



## in focus

### THAILAND: FAO conference tackles avian influenza and emerging infectious diseases *Bangkok, 26-31 March*

Representatives from 32 countries participated in the biennial FAO conference for Asia and the Pacific to consider issues such as food security and the growing threat of transboundary animal diseases (TADs) and emerging zoonotic diseases (those which can be transmitted from animals to humans, such as avian influenza (AI)).

“Over the past 10 years, disease outbreaks have affected millions of poor households dependent on livestock for livelihood and food security; [their] occurrence is now

considered an emergency,” said Carolyn Benigno, Animal Health Officer from FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific.



Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf and FAORAP Assistant Director-General, He Changchui at the FAO conference (FAO 2009)

**“The emergency nature of animal disease control stems from the fact that 75 percent of infectious agents known to be emerging in human populations are deemed zoonotic”**



Mr. Diouf, FAO Director-General speaking at the FAO Conference in Bangkok, Thailand (FAO, 2009)

Ms. Benigno’s presentation, based on an FAO report to the conference, outlined the long-term threat to human populations and food security from TADs. The report highlighted foot-and-mouth disease, classic swine fever and haemorrhagic septicaemia among the major diseases in Asia. AI remains a threat, despite the enhanced surveillance, detection and response in several countries where outbreaks decreased or were eliminated.

The FAO report also encourages countries to commit financial and human resources to combat TADs and to enhance existing or develop national outbreak response plans. Greater regional collaboration is also important in fighting such diseases, and may require common policies across countries to tackle the issue.

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## THAILAND: FAO conference (continued)



Dr. Subhash Morzaria, RAP-ECTAD Regional Manager explaining the major activities of the FAO-ECTAD regional AI programme at the FAO Conference in Bangkok, Thailand (FAO 2009)

In the Asia and the Pacific region, many governments have already developed plans for outbreaks of animal diseases, as a result of their experiences with AI from 2003. These same strategies can also be applied to preventing other emerging zoonotic diseases. "When there's an outbreak, the same principle that you apply for avian influenza can be applied for this disease or an unknown disease," said Ms Benigno.

The Conference encouraged increased regional cooperation in addressing the threats of TADs and commended FAO for its support to member countries in avian influenza control and appreciated the generous support from donors in addressing the serious challenges related to transboundary animal diseases and welcomed indications of continuing support.

## policy news

### NEPAL: Technical and policy level committees meeting for cross border AI project Kolkata, India, 17 April, 2009

The Government of India hosted a meeting for 30 participants from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, representing USAID Bangkok office and its partners in the sub-region and FAO country, regional and HQ offices. Opening remarks were made by Gavin Wall (FAOR, India), Subhash Morzaria (ECTAD Regional Manager, FAORAP), Molly Brady (USAID) and Arvind Kaushal (Joint Secretary, DADF, India), emphasising regional collaboration and harmonisation of technical and policy options across borders shared by the three participating countries.

The Joint Secretary (GoI) expressed political commitment by the Government of India to the HPAI cross border project and urged participants to address the entrenched nature of HPAI in the Greater Gangetic Plains in innovative ways. He also proposed establishment of a common – password protected – website to share disease information; and requested country teams to explore possibilities of establishing disease free corridors along the borders in endemic zones.

Dr. Mohinder Oberoi (ECTAD Sub-regional Manager, South Asia) gave an introductory technical presentation, describing the current regional status of HPAI, followed by a description of the overall project objectives, work plan and key partners. Dr. Oberoi also provided preliminary analysis of a study on the value chain of the poultry and poultry production trade and risk associated with the introduction and spread of HPAI at defined cross-border corridors between Nepal and India: key drivers identified were demand and supply, price differentials, and profit and employment motives.

Dr. Subhash Morzaria described the global status of

HPAI, and the molecular evolution of the H5N1 virus in Southeast Asia and South Asia. He also provided a brief description of the concept on conducting regional molecular epidemiological studies linked to the value chain analysis being conducted currently in both the sub-regions.

Country presentations were made by Dr. Sabbir Ahmed, Dr. P Dandapat and Dr. P Pathak for Bangladesh, India and Nepal, respectively. Presentations provided country specific information on the HPAI status, constraints and challenges. There was agreement among all country representatives on the importance of regional cooperation and the need for improved timely and transparent information exchange in addressing HPAI in the sub-region.

