SCIENTIFIC NETWORK ON ANIMAL HEALTH

Minutes of the 17th meeting

Held on 21-22 October 2020, WEB-conference
(Agreed on 16 November 2020)

Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

Country	Name[1]
Austria	Friederich Schmoll
Belgium	Kirstine Ceulemans
Bulgaria	---
Cyprus	---
Croatia	Dražen Kneževicč
Czech Republic	Richard Wallo
Denmark	Annette Boklund
Estonia	Ave-Ly Toomvap
Finland	Satu Raussi
France	---
Germany	---
Greece	---
Hungary	---
Ireland	Ronan O'Neill
Italy	Fabrizio De Massis
Latvia	Edvins Olsevskis
Lithuania	Vilija Grigaliuniene
Luxembourg	---
Malta	---
Netherlands	Olaf Stenvers
Poland	Przemyslaw Cwynar
Portugal	---
Romania	---
Slovakia	Anna Ondrejkova
Slovenia	Arnej Galjot
Spain	Elena Garcia Villacieros
Sweden	Cecilia Hultén
Iceland	Audur Arnthorsdottir
Liechtenstein	---
Norway	Dean Basic

- **Pre-accession countries**

ALBANIA (Ali Lilo, Keti Margariti), BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA (Aleksandar Nemet), KOSOVO (Berat Hoxha), REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA (Vanja Kodratenko, Greta Nikolovska), MONTENEGRO (Marko Nikolic), SERBIA (Tamas Petrovic), TURKEY (Anil Demeli)

- **Observers**

NA

- **European Commission:**

NA

- **EFSA:**

Yves van der Stede (co-chair): ALPHA Unit

Inma Aznar: ALPHA Unit

Francesca Baldinelli: ALPHA Unit

Alessandro Broglia: ALPHA Unit

Sofie Dhollander: ALPHA Unit

Andrea GERVELMEIER: ALPHA unit

Sotiria- Eleni ANTONIOU: ALPHA unit

Gabriele Zancanaro (chair): ALPHA Unit

DAY1

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**

   The Chair welcomed the participants.

   Apologies were received from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Liechtenstein.

2. **Adoption of agenda**

   The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. **Topics for discussion – Day 1 (21 October 2020: 9.00h-13h)**

3.1. SIGMA Project: state of the art

Gabriele Zancanaro updated the MS on the ongoing project of SIGMA reminding goals and taking the audience through the different working packages and providing concrete examples of possible developments and current success story on EIP6 report.

3.2. SIGMA Data Models & DDI & SIGMA EST tool

Gabriele Zancanaro presented the state of the art and on future steps with particular focus on the first official data collection based on the SIGMA framework, i.e. the one on African Swine Fever (reporting period: 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021). The developed tools (DDI and SIGMA EST tool) were explained during a short demo and participants were shown how to use these tools in their countries in order to be able to report data according the SIGMA models (population data and laboratory data).

The participants been trained on the usage of the SIGMA tools: the Digital Data Inventory and the SIGMA EST. The output of the SIGMA EST tool consists in a standardised xml file to be submitted to the Data Collection Framework (DCF). The name of the data collection is ASF.2020 and it will be open until 30 September 2021.

Some countries asked the possibility to have the data model so to adapt as far as possible the national data model. EFSA will provide all countries with the relevant official publication of the SIGMA data model.

An additional training for pre-accession countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA, KOSOVO, REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO SERBIA and TURKEY was delivered on 3 & 4 November 2020.

3.3. SIGMA Discussion and Conclusions: Lesson learnt, ASF EPI 6, future steps in the AHAW data collection

MS discussed on lessons learnt from SIGMA data models and expressed their views on future steps in data collection through SIGMA model. The developed tools were considered as very useful as these allow the countries to map their national database (once) towards the SIGMA standards and it creates automatically xml file for submission.

3.4. Activities by AHAW on ASF: mandates and state of play – ASF in the EU and Case Control study in Romania

EFSA staff presented ongoing mandates on African swine fever. Before June 2021 EFSA will deliver ASF mandates related to i) Exit strategy on ASF ii) risk of spread of ASF in different matrices iii) risk factors for ASF introduction and spread that are linked to the keeping of pigs outdoors iv) the development of research protocols (GAP research) for ASF and v) an epidemiological update of the ASF situation in the EU (EPI5 report, Art 31). , For each of the mandates the Terms of References were explained and presented.

