Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

eufmd
european commission for the control of foot-and-mouth disease

Standing Technical Committee

Report

Online. 6th April 2022

European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

Contents

Minutes of the meeting of the EuFMD Standing Technical Committee (STC)

06 April 2022

The meeting was held via video-conference and was attended by: Stéphan Zientara (SZ), Giancarlo Ferrari (GF); James Wood (JW); Germán Cáceres Garrido (GCG); Sten Mortensen (SM); Katharina Stärk (KS); Fabrizio Rosso (FR); Nadia Rumich (NR); Marcello Nardi (MN); Cécile Carraz (CC); Elena Salvati (ES).

The meeting started at 14:00 PM and ended at 16:00 PM and was chaired by SZ.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

Item	Content	Objectives
1	Open session 2022	Provide updates and discuss preliminary agenda
2	TOM - training management system	Present TOM web app, Steering committee and discuss implementation options
3	Other EuFMD committees - programmes	Discuss priority programmes of other Committees
4	Towards next EuFMD strategy	Reflecting on next EuFMD strategy and recent threats
5	AOB	

ITEM 1: Open session 2022

FR summarized the progress on the preparation of the Open Session 2022 (OS22). He outlined the sessions and stated they are now ready to be published (by the 15 April together, with the call for abstracts). On the 30 April, registration will be opened for all but, because of the limitation on the number of those attending physically, the EuFMD team will make preliminary contacts with these institutions (such as ANSES, SCIENSANO, etc., that have always actively contributed to the OS) to request a specific expression of interest to attend. On 15 June, the submission of abstracts will be closed and peer-reviewed. By 15 July, the decisions of which abstracts will go either for a short presentation or for posters will have been made and communicated. On 1 October, the registration will be closed for those attending physically, while for those attending remotely, registration will close on 25 October. FR illustrated also a preliminary proposal for abstracts' selection and that two experts will be appointed for a peer review, to be then submitted to the STC for endorsement. The selection of the keynote speakers and the panelists has also been almost finalized and will only require a final step to ensure gender balance and geographical representation. FR gave a brief update on the venue (Intercontinental Hotel in Marseilles) and the logistics. Out of the 100 participants attending physically, 40 will be EuFMD staff, panelists and keynote speakers and the remaining 60 to self-booking participants. The overall cost is estimated as 80 000 Euros, 15 000 of which most likely will be covered by partners' contributions. A side event will most probably take place with the involvement of those who participated in Real Time trainings. It will be an opportunity to better understand the impact and what might need to be changed to further improve such trainings. SZ asked if the outline of the abstracts will be like

those usually presented in scientific events with introduction, materials and methods, etc. FR confirmed that and further clarified that authors should say whether they would like to see their contribution presented as a short communication or poster. JW asked if EuFMD was expecting STC members to take initiatives with CVOs to facilitate sponsorship and encourage participation. FR replied in the negative. In any case, the program will be submitted to the Executive Committee which is a good platform to disseminate the initiative and to promote sponsorship. SZ mentioned that he can possibly discuss with JL Angot (deputy chair of the ExCom) and the CVO of France to see whether France, as a hosting country, could allocate some funds. CC clarified that the organization of the OS can benefit also from part of the budget allocated to component 1.5. The travel of participants either belonging to the EuFMD team or attending as panelists and keynote speakers and part of the expenses of the meeting package will be funded by EuFMD. The support that may be received by private contribution can only support extra initiatives that might take place during the OS. FR suggested to present the outline of the OS to the ExCom on the 11 April 2022.

