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One Health legal framework

UGANDA

A livestock value chain perspective
on emerging zoonotic diseases and
antimicrobial resistance



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1. Introduction

The anticipated transformation of the Uganda livestock sector in the coming decades may result in increased public health risks (FAO, 2019). These risks relate in particular to emerging zoonotic diseases and livestock-driven antimicrobial resistance along peri-urban and urban livestock value chains. In order to well address these challenges, national and sub-national governments should adopt a One Health approach, which allows the prevention of risks and the mitigation of the negative effects of public health threats that originate at the interface between humans, animals and the different environments in which they operate

Uganda is supporting a One Health Approach through the National One Health Platform and the Zoonotic Diseases Coordination Office. At the same time, several overarching development/livestock/public health/environment policy documents recommend undertaking multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approaches when addressing complex public health issues. For example, the National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 2018–2023 supports the adoption of a One Health approach to prevent, slow down and control the spread of resistant organisms, while ensuring continuous availability of safe, effective and quality assured antimicrobials for the population. The National One Health Strategic Plan 2018–2022 aims to achieve a functional and sustainable collaboration among public and private sector responsible for the physical and economic health of Uganda.

The government, in the Ministries and various intergovernmental committees, has ultimately two major intertwined instruments to operationalise the One Health approach, i.e. to ensure people, companies and other actors (e.g. NGOs) adopt good practices so as to minimize public health threats along the value chain. These are:

- Targeted use of the public budget, such as for example the training of veterinarians to detect, prevent and control emerging zoonotic diseases or communication campaigns on AMR resistance;
- Legislative reforms, such as for example a legal provision prohibiting anyone to graze livestock in forested areas or allowing only registered veterinarians to prescribe antibiotics to treat sick animals.

This paper provides an assessment on the extent to which the prevailing legislative framework facilitates the implementation of the One Health approach in Uganda, and opportunities for legislative reforms. The next section presents the methodology used to assess whether the existing legal framework in Uganda supports a One Health approach. Section three presents and discusses findings. Section four presents conclusions. This brief was drafted by Gerald Nizeyimana (FAO), Snagwami Patrick Ng'amni (University of Zambia), Orsolya Mikecz (FAO) and Ugo Pica-Ciamarra (FAO) in June 2020.

Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments

Acts of Parliament are written laws rendered by the Parliament of Uganda. The aim of any Act of Parliament is to command or prohibit something, or to simply declare policy.

Statutory instruments or regulations are a form of delegated legislation issued by the executive branch of the government of Uganda. Statutory Instruments are made by the Minister, under powers delegated by an Act of Parliament, granting the executive agency the power to implement and administer the requirements of that primary

2. Method

We use a skeleton livestock value chain structure – including imports, production, marketing, processing, retailing and consumption – to identify the major actors, at each node of the value livestock chain, whose behaviour plays a key role in preventing, detecting and controlling potential public health threats. For example, the behaviour of the farmer and the frontline veterinarian at production level, or the behaviour of the importer and the veterinary inspector at border entry points, both influence the capacity of the country to manage potential livestock-driven public health threats.

We investigate two major public health threats, including emerging zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance, at each node of the livestock value chain. On the one hand, the anticipated growth of human and animal population in Uganda and, in particular, the increased density of animal and people in and around urban areas are going to create veritable hotspots for the emergence of zoonotic diseases in the future. On the other hand, because of both stiffer competition to access productive resources to satisfy the growing market for animal source foods and increased risk of zoonotic diseases, farmers will be tempted to imprudently use antibiotics not only to treat sick animals but also as growth promoter and/or for prophylaxis.

In consultation with the Veterinary Regulation and Enforcement Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), and the Policy Divisions of MAAIF and the Ministries of the Environment and Health we identified existing policy and legislative databases and gathered the major legal texts, including government's Acts and Statutory Instruments, expected to shape people behaviours in the livestock sector, in human health and with respect to the environment. Acts are enacted by the Parliament, which is the legislative body of the country: they command or prohibit something, or simply declare policy. Regulations are a form of delegated legislation or a law issued by an executive branch of the government, such as the Ministry in charge of livestock, under powers delegated by an Act.

We went word by word through the gathered Acts and Statutory Instruments and identified provisions that, at each node of the value chain, support behaviours that facilitate the prevention, detection and control of EZDs and AMR. In particular, we searched for legal provisions that recommend sharing of information and joint action between livestock, health and environmental stakeholders. These are the types of behaviour that, by overcoming sector boundaries, allow the implementation of the One Health approach on the ground.