Annette Boklund presented the case control study 'Risk factors for African swine fever incursion in Romanian domestic farms during 2019' (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-66381-3) which was published in June 2020. This study was conducted with EU experts and the Romanian competent Authorities in order to obtain knowledge on ASF transmission routes and to identify risk factors. Therefore, a matched case control study was executed in the period from May to September 2019: 655 Romanian pig farms were included in the study. The results showed that close proximity to outbreaks in domestic farms was a risk factor in commercial as well as backyard farms. Furthermore, in backyard farms, herd size, wild boar abundance around the farm, number of domestic outbreaks within 2 km

around farms, short distance to wild boar cases and visits of professionals working on farms were statistically significant risk factors. Additionally, growing crops around the farm, which could potentially attract wild boar, and feeding forage from ASF affected areas to the pigs were risk factors for ASF incursion in backyard farms. One participant (Ireland) asked if there has been analysis on the effect of farm proximity to significant man-made topographical features such as towns or motorways? EFSA staff answered that towns or motorways were not included in the analysis. Turkey asked if local veterinarians interviewed the Romanian farmers. Indeed, the interviews were done in the local language and performed by veterinarians of the Romanian Competent Authorities.

3.5. ASF and Outdoor farming in the EU: discussion on Feedback by the MSs (Survey)s,

Sotiria- Eleni ANTONIOU (EFSA) presented the objectives and the results of the survey on outdoor pig farms. The objectives of this survey were: a) to identify and describe the different categories of outdoor pig farms in EU MSs, b) to identify and describe the different biosecurity measures that are presently applied in outdoor pig farms in EU MSs and c) to identify any evidence of epidemiological links between outdoor pig farms and ASF spread/introduction. The response rate was high for the Veterinary Authorities (96% of MSs) but not for the farmers' associations (18% of the total number of associations that received the survey from 9 MSs covering 33% of MSs).

The main findings based on the replies from the Veterinary authorities are:

1) All types of outdoor farms of the preliminary proposal of EFSA have been reported by EU MSs: a) animals have access to woodlands/forests without any fence, b) animals have access to fenced areas in woodlands/forests, c) animals have access to fields or pastures without any fence, d)) animals have access to fenced areas in fields or pastures, e) animals are held in open buildings which are fenced and f)animals are held in closed buildings with access to a fenced concrete outside run/yard.

2) Different categories of outdoor farms exist in 23 out of 26 MSs, but the national categorisation system is not harmonised amongst MSs.

3) Specific pig breeds that need outdoor access: 12 out of 26 MSs have autochthonous pig breeds that should have access to the outdoor areas such as woodlands, forests, fields and pastures; some of them belong to endangered or traditional breeds.

4) The types of farms that are considered as outdoor farms in several MSs are: free ranging farms, backyards, kept wild boar farms, organic pig farms, farms with specific (native) breeds and pigs kept as pets or for hobby.

5) The number of outdoor farms and the number of animals per category of outdoor farm were not available at national level for many MSs. The situation is similar with the number of the commercial outdoor farms and the number of animals in these farms. The MSs explained that the different types of outdoor farms, the commercial or non-commercial activity, the breed of the animals are not registered in their national databases per farm, so this information is not retrievable at national level.

6) Several MSs have developed a policy on biosecurity measues such as: a)the implementation of the biosecurity measures in all pig farms is a legal requirement in the national legislation making it compulsory for the farmers to implement them, b)there is an official control system in place to verify implementation of the biosecurity measures on pig farms and to assess the level of compliance, c) the awareness campaigns and the training activities include the biosecurity measures in their objectives, d)specific or additional biosecurity measures for the outdoor pig farms have been developed, e) a system is in place that classifies pig farms based on their level of biosecurity.

7) The main bisosecurity measures that have been prescribed for outdoor farms are: a) approval of the operation of an outdoor farm by Veterinary Authority, b)fencing, c)record-keeping, d)biosecurity evaluation, e)avoid any contact with pigs from other farms or wild boars, f)management of the carcasses and the animal by-products,g)controlled entrances secured against unauthorized access, h)isolation area/places to keep pigs in quarantine under the following circumstances: new arrivals, sick animals, animals leaving the farm, i)routine within-farm biosecurity, and j) defined/spesific slaughterhouses for slaughter pigs from outdoor farms.

8) Then main non-compliances to the implementation of biosecurity measures in outdoor pig farms are related to the following areas: a)fencing, b)biosecurity relating to clothes and shoes, c) keeping records, d)disinfection at the farm or housing entrances, e)movement and disinfection of the vehicles, f)feeding materials (fresh grass, grain and straw) and equipments, g)identification and registration system, h)general hygiene, i)people, j)hunting, k)management of carcasses and l)structure of the buildings.

3.6. Discussion – Conclusions

The chair summarised the main points emerged during the meeting and illustrated the agenda for Day 2.

