

COMMUNIQUE

INTER-REGIONAL CONFERENCE TO PROMOTE SAFE AND STABLE LIVESTOCK TRADE BETWEEN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

22nd - 24th November, 2015, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Countries in the Greater Horn of Africa (GHOA), with support from AU-IBAR, ICPALD, USAID and EU, have been undertaking measures to enhance prevention and control of animal diseases. The intention is to guarantee disease free livestock exports to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

There have been periodic opportunities to reflect on enhancing safe trade in livestock and livestock products between GHOA and the MENA. This has been through two previous forums:

- a. Livestock Stakeholders in Animal Health Certification and Trade, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2-3 August 2010; and
- b. Enhancing Safe Inter-Regional Livestock Trade: Risk-Based Approaches to Livestock Certification and Harmonized Control of Trade-Related Transboundary Animal Diseases; June 13-16, 2011, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

To further strengthen the modalities for sustaining and enhancing safe trade in livestock commodities between the two regions, this third forum was convened given the increasing recognition of the importance of market oriented livestock production.

These modalities aim at preventing livestock trade disruptions occasioned by import bans by Middle East Countries as previously experienced during outbreaks of transboundary animal diseases (TADs), especially Rift Valley Fever (RVF). Previous livestock import bans by Middle East countries resulted in informal live animal trade. This posed major health risks to human and animal populations in the importing countries. Hence, the modalities will also explore joint management approaches to counter factors that would lead to trade bans.



Sheep in a livestock market in Sudan

The forum is jointly organized by the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the IGAD Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD), with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, Kenya and East Africa) through the Standard Methods and Procedures Project (SMP-AH) and the European Union (EU) through the Enhancing Somali Livestock trade (ESOLT).

General Objective

To develop consensus on the measures for sustaining and enhancing safe trade in livestock commodities between the exporting countries in the Greater Horn of Africa and the importing countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Specific Objectives

- a. To track the progress of the recommendations of the previous consultative meeting;
- b. To enhance knowledge on the evolving status of livestock trade between the Greater Horn of Africa and MENA;
- c. To agree on modalities for implementation of measures to improve livestock and livestock products trade in GHoA and MENA; and
- d. To foster business linkages between private sector actors from GHoA and their counterparts from MENA.

The conference was officially opened by Madame MajdAl-Herbawi, Director Animal Health and Development, Ministry of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates. She informed the participants that the UAE is a regional hub of livestock trade and her Ministry was therefore keen on updating animal health measures to stabilise the trade. She informed the meeting that her government had adopted a number of measures such as the 'National Agenda for Animal Health' and hoped that the recommendations of the meeting would contribute towards the achievement of the objects of the agenda.

Dr. Nacif Rihani, the FAO sub-regional representative in the Middle East observed that FAO was also promoting livestock trade between the two regions given the contribution livestock trade played in enhancing the livelihoods of livestock keepers.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Mr. Isaac Thendiu, the Regional Resilience Advisor, at USAID, Kenya and East Africa office, remarked that USAID was glad to be associated with the Standard Methods and Procedures in Animal Health (SMP-AH) project. He observed that SMP-AH was a component of the Feed the Future initiative (a US Government 5-year strategy that addresses key regional challenges in the GHoA). He appreciated that the project also contributes to the United States Government resilience agenda for the GHoA. 'Increased trade as a result of the SMP-AH interventions that involve institutional strengthening and human capacity development should ultimately benefit the livestock keepers and traders' he said.

The OIE representative, Dr. Samuel Wakhusama reiterated the need to adhere to OIE animal health and welfare standards to promote safe international trade in livestock and livestock products. He commended the dialogue between the trading partners which would enhance understanding and build trust to enhance trade.

In his welcoming remarks the Director of AU-IBAR, Prof Ahmed Elsayalhy observed that the Horn of Africa is home to a huge animal resource that makes a significant contribution to food and nutrition security, and is a major contributor to the GDPs of the national economies. He further observed that Middle East had provided ready market for livestock and livestock products from the Horn of Africa for many years. However, access to the markets had been limited by recurrent bans associated with fear of introduction of TADS and zoonoses. 'This conference should deliberate on how to address the gaps and seize the opportunities for safe and stable trade' he remarked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Communication

- i. Importing countries should immediately notify exporting countries of any rejections of livestock shipments with clearly documented justifications.
- ii. Communication should be channelled through CVOs for dissemination to other national actors to ensure that information received by the importer from public and private sectors is not contradictory, and for timely feedback.
- iii. Exporting countries should package information on market opportunities and trends to catalyse an increase in the market share to the GCC.

B. Export Facilities

- i. Importing countries should fast track the approval of export facilities.
- ii. Importing countries should undertake risk assessments to verify that animals conditioned in bio-secured feedlots are safe for export. This will eliminate the need to further hold the animals in international standard quarantine facilities as is currently the case.
- iii. Importing and exporting countries should explore mechanisms to safeguard the integrity of the consignments to ensure the consignments that reach the importing countries are the same as those that passed through the quarantines.
- iv. Importing countries should review the requirement for exporting countries to meet the costs of assessments of export facilities.



Sheep being offloaded into an export facility in Sudan

C. Animal Health and Welfare Standards

- i. Continued vigilance to animal welfare standards, particularly those relating to transportation, should be observed (Exporting countries, AU-IBAR, ICPALD).
- ii. Exporting countries should involve from the onset importing countries in the process of strengthening their capacities, and improving standards for livestock and livestock products exports.
- iii. Exporting and importing countries should base their trade requirements on OIE standards for safe international trade, including adherence to the principle of equivalence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Government of UAE through the Ministry of Water and Environment for hosting this meeting.