.

A.08 Member State Action Plans and Commission's work programme to reduce tail-docking of pigs.

The Commission's representative held a presentation on the subject, no comments were made by Member States.

A.09 Report on the Community Veterinary Emergency Team (CVET) mission on Sheep Pox in the Island of Lesbos, Greece.

The team leader of the CVET mission on Sheep Pox (SGP) in Lesbos (November 2017) presented its main findings and recommendations. The delegations of Greece and Denmark stressed the need to create an EU SGP vaccine bank due to the difficulties of national procurement procedures. The Commission representative expressed reservations about the disease evolution in Lesbos and clarified that, in spite of any Commission efforts on the creation of vaccine bank(s), the Member States should also do their own preparations for vaccine procurement, to cope with emerging diseases.

A.10 Information from Finland on recent outbreaks of infectious haematopoietic necrosis (IHN).

Finland explained the events and other elements related to the recent IHN outbreaks (5 to date) in their previously free country and to their handling. Several issues make the case complex (e.g. exact source of the virus is not known, structure of the sector, hydrological and meteorological conditions, domestic product flows, infection in an important hub establishment supplying juvenile trout to many other establishments etc.). Nevertheless Finland aims for the quick eradication of the disease and hopes to succeed. Other Member States are not affected in any way. The Commission thanked Finland for the presentation, appreciated that the outbreaks are being handled in accordance with the Directive 2006/88/EC, noted that other Member States are not at risk and informed the Committee that the issue will be administratively followed-up by de-listing the affected parts from the Decision 2009/177/EC where currently whole Finland is listed as free of IHN. The Commission also informed the delegates that that administrative follow-up by a draft Commission Decision to be brought to this Committee may also include outbreaks of koi herpes virus disease in carps in Croatia and oyster herpes virus disease in molluscs in the UK (Northern Ireland), both occurred on territories currently listed in an EU Decision as free, hence to be amended. One delegate emphasised the risks by fishing baits which may have caused the outbreaks in Finland.

A.11 Update from Member States on highly pathogenic avian influenza.

The **Commission** representative gave an update on avian influenza highlighting the most recent findings of a new highly pathogenic avian influenza virus strain of subtype H5N6 that was confirmed since early December 2017 in a total of 51 wild birds in the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as in one poultry and one captive bird holding (see Netherlands below). The EU Reference Laboratory for avian influenza has conducted a detailed genetic analysis of a small number of H5N6 HPAI viruses recently detected in Europe and Asia. It concluded that the European strains can be differentiated from those associated with zoonotic infection in Asia. Furthermore, they do not carry any virulence markers strongly associated with human infection risk. In addition, there have been no reported human infections with this particular genetic sub-lineage of H5N6 HPAI to date.

Italy reported on the last two outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza of the second epidemic wave (second half of 2017) detected in Emilia Romagna and Veneto regions. Restrictions for the protection and surveillance zones established around these holdings have been lifted and those for the further restricted zone will elapse by 31 January.

The Netherlands reported on two outbreaks in a duck and a captive bird holding situated in the polders in Flevoland in an area with a low density of poultry. Culling of the birds and cleaning and disinfection were performed. The investigations in farms located in the zones established around the two infected holdings gave negative results and restrictions were lifted.

A.12 Information from Member States on low pathogenic avian influenza.

Italy reported six outbreaks of low pathogenic avian influenza in poultry holdings during November and December 2017 in mixed species and waterfowl farms. Preventive culling was also applied to one game bird farm in proximity to an outbreak.

France reported on four outbreaks confirmed mainly in fattening ducks since September 2017 (total of 34 outbreaks since the beginning of 2017). France reported that the legal provisions for the option to send ducks previously infected with low pathogenic avian influenza for depopulation to a slaughter house are difficult to apply for the foie gras sector. Instead of going directly to slaughter, as required, such ducks need in most circumstances to go to another holding for the force-feeding phase, before being sent to slaughter. The Commission informed that current legislation only foresees the direct movement from the holding where infection was confirmed, to slaughter.

A.13 Information from Member States on Newcastle disease in poultry.

