

Meeting report

Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Peste des Petits Ruminants Regional Advisory Group Meeting for the West Eurasia Roadmap

Baku, Azerbaijan, 2-4 July 2024



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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD), express their sincere thanks to the WOAH sub-regional representation for Central Asia and the FAO regional office for Europe and Central Asia for organizing this event under the umbrella of the Global framework for the progressive control of Transboundary animal diseases (GF-TADs), and to the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting the event and thus contributing to the success of the meeting.

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ACRONYMS

ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EuFMD	European Commission for the Control of Foot-And-Mouth Disease
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAO REU	FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
FMD	Foot-and-mouth disease
GF-TADs	Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
PPR	Peste des petits ruminants
PPR GEP	PPR Global Eradication Programme
PPR GCES	PPR Global Control and Eradication Programme
PMAT	PPR Monitoring and Assessment Tool
RAG	Regional Advisory Group
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
TADs	Transboundary Animal Diseases
VS	Veterinary Services
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
WOAH SRR	WOAH Sub-Regional Representation

I. Background

The Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), an initiative jointly led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), was inaugurated on May 24, 2004. This facilitative mechanism aims to provide a coordination framework to efficiently achieve the prevention, detection, and control of transboundary animal diseases (TADs). Among the priority diseases within GF-TADs are Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

FMD significantly impacts livestock productivity, disrupting regional and international trade in animals and animal products. In low- and middle-income countries, the disease's most severe impact is the loss of production and income, adversely affecting the livelihoods, food security, and nutrition of pastoralists. To mitigate the burden of FMD, FAO and WOAH developed a fifteen-year [Global FMD Control Strategy](#) in 2012. Since its inception, several initiatives have been undertaken to create an enabling environment for FMD control efforts. One such initiative is to encourage countries to follow the Progressive Control Pathway for FMD control ([PCP-FMD](#)), which guides national strategies as part of regionally coordinated control efforts. Currently, around 80 countries worldwide are engaged, at various levels, in implementing PCP-FMD to reduce or eliminate the circulation of the FMD virus.

PPR is a devastating viral disease affecting sheep and goats, severely impacting livestock-dependent communities in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In approximately 68 PPR-endemic countries, it poses a significant threat to small ruminant value chains, sheep and goat health, food security, and the social wellbeing and livelihoods of smallholder producers. In April 2015, the FAO and WOAH International Conference for the Control and Eradication of PPR, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, approved the PPR Global Control and Eradication Strategy (PPR GCES), aiming for global eradication of PPR by 2030. The PPR GCES aims to eradicate PPR by 2030 while strengthening veterinary services and improving animal health globally by reducing the impact of other major infectious diseases of small ruminants.

The PPR GCES was operationalized through the first five-year PPR Global Eradication Programme (PPR GEP) (2017-2021), laying the foundation for implementing the strategy. The progress made, lessons learned, and experiences of partners during the first five years of the operational phase were reviewed and informed the development of the operational guide, the Blueprint for PPR Eradication by 2030, launched on November 4, 2022. The blueprint summarizes the key elements

of the strategy and partnerships needed to achieve eradication. To reach the primary goal of eradication, improved access to vaccination and other primary animal health services will be critical. Therefore, the strategy emphasizes capturing the long-term benefits of eradication through sustainable animal health services, from the primary community level to strengthened veterinary services capable of maintaining PPR-free status once vaccination programs are suspended, hopefully by the end of 2027.

Annually, countries are guided to undertake self-assessments using the PPR Monitoring and Assessment Tool (PMAT) and FMD-PCP Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) to review their status and identify priority activities for national planning. To support countries' progress in the stepwise approach to PPR eradication, the PMAT has been reviewed and improved for enhanced use in the next phases of the PPR GEP. It is available in Excel format and comes with a comprehensive user guide.

The transition of a Member country from one stage to another is discussed and accepted during a regional roadmap meeting upon the suggestion of the RAG, which manages the "acceptance process" and overall progress towards FMD control and PPR eradication programs at the regional level. The RAG also provides advice on implementing the recommendations arising from both roadmaps.

II. Objectives and Expected Results of the meeting

The RAGs are the regional bodies responsible for assessing and providing advice on the Members' progress along the FMD and PPR progressive (stepwise) control approaches. Since the RAGs have been established, their contributions were mostly requested at the time of regional roadmap meetings, and for country stage assessments. Regional leadership and guidance to the member countries, as initially planned in the RAG terms of reference, were not achieved in most regions.

Objective:

Therefore, there is the need to discuss with RAG members their core role for the region, as well as the group functioning. This meeting aimed to bring together the members of the FMD and PPR RAGs for West Eurasia region for experience sharing, and discussion with the some of the non-voting members of the RAG to improve their functioning and utility for the region.

Expected results:

- I The members gain improved understanding of how RAGs are constituted and their governance.
- II RAG members better understand their roles and responsibilities in the RAG.
- III RAG Members supported with a guide for a workplan to structure their activities and better support to Members.
- IV RAGs gain an understanding of the need to support Members prepare applications for endorsement of their national control programmes.

Note: On day 2, AFSA organized a multi-agency field simulation exercise to demonstrate the Veterinary Services 'capacities to conduct epidemiological investigation following a suspected outbreak of FMD and PPR, collect samples and test them on site, raise public awareness and notify to WOAHO.

III. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The meeting was officially opened on July 2, 2024, by Mr. Sarvan Jafarov, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture of Azerbaijan, and Mr. Balarahim Guliyev, Deputy Chairman of the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AFSA). Representatives of WOAHO and FAO, including Dr. Mereke Taitubayev, Representative of the Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia (WOAH SRR CA), and Dr. Eran Raizman, Senior Animal Health and Production Officer for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (FAO REU), also made opening remarks.