Working groups looked at technical and policy issues related to cross border collaboration, with the emphasis again on information sharing, including immediate and regular exchange on unusual mortality and follow up actions taken. The establishment of a poultry-free area along the international borders between the countries was also raised; India and Nepal agreed to implement the suggestion on a pilot scale in the already identified high risk corridors. If poultry-free areas are not feasible, then enhanced biosecurity in backyard poultry rearing systems was recommended.

The meeting was important in consolidating a common understanding of the technical and policy level approaches that need to be adopted: it was agreed to hold regular meetings among participating countries, with policy-level participants meeting at least twice a year and technical participants more frequently.



## CAMBODIA: Commercial farmers adopt bio-security measures to prevent bird flu

Siem Reap, 26 March 2009

The Department of Animal Health and Production (DAHP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), with technical assistance from FAO, conducted a workshop to highlight to commercial farmers the benefits of adopting simple and practical bio-security measures, to prevent the introduction of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and other poultry diseases into their farms.

Thirty-eight commercial poultry farmers from 11 provinces were attended the workshop, which provided knowledge on HPAI and other poultry diseases and the importance of bio-security measures, which taken together can prevent or reduce risks from HPAI and other poultry diseases and contain their spread to other birds (and humans, in the case of HPAI).

The workshop explained how a disease is transmitted in the farm and discussed measures such as isolation of birds, traffic control, sanitation and the role of traders/middlemen. Participants were encouraged to design their own bio-security programmes following the workshop. For those who are already adopting bio-security measures, the workshop helped them evaluate and strengthen their existing programme by incorporating changes and improvements.

“FAO is concerned that crucial aspects related to bio-security are still not being practiced to enhance prevention of HPAI and other poultry diseases,” said Dr. Teresa Cereno, Technical Adviser of FAO HPAI Control and Prevention Programme. “Although surveys show awareness and a growing change in attitude to HPAI among key stakeholders, improving widespread adoption of good bio-security practices remains a crucial challenge in the prevention of HPAI in poultry and humans” Dr. Cereno continued.

The workshop was funded by USAID and the Government of Germany



Bio-security training for farmers in Cambodia (FAO, 2009)



Training of women farmers in Cambodia (FAO, 2009)

## Women farmers learn poultry production and disease prevention

The DAHP and FAO organised three group discussions with female poultry farmers around the topics in a four-module training video on HPAI. The meetings provide participants with information on HPAI and other poultry diseases; and simple and practical prevention measures that they can adopt to keep their poultry healthy, and reduce the risk of HPAI infection to themselves.

The meetings were conducted by women facilitators from DAHP and FAO in houses belonging to local village animal health workers and included a video presentation followed by a discussion on the key messages promoted in each module.

The first group involved 21 female poultry farmers, most of whom had their chickens culled during the last outbreak of HPAI in Kandal Stung District, Kandal Province. Subsequent groups took place for 56 participants in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces in western Cambodia near the Thai border.

The training video was produced by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and co-funded by FAO (which also provided technical advice along with DAHP). The 37-minute video is divided into: (i) the importance of village poultry; (ii) diseases and transmission; (iii) disease control in animals; and (iv) disease control in humans.

The third segment on disease control in animals is particularly important, providing farmers with solutions to the mortality their birds suffer due to predators and diseases and shows the economic benefit of adopting bio-security measures.

# news from the region

## CAMBODIA: Increased efforts to prevent avian influenza in run-up to the Khmer New Year, Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Takeo and Kampot provinces, March-April 2009

The DAHP and FAO increased their public awareness campaign on the risks associated with increased movement of poultry and people in the run-up to the Khmer New Year celebrations in mid-April. The New Year period is one of increased risk from avian influenza (AI)

A series of community forums on AI awareness were organised with more than 3,500 – mainly women – poultry farmers in Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Takeo and Kampot provinces (bordering Thailand and Viet Nam). The forums were complemented by nationwide TV and radio broadcasts of HPAI prevention measures to promote better public understanding of how the virus is transmitted from poultry to poultry and from poultry to humans and what can people do to prevent and control its spread.

The media campaign included a three-minute karaoke video showing the benefit of raising backyard poultry with improved bio-security. The video, starring the popular local singer Kat Sakhim and comedian Ta Sis, encourages farmers to quarantine new and sick birds, wash hands with soap, clean the yard and poultry pens of faeces and other poultry wastes, wear mask and gloves or karma (scarf) and plastic bags when handling poultry, keep children away from poultry and separate ducks from chickens. The video also promotes reporting sick and dead poultry to local authorities via a hotline.