ITEM 2: Training Management System - TOM

FR briefly introduced the development of TOM Training Management System, a project to which EuFMD is working upon since 2019. The STC is asked whether they consider the tool useful to improve the capacity of Member Nations to deliver their training program. MN made a short presentation of the tool developed so far, and acknowledged Ms Seabrook's contribution. He explained that the keys of the tool are the management of training initiatives in relation to a competency framework. TOM was developed upon request of Member Nations looking for increased independence to formulate, plan and evaluate their training needs, taking into account also the training material available through the EuFMD. All this has led to the development of the web-based tool and the competency framework. The Veterinary Authorities will use TOM to assess the current capacities of the veterinarians, identify and address competency gaps at institutional or individual level and monitor the progress of such improved capacity. TOM is based on the Disease control and emergency management framework, which has been built integrating existing material on competencies such as, the GET PREPARED tool, the Progressive Control Pathway (PCP) and OIE, Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway tool, the OIE Day One competencies, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) competencies framework and the EuFMD training material. The way TOM has been developed, allows to link each level of competency with specific behavioural indicators and training courses illustrated in the source material (GET PREPARED, PCP OIE/PVS, etc…). A TOM Steering Committee is currently in preparation, which is supposed to play a role in the development and sustainability of the tool. The Steering Committee should be composed by 8-10 people chosen among ex-officio members (EuFMD, FAO and OIE), competency-based training providers, associations representing veterinary specialists (including veterinary paraprofessional and Community Animal Health Workers) as well as representatives from Statutory Bodies. JW asked if the assessment of competencies is based only on self-assessment performed by the veterinarians or if there is a mechanism through which such assessment is validated by third parties, and raised the point that currently, the assessment of competencies in veterinary education field is shifting from a process-based evaluation to an outcome-based evaluation assessed by independent bodies. MN explained, that currently, there are two tentative initial modalities. The first one is based on the validation based on the training certificates provided by individuals (in order to qualify them in accordance to the five proficiency levels) and the second is a self-assessment procedure performed by veterinarians and reviewed by the veterinary authorities. KS mentioned that she considers useful that the individual learners can identify which courses might be required to enhance a specific competency, but it was not clear how this could be applied by veterinary authorities and this could discourage individuals to access courses that they would like to take. She also asked, in relation to the 13 competencies, if it would mean that each individual was supposed to

have all of such competencies or likely to get specialized in one or few of them. MN explained that the representative from Veterinary Authority will select what competencies are relevant for each profile in TOM, according to their priority at national level. Each user will be provided a target expected level to reach and measure gaps against. The tool provides both learners and representative from Veterinary Authority, called Country Manager role, a dashboard of current levels for each learner and training opportunities to fill each gap. KS commented that the tool appears quite comprehensive and asked whether it will become compulsory for someone to be enrolled in the EuFMD training courses to use the application. Moreover, she asked how many Veterinary services requested the development of the tools (as mentioned by MN at the beginning of his presentation). MN commented that the tool is currently being piloted and it is understood that it may overlap to some extent with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives, which thing should engage the participation of learners to the tool. FR further commented that the idea of the tool was not only for EuFMD Member Nations but also for neighbouring countries and beyond, to make available a platform not only to assess needs but to measure progresses. At the moment, the tool is not linked to the CPD but may be something to be considered since many of the training activities for veterinary services are channeled through the CPD scheme. GCG commented positively about the tool presented, as it seemed to him that there is enough flexibility to comply with needs of different countries at different levels of competencies. In Spain, the CPD system is in the hands of veterinary colleges and sometimes out of the direct control of the official veterinary services. He considers that the tool could possibly improve the coordination mechanisms between these two entities and could also assist in managing cascade trainings and be a good tool to identify gaps especially when the turn-over of veterinarians is high.

ITEM 3: Other EuFMD Committees - Programmes

FR provided an overview of the on-going work in the other EuFMD committees. He started from the EuFMD Special Committee for Bio-risk Management (SCBRM), illustrating that there are three working groups within the committee dedicated to: (i) follow-up on the revision of the EuFMD minimum bio-risk management standards (MBRMS), (ii) development of a database of accepted inactivation/disinfection methods and (iii) training in bio-risk management. As per the revision of minimum standards, a two-day meeting is planned in June to discuss remaining comments under tiers C and D, while for tiers A and B a questionnaire is now ready to be distributed to neighbouring countries to better understand the bio-safety situation in their respective laboratories. Regarding the development of a database of accepted inactivation/disinfection methods, a summary of methods has been already drafted but there is a need to define the level of validation of the data, how to approve new protocols and how to maintain the database. In relation to the training in bio-risk management, a comprehensive learning matrix has been developed and a EuFMD course structured on MBRMS, with four modules created for employees and managers of laboratories handling live FMD virus. The course has been structured with many interactive material and infographics to facilitate the learning process. FR moved then to the Special Committee for Surveillance and Applied Research (SCSAR). During the last meeting, held in January 2021, the Committee dealt with the following main topics (i) methods to measure and monitor surveillance capacity for FMD and FAST diseases, (ii) assess diagnostic capacity of Member Nations, (iii) explore opportunities to integrate surveillance and control initiatives for FAST diseases. The next meeting is scheduled in May 2022 with a special focus on passive surveillance optimization, FAST integrated surveillance and laboratory capacity improvement options.FR reported also on a new committee established within the EuFMD: the Standing Committee on pre-Qualification system for FAST vaccines (SCPQv). The Chairperson is Gabor Kulcar (head of the vaccine department of the Hungary Directorate of Veterinary Medical Products) and the first informal meeting took place in December 2021. SZ asked, in relation to the Committee on bio-risk management, if the visits to the FMD laboratories is something that