The opening session was moderated by Dr. Galib Abdulaliyev, WOAHO Delegate for Azerbaijan.

The agenda and list of participants are in Annex 1 and 2 respectively.

IV. Updated Membership of the FMD and PPR Regional Advisory Groups for ECO region

Members of RAG-FMD for West Eurasia (as elected in 2023, for a 3-year term)

- Galib Abdulaliyev, Delegate of Azerbaijan (Chairperson of the RAG);

- Samat Tyulegenov, Delegate of Kazakhstan;
- Amir Javadi, Representative of the Delegate of Iran;
- Satenik Kharatyan, regional Epidemiology network (EpiNet) Leader from Armenia;
- Abdulnaci Bulut, regional Laboratory network (WeINet) Leader from Republic of Türkiye.

Members of PPR RAG for ECO

- Dr Abrar Akbarov, Delegate of Uzbekistan, (Chairperson of the RAG);
- Dr Vasili Basiladze, Delegate of Georgia;
- Dr Ashirbai Zhusupov, Delegate of Kyrgyzstan;
- The ECO Secretariat Representative is Dr Gurkan Polat.

V. Meeting Recommendations for FMD

On the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) composition and governance:

- Chief Veterinary Officers/WOAH delegates members of the RAG-FMD to appoint technical staff (CVO delegate) to coordinate the RAG activities during the RAG mandate, and share appointments with the FMD Working Group;
- Epidemiology and Laboratory network members to appoint co-leads for the regional networks, one accountable for the Southeast European Neighborhood (ie. Türkiye, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan) and one accountable for Central Asian countries, considering the sub-regional priorities, needs, and official language, and share appointments with the RAG and FMD Working Group;

Recommendations to the RAG including technical networks and to international organizations:

- RAG to initiate a regional meeting, in collaboration with Reference Laboratories for FMD to discuss the sharing of samples for confirmation and further analysis;
- Foster member countries to send biological samples for FMD virus characterization or sequences with members of the FAO/WOAH Reference Laboratory network for FMD;
- Provide support to the national authorities to update the current national legislation regarding shipping biomaterials (samples);
- Foster sharing of experience and good practices with regards to PCP-FMD progression, application for official status, development and/or testing of contingency plan;

- EpiNet to study the extent of cross-border informal livestock mobility and assess implications for the risk of FMD virus regional spread;
- RAG to initiate meeting in emergency situation, and discuss collaboration around emergency FMD vaccination and support to neighboring countries;
- RAG to facilitate regional-country vaccine procurement, with support of IO, if needed

- Non-voting members of the RAG to establish a secretariat to assist the RAG to develop a yearly workplan and implement activities, and coordinate communication with the regional level.
- International Organization to facilitate regular meetings of the networks, according to the networks' workplans, in between regional roadmap meetings;
- The FMD-WG to involve the RAG in the current assessment of the country situation,
- The FMD-WG to facilitate, in coordination with the RAG and regional offices, the sharing of experiences and best practices between countries (involving country missions, if budget allows) and the provision of regional risk information within the RAG.

IV. Meeting Recommendations for PPR

For infected countries

- Use the revised PMAT to track progress & adapt strategy if needed.
- Develop PPR eradication plan taking into account the following:
 - For the infected countries identify possible PPR episystems that as a source of infection and maintenance of the PPR virus.
 - Develop or strengthen strategies to track and control livestock movements.
 - Enhance surveillance activities (active and passive) and consider developing a PPR early warning system strategy.
 - Target control activities at hypothesised PPR episystems.
 - Intensify efforts for high-coverage risk-based vaccination between 2023-2025 and evaluate the effectiveness of the vaccination campaigns (including sero-monitoring).
 - Use the support of the FAO-WOAH Reference laboratories and centres, including for virus genetic analysis.
- Work to develop harmonised PPR eradication activities with neighbouring countries, including coordinated vaccination campaigns, including:
 - Plan mutual surveillance activities.
 - Conduct simulation exercises to test emergency preparedness at both national and multi-national levels.

- Countries to consider developing endorsed PPR control programmes to guide and domestic the eradication process at the country levels

For countries not infected

- For countries carrying vaccination without infection, decide upon criteria to be met for cessation of vaccination.
- To countries never having reported the disease, initiate the necessary actions according to the WOAAH requirements with regard to official recognition of disease status and consider applying for the official recognition of their PPR-free status.

For RAG

- Explore the possibility to organise a meeting between the countries of the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) to discuss the regional approach for implementing PPR-related activities.
- Hold more frequent RAG meetings- develop a task force committee that can meet regularly on specific issue and report to the main RAG.
- Develop, with the support of the PPR Secretariat, a calendar of future activities and share in a timely manner with Member Countries.

For WOAAH FAO, GF-TADs governing bodies/international organisations

- Support for dossier preparation for official recognition of freedom.
- Consider how to financially support RAG meetings.
- Invite other chairpersons from other RAGs to share experiences on RAG activities and PPR eradication process.
- Support countries in being transparent when sharing PPR disease intelligence data (WAHIS).
- Encourage countries to request PVS missions including a PPR-specific component.
- Prioritise PMAT translation into Russian.
- Support countries in preparations of dossiers for endorsement of official PPR control programmes and official recognition of PPR freedom status by WOAAH.
- Invite other countries within the region to participate in global efforts of disease control and eradication (Afghanistan).