We discussed the preliminary findings at a stakeholder workshop held in December 2019, where participants provided comments and reached consensus on whether the current Uganda legal framework enables the implementation of a One Health approach and identified opportunities for improvement.

The method utilized to gather and examine the existing legal texts that include One Health elements presents limitations and strengths. Beyond the difficulty in assembling all legal texts that pertain to One Health, which is a broad concept, the method does not represent a thorough legislative review and only allows undertaking an overview of the existing legal framework. However, as it is issue-focused, it allows immediately identifying potential weakness and gaps, thereby suggesting priority areas for reforms to create an enabling legal framework for the implementation of a One Health approach on the ground.

3. Findings

3.1 Emerging zoonotic diseases

3.1.1 Acts and Statutory Instruments

We gathered a total of 9 Acts and One Statutory Instrument relevant to the control and management of emerging zoonotic and infectious diseases (EZD), i.e. that target prevention, detection and control of animal diseases, and in particular zoonotic diseases at the different nodes of the livestock value chain. The sections below summarise the content of the EZD-related legislative framework.

Table 1. EZD related legislation

Acts	Statutory Instruments
The Animal Breeding Act, 2001, Cap 2222	Animal Disease Act Statutory Instruments, 38;
The Animal Diseases Act, 1964, Cap 38	
The Animal Straying Act, 1922 , Cap 40	
The Cattle Grazing Act, 1945, Cap 42	
The Cattle Traders Act,1942, Cap 43	
The Dairy Industry Act, 2000, cap 85	
The National Drug Policy and Authority Act, 1993, cap 206	
The Public Health Act, 1935, Cap 281	
The Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1958, Cap 277	

3.1.2 Import and export of live animals and genetic material

A permit is required to import any animal to Uganda. All imported animals have to be inspected for disease and can only move further with a permit. The Cattle Traders Act-prescribes that no person shall export cattle from any declared area unless they have an exporting license. Regulations on movement of locally purchased live animals are summarised in 3.1.5 Marketing.

There is a requirement material under the Animal Breeding Act that no animal breeds and genetic material shall be imported or exported without first obtaining a permit from the Commissioner, Livestock Health and Entomology.

3.1.3 Production

At production level, it is a requirement under the Animal Diseases Act that suspected animals are separated and reported to an administrative/veterinary/inspecting officer. A farmer whose animal has been slaughtered as infected by a zoonotic disease shall be compensated based on the market value. Healthy animals shall be separated from the ones that are affected or suspected of being affected by a disease. The affected or suspected to be affected animal shall be tied up or put in a kraal or other enclosed place; and the owner must notify an administrative officer or veterinary officer or inspecting officer of the animal being affected or suspected of being affected.

There is a requirement material under the Animal Breeding Act that for recording breed registration and registration and regulation of breeders and their breeding stock shall be maintained by National Animal Genetic Resource Centre and Databank.

3.1.4 Processing

An inspection of dairy stock and of animals intended for human consumption, and of stock sheds or yards, milk shops, milk vessels and slaughterhouses, and of factories, stores, shops and other places where any article of food is manufactured or prepared or kept is required. The Dairy Industry Act prescribes registering and licensing milk processors and traders.

3.1.5 Marketing

A requirement under the Animal Diseases Act is that no person may move or cause to move any cattle, sheep or goats into or out of a clean cattle area unless he or she is in possession of a valid movement permit issued by a veterinary officer. Additionally, a notification to the District Veterinary Office / Veterinary Officer in charge of the market has to be made before any animal is moved, with animal movement restriction to official routes where only healthy animals are expected to be moved and traded.

The Minister of Health under Public Health Act may make rules for sanitary control of markets and market buildings. The Cattle Traders Act-prescribes that no person shall engage in a business of cattle trading unless he has a valid license.

3.1.6 Consumption

Under the Public Health Act, it is a mandatory to inspect dairy stock and animals intended for human consumption, and of stock sheds or yards, milk shops, milk vessels and slaughterhouses, factories, stores, shops and other places where any article of food is manufactured or prepared or kept. This should allow for early detection of any suspected diseases that may jump to humans. Equally so, there is a requirement under the same Act to take and examine samples of milk, dairy products, meat or other articles of food and prescribes the removal or detention, pending examination or inquiry, of animals or articles which are suspected of being diseased or unsound or unwholesome or unfit.