DAHP and FAO are encouraging people to report suspected cases of HPAI immediately via hotlines and to village animal health workers or village chiefs. Early reporting enables DAHP to rapidly respond, diagnose and control an HPAI outbreak if necessary before it



Awareness raising on prevention of risks in Cambodia (FAO 2009)

spreads. Around 8,000 village animal health workers (VAHWs) have been trained by DAHP and FAO on HPAI control measures, including surveillance, bio-security, reporting and outbreak response. VAHWs and village chiefs have also been trained on how to communicate HPAI prevention measures to their communities.

The DAHP and FAO, with financial support from USAID and the Government of Germany have been working to control HPAI through disease surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, rapid reporting and response, bio-security measures, public awareness, socio-economic and livelihoods studies, and development of a supportive and protective legislative environment.

A number of major missions took place in Cambodia:

### MARCH

**Dr. Ibrahim Diallo, FAO laboratory expert**, advised and assisted the National Veterinary Research Institute at the DAHP on the re-installation and calibration of laboratory equipment in their new building in Stung Meanchey District. Dr. Diallo also advised on the procurement of additional laboratory supplies including equipment and consumables for use in analysis of poultry samples for the possible presence of HPAI virus.

**Mr. Carlos Tarazona Cervantes, FAO Evaluation Officer**, conducted a preparatory mission for the second Real Time Evaluation (RTE) of HPAI programme that will take place in the second half of 2009. Mr Tarazona met national and provincial level MAFF officials, VAHWs, USAID, NGOs, including CARE, CelAgrid, CENTDOR and Wildlife Conservation Society. He also observed the sampling of ducks in Takeo market, a community forum

on HPAI in the same province and VAHW/village chief training by a District Veterinary Officer in Kandal.

### APRIL

**Dr. Klaas Dietze, FAO Veterinarian**, provided an overview of pig and poultry production and related problems. Dr. Dietze visited two markets in Phnom Penh and the poultry farm run by CelAgrid, a local NGO. He also met officials from NaVRI and FAO.

**Dr. Subhash Morzaria, Regional Manager ECTAD RAP**, met with officials from USAID, the Government of Germany, European Commission, Asian Development Bank, World Bank and the UN Resident Coordinator to explore possibilities of additional funding to FAO's HPAI Programme (currently funded by USAID).

**For further information, please contact: Cecilia Dy, FAO Information & Communication Officer, email: [cecilia.dy@fao.org](mailto:cecilia.dy@fao.org);**



## focus on BANGLADESH

The FAO Technical Unit for the Avian Influenza (AI) Programme was established in October 2007 by FAO using donor funding following the HPAI crisis in Bangladesh in March 2007. Located within the premises of the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MoFL), and staffed by international and national AI experts, it provides technical assistance to the DLS in controlling AI in Bangladesh. The unit's aims are the prevention, control and ultimate eradication of HPAI with the ultimate goal of secure production of poultry and poultry products in order to increase consumption of animal proteins for better human health and to alleviate poverty.

### BANGLADESH: Risk factors for HPAI infection in commercial chickens

*Chittagong, 17-19 March 2009*

Dr. Paritosh Kumar Biswas (FAO National Consultant for Outbreak Response and Training) presented on 'Food Security and Food Safety: Towards a One World, One Health Approach' at the 7th Annual Scientific Conference of the Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU). The conference was organised by CVASU and the 'One World One Health-Bangladesh Initiative'.

Dr. Biswas described how a matched case-control study was performed to identify risk factors for HPAI infection in commercial chickens in Bangladesh. 33 commercial farms diagnosed with HPAI before 9 September 2007 were enrolled as cases, with 99 geographically matched unaffected as control farms. Farm profile data was collected using a pre-tested questionnaire and analysed (using matched-pair analysis and multivariate conditional logistic regression).

Three risk factors remained in the final model: HPAI infection is more likely to occur on farms accessible to feral and wild animals and on farms where there is no footbath at the entrance to the farm/shed. The use of designated vehicles for sending eggs to a single vendor/market appeared to be protective against HPAI infection.

