

REMESA: A Network to Control Infectious Animal Diseases in Mediterranean Countries

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Abstract – In 2009, the chief veterinary officers of 10 Western Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia) created a common structure for work and cooperation, with the necessary capabilities to assist and coordinate the development and implementation of animal health regional projects and programs: the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (*Réseau Méditerranéen de Santé Animale – REMESA*). The main objectives of REMESA are the improvement of prevention and control against the major transboundary animal diseases and zoonosis through strengthening of the national and regional resources and capacities, the harmonization and coordination of surveillance and control activities. The concept of regional animal health network is based on grouping several countries; moreover was focused on harmonization of surveillance and control methods as well as strengthening the national devices without replacing their functions. The purpose of our paper is to determine the structure of REMESA, its overall strategy and specific objectives.

Keywords – Animal Health, Mediterranean Countries, Network, Prophylaxis, REMESA.

I. INTRODUCTION

Aware of the difficulties faced by some countries to eradicate infectious animal diseases in their territory or to keep disease-free status of certain regions, the governments of Mediterranean countries create REMESA (Mediterranean Network of Animal Health)

This network is composed of six countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) and 4 countries on the northern shore (Spain, France, Italy and Portugal) (Fig.1)

The importance of trade and migration between these countries, similar natural characteristics (Mediterranean climate) and the prevalence of specific diseases has prompted the veterinary authorities of these countries to establish a policy of prevention and fight against animal diseases and especially zoonoses.

The initiative to create a Mediterranean Animal Health Network is in line with the global initiatives of the Barcelona Process (started in 1995) for a Mediterranean partnership, and more recently, with the proposed creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (launched in 2008). This initiative is also consistent with the European policy vis-à-vis the Mediterranean and could be integrated in th future feasibility study to be coordinated by DG SANCO for the enlargement to a wider Euro-Mediterranean partnership between the European Union and the countries

from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. The partnership, involving reciprocity, solidarity and co-development, aims at establishing political, economic and social cooperation. Beyond their bilateral nature and the specificities of each partner State, the Association Agreements tally with a similar pattern.

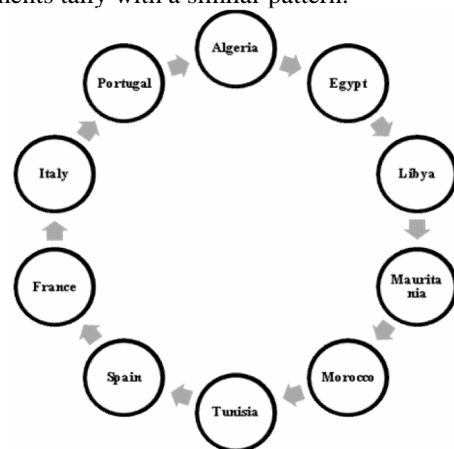


Fig.1. Member countries REMESA

II. DEFINITION

The REMESA is an animal health network created in 2009 by the Heads of Veterinary Services of 10 Mediterranean countries, to improve the prevention and the fight against animal diseases. The countries concerned are responsible for policy and the dynamics of the network. FAO / OIE are essential partners and animate and facilitate discussions on animal health [1].

The priority diseases that appear in Northern African countries are: rabies, brucellosis, bluetongue (BT), sheep pox, tuberculosis, foot and mouth disease, avian influenza (AI), leishmaniasis, Rift Valley fever (RVF) and African horse sickness (AHS). In Southern European countries, animal health concerns are the spread risk of these diseases from the South (FMD, PPR, rabies, etc...), and shared surveillance and control issues (vector-borne diseases such as BT or West Nile Disease WND).

In the framework of the Mediterranean Animal Health Network, four other technical sub-networks have been established as part of the same initiative to harmonize, energize and facilitate the operation and activities of REMESA: the Animal Health Laboratories Network (RELABSA), the Veterinary Epidemiology Network (REPIVET), the Animal Health Communication Network (RECOMSA) and the Animal Health Socio-Economics and Production Systems Network (RESEPSA). (Figure2)

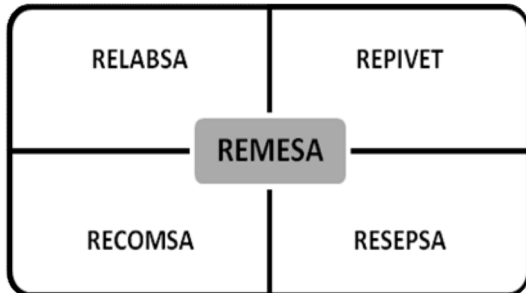


Fig.2. Relation between REMESA and other technical sub-networks

III. ORGANIZATION

The REMESA consists of a standing committee composed of members from the Mediterranean countries. Ongoing meetings are held twice a year. The board REMESA is constituted by the following members: (Figure 3)

- Heads of the veterinary service of the member countries
- OIE (World organization for Animal Health)
- FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)
- UMA (Arab Maghreb Union)
- EU (European Union)

The Committee approves the overall strategy and action plans for each 6 months. This strategy is based on two main lines of action:

- strengthening national capacities of member countries
- the development of regional coordination: REMESA determines the priority animal diseases (across border, zoonosis)

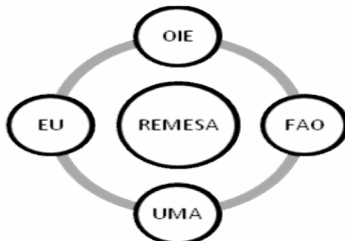


Fig.3. Relationship between REMESA and International Organizations

A. Specific targets

The REMESA aims to:

- Facilitate the exchange and sharing of information on animal diseases regularly
- Strengthen the capacity of diagnostic laboratories, quality assurance and biosecurity
- Improve monitoring epidemiological surveillance
- Strengthen the prevention and fight against infectious diseases and zoonosis
- Support the development and coordination of contingency plans for animal diseases
- Facilitate cooperation between research centers, laboratories and universities

B. Examples of activities REMESA [2]

Harmonization of procedures and protocols for epidemiological surveillance between member countries, development of evaluation and monitoring of

epidemiological surveillance at the scale regional networks as in the Caribbean [3] organization of training (diagnostic laboratories) and seminars, and analysis of socio-economic constraints by country.

