

Brussels, 24 April 2018
(OR. en)

7730/18

LIMITE

VETER 31

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Outcome of proceedings of the meeting of the Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers (20-21 March 2018)

1. Wildlife in the context of animal health management

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the Presidency both on the outcome of the Presidency questionnaire (WK 3212/2018 + WK 3637/18) and on the outcome of the TAIEX workshop (WK 3184/2018 + WK 3638/18) related to wildlife in the context of animal health management.

During the exchange of views, several delegations specified that the main focus should be on those animal diseases that affected domestic animals or humans and for which wildlife played an important role in the transmission. Most of these delegations also explained that one of the key questions in this context was how to best protect commercial holdings and prevent the disease from infecting them. On this point a few delegations shared their national experience as regards reducing the risks in certain areas, e.g. through management of the size of holdings there. A few delegations also referred to the impact of animal diseases on biodiversity, which had to be looked at.

Overall delegations agreed that good coordination among the various authorities having to deal with wildlife was essential. While some delegations commented that, given the existing differences amongst Member States, additional measures in the existing veterinary programmes were not necessary, other delegations considered additional harmonisation at EU level desirable and were interested to hear any suggestions from the Commission on that point.

Delegations stated in addition that training courses, especially those under the Commission-run 'Better Training for Safer Food' (BTSF) programme, were a good way to raise awareness amongst the various stakeholders dealing with wildlife. However, BTSF training courses delivered to hunters were judged sometimes to be too technical and not always sufficiently focused on animal health issues and not sufficiently diversified in terms of the language in which they were offered.

Eventually, many delegations stressed the importance of, and the need for, additional research activities in relation to wildlife, which should be adequately prioritised (e.g. regarding the evaluation of density of wild populations, disease dynamics in wild populations, biosecurity measures).

The Commission representative recalled some of the successes achieved in past years in the fight against certain diseases (e.g. rabies) and warned that the distinction between wild and commercial farms was not always sufficient given the existence of small and backyard farms in many Member States. He also insisted on the particular role of hunters in the fight against animal diseases involving wildlife.

2. African swine fever (ASF) - scientific research

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the Commission representative, the EFSA representative and some delegations on the ASF-related research programmes currently ongoing and planned, at both national and EU levels (WK 3640/18 + WK 3643/18).

Delegations generally welcomed the information provided and considered it useful to receive an overview of all research activities on ongoing and planned ASF research at both EU and national levels. They furthermore believed that increased cooperation in this area would be helpful and that EU funding was important.

While indicating that the eradication of ASF should be the objective, many of these delegations acknowledged that it would take some time and judged it necessary meanwhile to continue research work (e.g. on density of wild boar populations, disposal of wild boar carcasses, behaviour of wild boars, persistence of ASF virus in wild boars, interface with bloodsucking insects). Although they generally found it difficult to identify precisely the main priorities for research, they often quoted the development of a vaccine as being crucial.

The Commission representative explained that EFSA research activities were distinct from those carried out in the context of the research framework programme and that ERANET could be the right place for the coordination of research activities and funding.

The Presidency invited delegations to provide more detailed information in writing with a view to preparing for a new discussion at the next CVO Working Party meeting.

3. World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

a) Outcome of the OIE Council meeting

The German delegation presented the main outcomes of the last meeting of the OIE Council, which focused in particular on the review of the programme of the forthcoming OIE general session and discussed also the state of play of ongoing projects (WAHIS+, observatory). She also recalled that the second international conference on AMR would take place from 29 to 31 October 2018.

The Commission representative thanked delegations for their cooperation in preparing the coordinated reply to the OIE questionnaire on the technical item. He additionally informed delegations of the Commission's readiness to fund certain OIE activities (e.g. WAHIS+, capacity building in OIE member countries) and recalled that it was essential for the OIE to have an adequate budget.

b) Elections of OIE Specialist Commissions

The Working Party was informed about the availability, on the OIE delegates' portal, of the list of candidates for the forthcoming OIE elections. It showed that several Member States had presented and/or supported candidates for all 4 specialist OIE Commissions. Delegations confirmed their intention to discuss and agree on the list of candidates from the EU Member States to be supported in these elections and the Presidency confirmed that the discussion of this issue was planned for the forthcoming CVO Working Party meeting in Sofia. With a view to this discussion, Member States that had presented more than one candidate for a given specialist OIE Commission were invited to specify the name of their preferred candidate.

The Commission representatives informed delegations of their intention to approach several OIE member countries in other regions with a view to securing support for the agreed 'EU candidates'.

c) Exchange of views with representatives from Iceland, Norway and Switzerland

Only the Swiss and Norwegian delegations were present. The Norwegian delegate informed the Working Party of her country's decision to present a candidate to become a member of the OIE aquatic code commission.