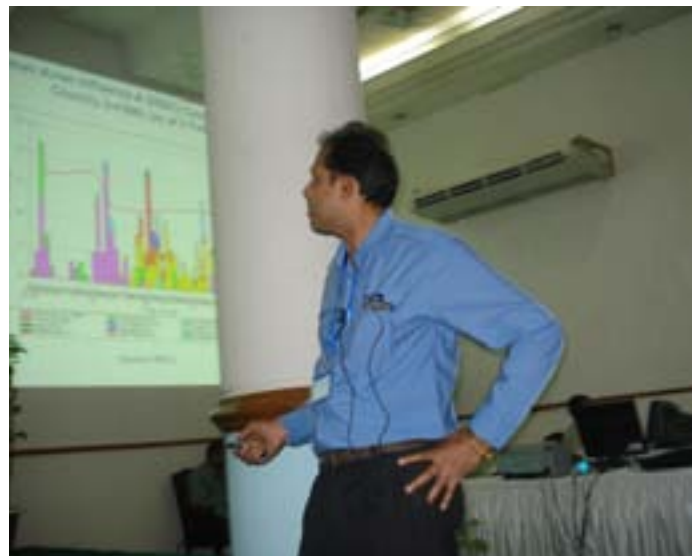
### Capacity building for community animal health workers, *Cross-country, March - April*

FAO are working with 450 Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) and 50 Additional Veterinary Surgeons (AVSs) in 150 high-risk *Upazilas*. They are a key element of the surveillance system in Bangladesh and since the programme began in February 2008, there has been a successful reduction in the number of outbreaks of HPAI.



CAHWs attending the refresher training course (FAO 2009)

**Contact Information: Leo Loth, Acting Team Leader/  
Chief Technical Advisor, FAO Bangladesh.  
E-mail: leo.loth@fao.org**



Dr. Paritosh Kumar Biswas presenting at 7th Annual Scientific Conference of the Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (FAO 2009)

A Refresher Training courses for 450 CAHWs, 50 AVSs and 150 *Upazila* Livestock Officers (ULOs) will be completed in May.

### Cleaning and Decontamination of Live Bird Markets, *Dhaka, 26 April*

Live bird markets and points of concentration for commercial distribution are considered a significant factor in the maintenance and spread of the HPAI virus: bio-exclusion and containment are important measures to reduce initial spread; while improved cleaning and disinfection are crucial to reduce the overall secondary spread. A series of meetings between FAO, USAID, AI COM, USAID DELIVER and UNICEF were conducted during March-April, culminating in a stake-holders workshop on live bird markets/cleaning and disinfection. FAO will implement a new project on cleaning and disinfection of live bird markets throughout the country, and USAID has undertaken an initiative to clean and disinfect two Dhaka live bird markets as a pilot project to guide the FAO project.

# news from the region

## CHINA: Risk assessment and socio-economic cross-border studies

Guangxi Province, 27 April

A field trip to the China-Viet Nam border point near Pingxiang, Guangxi Province was undertaken to observe the official border point, meet the local veterinary service and visit a live bird market. The visit was undertaken as part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region Cross Border project and within the framework of the USAID-funded risk assessment and socio-economic studies implemented in Southern China

The visit was followed by a workshop on 28-29 April in Nanning City involving 47 trainees involved in both the public and private poultry sectors of the Province. The workshop included an introduction to risk analysis, participatory mapping exercises to identify the main poultry commodity chains (both geographically and schematically), and discussions on additional information and surveillance required to reduce the risks of HPAI.

The information gained from the socio-economic mapping exercise organised in Guangxi will be used to direct and support further surveillance and control activities in the province. The long-distance importation of eggs and spent hens into the province deserves further investigation, especially with regard to possible export of poultry products into Viet Nam. Helping poultry sector actors to recognise the risk of disease transmission from fomites, such as from eggs and



Poultry commodity chain mapping in Guangxi Province (FAO 2009)

egg trays, should continue to be emphasised in future activities.

In May, a training workshop on risk-based surveillance, risk analysis principles and qualitative and quantitative risk analysis will be organised by FAO and delivered by the Royal Veterinary College of London. Preliminary results from the live bird market survey implemented in three provinces in March are also expected.

### Contact Information:

**Vincent Martin, FAO Team Leader**

**E-mail: [Vincent.martin@fao.org](mailto:Vincent.martin@fao.org)**

## LAO PDR: Workshop and events

**A Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Workshop** was conducted on 26 March with the objective of finalising the drafted SOPs through joint consultation among technical staff from the FAO AI Programme, DLF and the Livestock sections of 17 provinces.

### Evaluation of USAID project

As Phase II of the project nears its end, an evaluation workshop will be organised to review the activities implemented during this phase of the project and discuss the constraints, positive outcomes and lessons learned. The workshop will also review risk areas in order to plan the activities to be implemented during Phase III.

Representatives from 10 provinces attended the workshop, along with FAO AI programme and DLF staff

NAHICO organised, with the support of FAO and WHO, a two-day workshop on 16 - 17 March to enhance coordination on zoonotic diseases between the animal and human health sectors.