Closure of Day 1

DAY2

The Chair did a wrap up of the different topics presented on first day and highlighted the deadlines for the submission of the SIGMA EST and SIGMA DDI tool.

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Topics for discussionActivities by AHAW on Animal Health Law: Listing and categorisation of AMR bacteria & Control of Cat A diseases mandate

The mandate and the three terms of reference (ToR) as received from the Commission were presented to the AH network. The approach elaborated and the schedule to conduct the activities by ToR was presented and discussed. The AH network was informed on the ongoing extensive literature review to collect data for ToR 1, to give a state of play as regards resistant bacteria that cause transmissible diseases in animals, and for ToR 2, to identify which bacteria, among those described in ToR 1, are of relevance in the EU.

The ongoing work related to Category A diseases evaluated existing rules that will cease to apply as from the date of application of the Animal Health Law and its complementing legislation including the Delegated Regulation, i.e. from 21 April 2021. Certain of the proposed measures for the prevention and control of category A diseases of terrestrial animals should therefore be assessed in order to ensure that they are effective and updated based on the latest scientific knowledge in this new set of legislation. This is particularly important in the case of those diseases that are less common or have been never reported in the Union. It is requested to evaluate i) sampling of animals and establishments for the detection of Category A diseases in Terrestrial animals ii) the monitoring period and its assessment of the effectiveness iii) the minimum radius of restricted zones and duration of the control measures in restriction zones and iv) prohibitions in restricted zones and risk-mitigating treatments for products of animals origin and other materials

3.2. Results from Risk Assessment on RVF

An overview was provided by Alessandro Broglia (EFSA staff) on the published mandates on RVF. Results and conclusions were discussed. An update on RVF word wide and risk of introduction into Europe (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6041). In addition, specific risk assessments were done for the Region of Mayotte (France) in relation to risk of persistence, spread and impact. Results can be consulted in: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6093. The last Scientific opinion deals with the assessment of effectiveness of surveillance and control measures for RVF in the EU (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/6292).

3.3. Ongoing projects in AHAW

AHAW Staff presented different projects that has been launched the last year: the Syndromic surveillance project aims to set up early warning systems for three particular diseases (Avian Influenza, Lumpy Skin Disease and Rabies). The main idea is to identify and test indicators that could work for early warning at the EU level. Pilot project will be presented and executed in 2021.

The Story maps project aims to characterise the vector borne diseases as well as the diseases, listed as Category A diseases in the Animal health law, in a harmonised way and to extract (from a systematic literature review) in an automatic way the information be shared via dashboards and/or story maps.

The ENET wild project is funded by EFSA. The aim of the project is to collect comparable data at European level in order to analyse risks of diseases shared between wildlife, livestock and humans; data that are also essential in conservation and wildlife management. This project attempts to improve the European capacities for monitoring of wildlife population, developing standards for data collection, validation and, finally, create and promote a data repository. The objectives that ENETWILD will develop during next years are specifically focused on wild boar.

Avian influenza procurements (with EuroBird Portal) aims to collect and collate and visualise the data on abundance, distribution as well as migratory routes

(for different species). This allows EFSA to follow up timely the situation on Avian influenza to identify zones at risk as well as species that are target species for the risk of introduction and spread of Avian influenza in the EU.

The self-mandate guidance document aims to update two specific guidance documents specific for AHAW. One is related to Guidance on RA for Animal Welfare (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/2513). The second guidance that needs revision is the guidance on risk assessment in animal health using modelling (https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2009.1419). The deadline for adoption in June 2021.

3.4. Functioning of the Animal Health Network

A discussion among the participant was launched related to topcis that could be presented in next AHAW network meetings. Most of the participants were in favour of having a morning TOPIC in which all MSs could present the situation in their country. As an example: COVID-19 and studies done in animals. However, no proposals were submitted for this network meeting. Therefore, it was agreed that for the future a specific topic will be announced in the invitations and MSs will be asked to provide presentations or updates on that specific area (eg. Risk assessments on animal health, methods developed for evaluating risks for specific diseases, specific papers/studies, …).

The network was in favour of keeping Animal Health and Welfare separated (two separate meetings).

Finally, it was agreed that EFSA will contact the AHAW Network representatives for gathering the info requested for specific topics and dates for NETWORK meetings. EFSA would like to start actively using TEAMS, as communication platform, to share information with the Network. EFSA will create a specific channel dedicated to AHAW network in TEAMS.

3.5. AOB – Dates for next meeting & conclusions

The meetings ended at 12.00h.

Dates for next year (2021) have to be confirmed. Proposals were 25-26 May 2021 or 1-2 June 2021.

Confirmation will be communicated via the TEAMS platform.

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Document history	
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