France reported an isolated Newcastle disease outbreak in a vaccinated meat pigeon holding (~12,000 heads) in the Département France Nord. The pigeons were culled. Epidemiological investigations and checks in poultry holdings in the established protection and surveillance zones did not reveal spread of infection. The outbreak in France is located close to the border with Belgium which therefore had to establish a small area as surveillance zone. Belgium informed that the required examinations have been carried out with negative results.

Bulgaria informed that following the last outbreak of Newcastle disease confirmed in a backyard holding on 01/12/2017 restrictions in relation to this disease have been lifted for the whole territory.

A.14 Report on the mission of the EU Veterinary Emergency Team (CVET) to Bulgaria on highly pathogenic avian influenza.

The CVET expert reported on the mission and concluded that improvements for avian influenza prevention and control have been made since the previous CVET mission in January 2017, but that lack of resources is still of concern and might jeopardise response to further outbreaks.

B.01 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision on the evolution of animal diseases in the Union.

Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision concerning certain protective measures relating to African swine fever in Romania.

The Commission presented the draft Commission Implementing Decision for vote.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

B.02 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision on certain animal health protection measures for intra-Union trade in salamanders and the introduction into the Union of such animals in relation to the fungus *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*.

The Commission explained the changes made to the draft document after having received comments from Member States. Changes concerned, *inter alia*, elements related to the implementation of the Decision, such as reducing reporting obligations, prolonging the deadline, adding the possibility for an approved vet to do certain tasks and streamlining the text. Other changes were related to the narrative, mainly in a few recitals. Member States welcomed the amendments and sought further clarification on a number of issues, such as relationship between the Articles on trade and imports, on the change-over to these emergency measures and more. All explanations were given by the Commission and the draft was slightly amended to take into account some of the comments made by Member States. The Commission also informed the delegates, that it will share with them the list of current labs in the EU which have participated in a ring test for qPCR for Bsal and which can provide technical assistance for the implementation of the Decision (e.g. further tests, etc.).

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

B.03 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision amending the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States.

The Commission explained how the measures took on board the latest development on the epidemiological situation of African swine fever in the Union.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

B.04 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision amending Decision 2008/185/EC as regards the approval of the control programme for the eradication of Aujeszky's disease for the region of Emilia-Romagna in Italy.

After Italy presented the history of the control programme, the current epidemiological situation and measures included in the control programme, the Commission presented to the Member States the draft Implementing Decision. No questions or comments were raised by Member States.

Vote taken: Favourable opinion.

C.01 Exchange of views of the Committee on the draft Commission Implementing Regulation designating the first European Union reference centre for animal welfare.

The Commission presented the legislative context, scope, specific requirements and selection criteria of the call for selection and designation of the first EU Reference Centre for Animal Welfare.

The names of the applicants and the selection process were presented as well as the next steps of the designation procedure, in particular the submission to vote of the draft Commission Decision designating the Centre at the next PAFF Committee meeting (28 February-1 March).

Two Member States asked questions: the Netherlands has enquired if animals used for commercial and scientific purposes will be in the scope of the first Centre and France asked about possible further development of the Centre in the future, namely if other centres for other animal species will be created.

Answering the first question, the Commission has confirmed that animals used for commercial and scientific purposes will not be included in the activities of the first Centre.

To the second question, the Commission has replied that, for the moment, no decision has been made as to the future development of EU Reference Centres in terms of more centres or other animal species.

M.01 Presentation by France on the Bluetongue situation.

France presented the latest update regarding Bluetongue restricted zones in France. Since 01/01/2018 all mainland territory of France is under restricted zone for BTV-4 and 8.

M.02 LSD Vaccination in Bulgaria.

The delegate of Bulgaria informed the Member States and the Commission on trade problems for cattle vaccinated with a new lumpy skin disease (LSD) homologous vaccine in Bulgaria in 2017. The Commission representative explained that Bulgaria has implemented an EU-approved vaccination programme against LSD, in 2016 and 2017, and animals vaccinated with the new vaccine are not different from those vaccinated with other vaccines in zones of the same LSD status in other Member States. According to the current measures a Member State can refuse live cattle from LSD affected zones, yet the type of vaccine used is not a valid justification to do so, in the current context. The EURL can also provide technical information on the LSD vaccines available upon request of Member States.