A workshop was organised from 27 March - 3 April, to review the **HPAI National Plan**, which included all sectors and all partners. FAO was actively involved in the animal health strategy (strategy 1). This national review is organised annually and supported by the World Bank.

During April, under the USAID project, **Training of Village Veterinary Workers (VVs)** continued in three additional target provinces for 163 participants; while refresher training, combining HPAI and pig diseases, was conducted for over 1,500 VVs.

**Public awareness and communication** activities during March and April included: pre-testing of training materials on HPAI in four villages in Oudomxay and Vientiane provinces (in conjunction with the Academy for Educational Development); development of the first 10 five-minute HPAI news programmes for television (in conjunction with AED and WHO); and a workshop was held – in relation to the pilot study on bio-security – with VVs and village chiefs of four target villages, to assess the activities they had chosen and are implementing in their villages.

# major events in RAP

**Second Consultative Meeting on Regional HPAI Risk in the Context of Poultry Sector and Value Chain Among GMS Countries ECTAD/USAID**  
*3-4 March 2009, Bangkok, Thailand*

31 participants attended from FAO HQ/RAP/country project staff, USAID, Abt Associates Inc., the Academy for Educational Development, Development Alternatives Inc. and the FREELAND Foundation.

The meeting shared information on activities related to cross-border trade and movement, assessed progress by the FAO country teams and agreed on the research methodologies to be used. Participants better understood the activities of the other key partners following the meeting, although it was recognised that more knowledge is needed on all aspects in border corridors. USAID stressed that a few countries had endemic AI virus and these 'fed' it to other countries. thus, it is crucial that information is delivered to those operating in the field to enable them to get results.

The USAID AI Program Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Strategy Meeting followed on March 5-6, involving participants from USAID, FAO, CDC Bangkok and Kenan Institute Asia. The meeting looked at current AI conditions in GMS; reviewed progress in RDMA's AI regional programme; discussed GMS strategy for FAO's AI programme; and discussed constraints and needs to improve overall AI efforts in the GMS, particularly China.

**Regional AI USAID Partners' Meeting**  
*April 1-3, 2009, Bangkok*



The eighth meeting featured an update on activities, breakout discussion groups and a poster session covering activities undertaken through USAID funding. Presentations included USAID regional strategy on AI, trends in disease patterns, a review of the epidemiology of human influenza A/H5N1 infection, pandemic preparedness, an update on the Human/Animal interface meeting in Verona in October 2008 and biosecurity and public/private partnerships.

Breakout sessions and plenary reports included pandemic preparedness, cross-border activities, epidemiology capacity building, communication, case management and infection control, biosecurity and linking of project outputs to national policies/plans.

The poster session featured 40 posters covering the activities of USAID partners and information on disease and infection reduction, movement control, pandemic preparedness, communication, cross border activities and training.

The meeting provided opportunities to share experiences and views and to consider future needs; and showed clear progress in the battle against HPAI - particularly in the frequency and number of locations of outbreaks.

There was a recognition by all partners of the need for regional approaches to the problems in terms of studying the disease and a better understanding of the virus.

The meeting identified areas in which further information is required: for example, human resource development at regional level in the field of epidemiology for animal and human health sectors, pandemic preparedness, monitoring and evaluation and in the systematic characterisation of the different strains/clades involved and in obtaining further information on cross-border movements involving potential health risks to animals and to humans. Several studies are being planned, with USAID assistance.

The next Partners' meeting will be in September 2009.

## coming up....

**FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of GF-TADs for SAARC Region, 4-5 June 2009, Kathmandu**

**Pilot training programme for 750 school teachers of three selected Upazilas to enhance the current surveillance programme by CAHWS**  
*June 2009, Bangladesh*

**Refresher training programme for 88 Central and Field Disease Investigation Laboratory Officers and District Livestock Officers to enhance the rapid diagnosis of HPAI.**  
*June 2009, Bangladesh*

**FAO 3rd Consultative Meeting on Regional HPAI Risk in the Context of Poultry Sector and Value Chain among GMS Countries, 18-19 June 2009, Bangkok, Thailand**

**Consultative Meeting on Regional Laboratory Network for HPAI Diagnosis in Southeast Asia**  
*23-24 June, 2009, Bangkok, Thailand*

**Technical Committee Meeting: cross border project, 19 July 2009, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

## staff news

Ms. Rosanne Marchesich joined FAO Viet Nam as Operations Coordinator. Rosanne joined FAO in 1999 and worked for 5 years in the Nutrition Division and 5 years in the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) where she was the Operations Officer and Budget Holder for Afghanistan's emergency and rehabilitation response.