3.1.7 One Health legal provisions

The One Health approach is about cooperation and coordination among actors operating in different domains, including the livestock, the human health and the environment domains. From this perspective, the Public Health Act provides for sharing of information between human and animal authorities as follows (Section 32, 33, 104 (f)): "Any person who becomes aware of any unusual sickness or mortality among rats, mice, cats, dogs or other animals susceptible to plague or other formidable epidemic diseases not due to poison or other obvious cause shall immediately report the fact to a local authority or to a medical officer of health". We could not find any other legal provisions, either among primary or secondary legislations, that explicitly support a One Health approach or support joint action among actors with different background.

3.2 Livestock driven antimicrobial resistance

3.2.1 Acts and Statutory Instruments

There are two primary legislations (Acts) relevant to livestock-driven antimicrobial resistance (AMR), i.e. that target prevention, detection and control of the development of antimicrobial resistance and spread of antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms along the livestock value chain. These are the National Drug Policy and Authority Act, 1993, and the Public Health Act, 1935. Below we summarise major findings by node of the livestock value chain.

3.2.2 Import

No person or body shall import any drugs into Uganda without having a license in relation to their import from the Drug Authority that is valid for that year, stating the range of preparations to be imported during that period.

3.2.3 Manufacturing

No person shall manufacture any drug or preparation that is not included on the national formulary, i.e. the drug or preparation should be approved by the National Drug Authority. No person shall manufacture any classified drug unless the processes of manufacture are carried out or supervised by a pharmacist.

3.2.4 Marketing

No person shall mix, compound, prepare, supply or dispense any restricted drug unless that person is a registered pharmacist, medical practitioner, dentist or veterinary surgeon or a licensed person as prescribed by the National Drug Authority Act. It follows that any person willing to market antimicrobials, which are among the restricted drugs, must have a license.

3.2.5. Consumption

Under the Public Health Act, the Minister of Health may make rules regarding any of the following: inspection of dairy stock and of animals intended for human consumption, stock sheds or yards, milk shops, milk vessels and slaughterhouses, and of factories, stores, shops and other places where any article of food is manufactured or prepared or kept. Taking and examination of samples of milk, dairy produce, meat or other articles of food and the removal or detention, pending examination or inquiry, of animals or articles which are suspected of being diseased or unsound or unwholesome or unfit. However as of today there are no regulations for antimicrobial residues surveillance at either abattoir, factories, bakeries etc.

3.2.6 One Health legal provisions

There is currently no legal provision supporting One Health i.e. that suggests cooperation, collaboration and sharing of information between human and livestock authorities to detect, control and manage livestock-driven antimicrobial resistance in humans.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Most of legislations relevant to emerging zoonotic diseases and livestock driven antimicrobial resistance date back to decades ago, such as the National Drug Policy and Authority Act of 1993 and the Public Health Act of 1935. In addition, while a number of Acts exist to regulate both emerging zoonotic diseases and livestock driven antimicrobial resistance, their enforcement is challenged by the fact that there are few Statutory Instruments that provide details for their implementation. Consequently, the government faces serious challenge in implementing existing policies and plans, such as the One Health Strategic Plan 2018–2022.

The existing legal framework largely targets control of infectious diseases, after an outbreak has occurred, and only marginally touches upon prevention and detection. From a value chain perspective, most of the emphasis is given to production and marketing, while the consumption dimension is given relatively little attention. As to prevention of livestock driven antimicrobial resistance, this is indirectly legislated through the control of supply of antimicrobials under the National Drug Policy and Authority Act and the Veterinary Surgeons Act, that regulates Veterinary Practice. However, AMR is not directly referenced to in the existing legal framework and the relevant legislation does not regulate use of antimicrobials at farm level.

In spite of a multitude of gaps, the existing primary and secondary legislations to prevent, detect and control emerging zoonotic diseases and livestock-driven antimicrobial resistance constitute a strong foundation for reducing livestock-related public health threats. It could be suffice to formulate targeted Statutory Instruments to fill existing gaps and ensure improved prevention, detection and control of EZDs and livestock-driven AMR. However, the existing legislation does support the adoption of the One Health approach, with the relevant exception of the Public Health Act.

The findings of this review should be complemented with a more detailed analysis of the implementation of the existing legal framework on ground. However, they suggest that while improvements are possible in several domains through the formulation of targeted Statutory Instruments, in all cases the legal framework should be revised to ensure continuous and constructive cooperation and collaboration among livestock, public health and environment stakeholders, which is essential for the successful adoption of a One Health approach that minimises the risk of public health threats along the livestock value chain.

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