will be done in the future by this Committee. Speaking from the point of view of the head of a FMD laboratory, it would be indeed useful to have such independent assessment from external experts, especially if there is a financial implication for things to be changed. As FR said, this point was raised in the last meeting of this Committee with the agreement that this topic will be re-discussed more in depth at the meeting planned in June. Currently, this external assessment is not part of the EuFMD programme and the mechanisms and costs will need to be identified. SZ mentioned that, in accordance to the accreditation system operating in France, the laboratories must have periodical visits (every 18 months) with a confirmed authorization and such visits, made by independent accreditation bodies, are directly paid by the laboratories. It could then be possible to think about a system through which also the assessment of compliance with bio-safety standards for laboratories handling live FMD virus could be paid by the laboratories assessed. This process is different from the accreditation mechanisms that does not foresee an assessment of compliance with bio-risk standards. SM recalled that those EU member states which have FMD laboratories must be audited by the veterinary competent authorities, but it was not sure to which extent this is actually done and which mechanisms are in place and SZ mentioned that (at least in France) it is not working in the way one would expect for an independent assessment to be done. Certainly, EuFMD may play an important role in this: KS mentioned that in Switzerland, the laboratories have to be audited for maintaining accreditation, quality assurance and, in addition to this, another mechanism of auditing is in place related to an evaluation of the resources assigned (conducted by the financial departments at government level independently from the veterinary services). GCG confirmed that in Spain there is a similar system of accreditation conducted by an independent and certified entity but he was not sure about the specific role played by the veterinary competent authorities in regard to the bio-risk assessment. SZ pointed out that this is true also in France, but there is no entity evaluating the bio-risk profile of those laboratories handling FMD virus (or other pathogens). GF commented that in Italy, there is a system in place ensuring accreditation but no specific mechanisms to assess the bio-risk management. GF agreed that this would be a mechanism worth being implemented. SM reiterated that indeed the competent authorities bear the responsibility to assess that Biosafety Level (BSL) of three or four laboratories do not leak live viruses. He recognizes that for competent authorities this is a difficult task and might be discussed within the Executive Committee if EuFMD could play a role in starting to promote a discussion within Member Nations on how to do these audits which do not have anything to do with the accreditation process. FR commented that the assessments on bio-risk management were part of the EU legislation, where the latter was responsible for the introduction of the new Animal Health law (which is no longer under its responsibility). This may lead to consider the possibility of such audits being under the framework of the EuFMD activities (which might require a change in the EuFMD constitution) and will become valid for all EuFMD members and not only for EU countries. As GCG recalled, such changes are actually already addressed into the changes of the EuFMD constitution to be voted by the end of April.

ITEM 4: Towards next EuFMD strategy

FR explained that there had been an internal retreat to reflect on the vision and how the role of EuFMD is seen in the next five years. He asked STC members to indicate ideas, comments on a document that had been prepared (Annex I). SZ proposed that, if the document could remain available for a few days after the meeting, it would give more time to reflect and make a contribution. FR mentioned that it could very helpful in preparation of a concept note to be prepared by the end of May. FR, in replying to a comment made by SZ, confirmed that the list of FAST diseases is supposed to remain as it will be under the change of the constitution to be approved shortly. A change in the list of diseases will be indicated in the constitution to be made. JW expressed the importance to ensure that FMD remains a top priority, but also to have a higher degree of flexibility in incorporating other threats as they may arise. He cited the example of SARS-COV2 and the importance of being able to address important issues such as the potential role of animals in the epidemiology of the virus, which may require a flexible mechanism to respond quickly to the needs of the countries. FR confirmed that such mechanism would certainly help to adapt to new unpredictable circumstances and indeed the idea is to give the ability to the Executive Committee to rapidly re-direct the use of the resources available among the FAST diseases, should this become necessary. SM commented that is certainly understandable that the main focus should remain on FMD: the risk, although declined, has not disappeared and it is still a big threat. The efforts and support that veterinary services have received over the years by EuFMD is unique and not seen for other diseases. This certainly contributes to create a demand to address other diseases in a similar way as it has been done for FMD and certainly EuFMD is seen as a key player in providing such assistance in adopting the same methods and the same principles as done for FMD. In this regard, FR considers important, in light of the next strategy, to address this discussion for both EU members as well as the neighbouring countries. In the last four months, there has been an increasing circulation of FMD in the Middle East and North Africa that should not be neglected and certainly a higher degree of flexibility may help in directing resources where mostly needed. GCG agreed that the work undertaken by EuFMD in the years, has contributed to increase capacity and strengthen the level of preparedness and he agrees that this model of providing assistance, especially through training, can be replicated for other diseases.