4. Insects as feed

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the the Commission representatives on the current EU framework and the regulatory roadmap on the use of insects as feed and by representatives from the International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed (IPIFF) on their activities and priorities in this field (WK 3644/18, WK3646/18).

Delegations welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issue. In general they considered that before changing the current regulatory framework on the use of insects as feed it would be necessary to gain more experience and make sure that efficient and reliable tests were available with a view to controls. Many delegations furthermore judged it useful to develop clear and harmonized legislation and insisted on the need for appropriate scientific assessment prior to introducing changes. A few delegations wondered about the situation in third countries and the imports from the latter of food produced from animals fed with insects but received no precise answer to their question.

5. Report from the Commission on the impact of animal welfare international activities on the competitiveness of European livestock producers in a globalised world

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the Commission representative in relation to this report (WK 3650/18).

A few delegations intervened to welcome the report and considered it important that the Commission continue to engage actively at international level on animal welfare, in particular on animal welfare during transport. The Commission representative confirmed that enforcement of the existing EU legislation, dialogue with stakeholders and the promotion of animal welfare at international level had been identified as priorities.

6. Commission report on the implementation of Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 on the non-commercial movement of pet animals

The Working Party took note of the report. Several delegations insisted on the need to have a closer look at the issue of pet movements and referred back to the document they had presented in December 2017 (WK 14241/17). Some of these delegations, joined by others, also pointed to the need to combat illegal pet movements and made suggestions to that end while acknowledging that this was a complex issue involving criminal activities and thus requiring the involvement of many different competent authorities.

The Presidency indicated that further discussion of this issue in the Working Party would be necessary.

7. Promotion of the regionalisation concept in relation to third countries

The Commission representative informed the Working Party of the road map developed by his institution with a view to obtaining the recognition by third countries of regionalisation measures taken by the EU (WK 3651/18). He stressed that the support of Member States in this context was essential and explained that this document would be regularly updated. He also confirmed that the Potsdam Working Party would be regularly informed of its development.

Delegations generally welcomed the initiative and stated that it represented a perfect example of the added value that the EU could bring. They confirmed their readiness to actively contribute to the process. A few delegations deemed it necessary to monitor the actual implementation by third countries of their commitment to accept the EU regionalisation measures.

8. Diagnostic kits and reagents for veterinary use in the context of Regulation (EU) No 528/2012

The Presidency informed the Working Party of the developments regarding this issue since the discussion at the Working Party in January, presenting in particular the outcome of the recent discussion in the Working Party on Environment. There, it appeared that a few delegations had questioned whether it was appropriate to call on the Commission to act through changes to the Biocidal Products Regulation and had asked for further discussion.

Several delegations regretted the absence of solution so far and called again for swift action to avoid putting at risk the availability of veterinary diagnostic kits on the market. All delegations but one confirmed the position expressed in January in the Working Party which called for a quick solution, including through a change to the Biocidal Products Regulation.

The Commission representative reiterated that she could not guarantee that the current Commission would present a proposal on the matter and suggested again that Member States look instead at harmonized enforcement measures among themselves until companies could comply.

A few delegations reacted to the Commission representative's intervention by wondering whether specific legislation on diagnostic kits for veterinary use at EU level could be an option to address the problem.

The Presidency closed the discussion by noting the strong request for a rapid solution and also invited delegations to liaise closely with their colleagues responsible for environmental issues.

9. Report on bee health

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the French delegation and the Commission representative on bee health (WK 3191/2018 + ADD1 +ADD2). The French delegation presented the result of an investigation carried out into beeswax in France and launched after the discovery of health problems in bee colonies in numerous apiaries in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France. This investigation made it possible to identify a number of cases of non-compliance in the production of beeswax (e.g. traceability and hygiene problems, use of banned chemicals, fraudulent activities, adulteration), some of which might be linked to the absence of a regulatory definition of beeswax (specifying in particular its composition) in the EU. The French delegation made a number of suggestions to address the problems identified.

The Commission representative then explained the fraudulent dimension of the issue and invited other Member States to provide data on this problem with a view to possibly requesting EFSA for a risk assessment. He explained furthermore that a number of additional actions were being considered, including awareness-raising campaigns aimed at stakeholders and an EU coordinated control plan but he could not commit on a precise timeline at this stage.

A number of delegations welcomed the information provided and supported the various suggestions and actions presented.

10. AOB

a) Brazil: update on developments regarding import controls

The Working Party took note of the information provided by the Commission's representative on the latest developments regarding controls on imports from Brazil. Several delegations judged the situation to be unsatisfactory and questioned the value of commitments entered into by the Brazilian authorities. They considered that this situation called for firm measures to be taken against this country.