Veterinary Epidemio-Surveillance Network (REPIVET)

The network of veterinary epidemiological surveillance (REPIVET) is a regional initiative to link national networks of epidemiological surveillance in the Mediterranean region and REMESA has organized several meetings:

- First Meeting REPIVET - Rabat, Morocco, 11 December 2009

The 1st REPIVET Regional Meeting took place on the 11th of December, immediately after the regional training session of "GIS applied to epidemiology". The objective of the REPIVET meeting was to discuss the constitution, launch the regional epidemiology network REPIVET in the framework of the REMESA annual action plan, and collaboration with the Moroccan veterinary services (VS).

- Second Meeting REPIVET - Porto, Portugal, 23 July 2010

The chiefs of the veterinary epidemiology units within the REMESA member countries, or their officially nominated representatives, together with experts from FAO-ECTAD-NA and OIE-SRO-NA, participated in this meeting in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries of Portugal. The meeting was chaired by Morocco and Portugal (REPIVET co-presidents).

- Third meeting REPIVET / RESEPSA - Tunis, Tunisia, July 2012.

This meeting considered the following project: "Strengthening systems for the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases in the Maghreb and Egypt. Concerned diseases were: The mouth disease (FMD), Peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and Rift Valley Fever (RVF)

Animal Health Laboratories Network (RELABSA)

Several workshop trainings were organized:

- Sub-regional OIE/FAO/WHO training workshop on infectious substances shipment and on laboratory biorisk management, Tunis, Tunisia, 25 - 29 November 2013
- USAID/FAO/OIE training workshop on capture and identification of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) mosquito vectors, Dakar, Senegal, 18-28 November, 2013.
- Workshop FAO, for the establishment of a prevention system and fight against Rift Valley Fever in the Western Mediterranean Area, 2-3 July, Nouakchott, Mauritania.
- Training Workshop on laboratory diagnosis of FMD, 21 - 25 May 2012, ANSES, Maisons-Alfort, France
- 5th Annual Workshop coordination and RESOLAB meeting RELABSA, 12 to 16 December 2011, Bamako, Mali
- FAO workshop on awareness and training activities of reference laboratories, June 27-29, 2011 Madrid / Algete, Spain.
- Transboundary meeting of the Veterinary Services and the National Laboratories for Strengthening



Epidemiological Surveillance of Rift Valley Fever between Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, 6- 7 June 2011 Bamako, Mali .

- Workshop on the strengthening of the surveillance and control of West Nile fever (WNF) in North Africa, 16-20 may 2011, Teramo, Italy.
- 5th International Symposium francophone Animal Microbiology and Focal Points Meeting RELABSA French North Africa, 4 to 7 April 2011, Marrakech, Morocco
- Assessment of the situation on the Rift Valley Fever (RVF) Mission, 7-17 January 2011, Nouakchott, Mauritania.

Animal Health Communication Network (RECOMSA)

The regional technical communication workshop for training and planning (TAD'S, IAHP & Zoonoses) - Animal Health Communication Network Regional Meeting, Tunis, 11-13 November 2009.

The specific objectives of this workshop were (a) to return to the countries the elements from the rapid assessments carried out during missions, (b) to make stock of achievements in communication in response to HPAI episodes, knowing that apart from Egypt, no country in the FAO-ECTAD/RAHC-NA intervention area has declared any Avian Flu outbreak, (c) to train the participants (or consolidate their gains) in Communication (methods & feasibility), but mainly (d) to set the groundwork of the Animal Health Communication Network (RECOMSA) within the REMESA framework and to plan the support activities in communication for a short and medium term.

Socio-Economy Network for Production and Animal Health (RESEPSA)

Workshop Communication and Socio-economic for Animal Health, June 2011, Hammamet, Tunisia
Socio-economical objectives/RESEPSA group :

- Progress in the implementation of three specific activities:
- Creating a database of organizations in the livestock sector.
- Creating a database on transnational movements of animals and animal "products".
- Assessing the impact of Peste des petits ruminants (PPR).
- Develop a proposal for a work program for the next 12 months.
- Initiate a process of exchange and networking on the socio-economy, in line with work done at the workshop launch GCP/RAB/010/SPA project.

VI. CONCLUSION

The REMESA is an example of regional coordination and cooperation in the control of animal diseases. It has allowed most of the member countries to establish an epidemiological surveillance network whose usefulness and necessity in the present era of globalization are well established. Between Member States, there are more similarities than differences. This is due to the fact that regional coordination maintained through REMESA

program a dialogue about common organization objective which is the fight against animal diseases. Epidemiological surveillance should be a sovereign activity of veterinary services. It must be decisive for the rapid detection of a change in the health status of an animal population.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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