ITEM 5: AOB

GCG asked if it would be possible to change the date of the next STC meeting. Another Doodle poll will be launched to re-schedule next meeting. In relation to the nomination of the new EuFMD secretariat, FR replied that the vacancy has been closed at the end of March. Process is managed by NSA and FAO-HR according to the new procedure that involves more directly the Executive Committee members in the selection process. Before closing the meeting, SM recalled that with the new Animal Health Law there is also a change in the regulation on the use of vaccines under emergency, in particular for FMD, Avian Influenza and Classical Swine Fever. This topic is ranking very high in the agenda of the EU (especially for emergency vaccination against highly pathogenic Avian Influenza) both from the perspective of administering and evaluating the vaccination programs but from the perspective of having these vaccines available in the European market through an engagement of the manufacturers. This issue will be addressed in a next STC meeting.

The meeting ended at 16:00 PM.

The next meeting will be held on 13 July 2022, morning session.

Annex I. STC comments on next EuFMD strategy

Question 1 - OUR VISION **Where do you see EuFMD in 5 years time?** What would be its main role in improving preparedness, prevention and control
Comments from STC Members • Competent training provider • An even broader range of transborder transmissible animal diseases covered, including funding • Strategic use of limited resources for transboundary disease control • EuFMD reference structure on transboundary animal diseases with priority on FMD • International body reference as knowledge source and training in FAST diseases with priority in FMD • Leading organization in the effort to mitigate risk associated to FAST diseases at international level
Question 2 - OUR PRIORITIES **What objectives should be taken forward?** What current activities will need to be further developed/delivered
Comments from STC Members • Integration of FAST diseases • Utilising country competencies, peer-learning • Improve the links with neighbouring and risk countries • Contribution to international transparency in FAST diseases • Technical and logistical support to developing countries regarding prevention and control of FAST diseases • Availability of safe and effective vaccines as a key mean for the prevention and control of FAST diseases at international level.
Question 3 - OUR PROGRESS **What do we need to improve?** New objectives/activities/approaches/research
Comments from STC Members • Priority setting • Building generic competencies for emerging disease control • Improve targeted research • Facilitate exchanges/internships between the different actors • Increase the level of awareness on FAST diseases • Improve animal health status at international level • Increase surveillance capacity in developing countries • Increase liason between and commitment of other international organizations in relation to FAST diseases

EuFMD Committees

Executive Committee, Standing Technical Committee (STC), Special Committee for Surveillance and Applied Research (SCSAR), Special Committee on Biorisk Management (SCBRM), Tripartite Groups.

Hold-FAST tools

AESOP. Assured emergency supply options; **EuFMDiS**, FMD spread model; **GET PREPARED** toolbox. Emergency preparedness; **GVS**. Global Vaccine Security; **Online Simulation Exercises**; **Outbreak Investigation application**; **Pragmatist**. Prioritization of antigen management with international surveillance management tool; **PCP-FMD**. Progressive Control Pathway for foot-and-mouth disease; **PCP-Support Officers**; **SAT**. PCP Self-Assessment Tool; **RTT**. Real Time Training; **SMS Disease reporting**; **SQRA toolkit**. A method for spatial qualitative risk analysis applied to FMD; **Telegram**; **TOM**. EuFMD training management system; **Global Monthly reports**; **VADEMOS**. Vaccine Demand Estimation Model; **VLC**. Virtual Learning Center. **Microlearning**.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs)

EuFMD's programme has a main focus on

Thinking of the environmental footprint

Together against wasting resources, think twice before printing.

Animal Production and Health Division, NSHA / European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD)

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