



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
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Regional Support Unit for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation  
(RSU-SAARC)

# Information Bulletin

## Major Diseases Situation in South Asia (April-June 2017)

The South Asia sub-region continued to record existing highly pathogenic diseases in one or the other country. Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) continued to be reported in Pakistan during April-June 2017, as was anthrax in Bangladesh and India. There have not been any official reports of outbreaks documented during the period on which the contents of this bulletin are based on. However, Bhutan has reported FMD and Rabies during the reporting period, which has been officially notified. The other SAARC Member States have not reported any diseases during this period.

### HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)

On February 25 2017, Nepal recorded H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in a mixed backyard poultry farm located at Khalte Masina, Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City-18, Kaski district, in the Western region. Similarly, Influenza A(H5N8) outbreak was reported on Mar 01 at a layer farm in Koshi zone in the south-eastern part of the country, according to report submitted to OIE. On the basis of post-operation surveillance in the defined zones, the Government of Nepal has notified to OIE on 11/06/2017 that both these events have been resolved and Nepal is free from HPAI once again. The Government of India has also notified to OIE on 06/06/2017 that the country is free from highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (both H5N1 and H5N8). Outbreaks of this infectious viral disease of birds (H5N1 and H5N8) were reported at various epicentres in nine States and Union Territories of the country between October 2016 and February 2017. A statement issued by the Agriculture Ministry said, surveillance has been completed in Delhi, Daman, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Odisha and it showed no evidence of the presence of bird flu. Bhutan last reported an HPAI outbreak on 03/04/2015 which subsided by the end of the same month; Bangladesh have not recorded any outbreaks during 2017. No new outbreak of HPAI was reported from any other country in the region. Sri Lanka and Maldives have never recorded HPAI outbreak till date and maintain HPAI free status.

### LEPTOSPIROSIS IN HUMAN

#### Sri Lanka

During April-June period of 2017, Sri Lanka has recorded 750 human leptospirosis cases. According to the epidemiology unit, Ministry of Health, 1398 human cases have been reported during this year between January to June 2017 and the highest number of cases (264 and 378) were reported in March and June respectively.

### FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (FMD) IN SOUTH ASIA

As per the information on Global FMD Situation, published by FAO (April and May, 2017), following incidences of FMD has been reported during the period April and May, 2017 from the SAARC Countries:

#### Afghanistan

FMDV serotypes A, Asia 1 and O were detected in the 78 samples, collected during May 2017 from different provinces of the country and examined by the Central Veterinary Diagnostic and Research Laboratory (CVDRL), of Kabul Afghanistan.

#### Bhutan

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017, NCAH reported an outbreak of FMD in cattle herd of 70 animals at Peuna Kharkha, Denchukha geog, Samtse with 20 animals presenting clinical signs of FMD. Control measures including ban on the movement of animals and animal products have been implemented. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2017, 116 cattle belonging to migratory herds of Habaylakha, Layna, Tshangkap and Epji of Lokchina geog under Chukha Dzongkhag were affected by FMD. Six calves and two cows died of the disease. Laboratory confirmation or the serotype information from both these outbreaks is awaited.

#### India

The ICAR-PDFMD, Mukteswar, India reported since May 2015, the sole detection of FMDV serotype O among the clinical samples examined using FMDV antigen and/or RNA detection as also for the current month from the samples of seven cattle; five isolates positive for this serotype were also submitted to genotyping.

## Nepal

Department of Livestock Services of the country reported 23 FMD outbreaks which occurred during January - March 2017 that affected 873 animals, including buffaloes, cattle, sheep and goats, and of which 12 died of the disease. Field isolates, O/NEP/35/2016 and O/NEP/1/2017, belonging to the O/ME-SA/ind-2001d lineage were employed in the VMSD tests. As per the report in the above-referred Bulletin, both isolates obtained good matching results with vaccine strain O/TUR/5/09, while only the former field isolate obtained good matching results with O 3039. None of the field strains obtained good matching results with O Manisa.

## Pakistan

The Progressive Control of Foot and Mouth Disease Project reported 54 FMD outbreaks during the surveillance activities carried out in April 2017 in Pakistan. Similarly Foot and Mouth Disease Project UTF/PAK/139/PAK reported 30 FMD outbreaks occurring in some of the territories of the country during May 2017. FMDV A and O were the serotypes responsible for the outbreaks. Details and distribution of the outbreaks can be obtained from the above referred Bulletin.

No report of FMD outbreak is available from Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka since 2016.

## RSU Workshops and Meetings

### THE 6<sup>TH</sup> SAARC CVOS FORUM MEETING AND THE 3<sup>RD</sup> FAO/OIE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES (GF-TADS) MEETING FOR SAARC



Participants of the CVOs Forum and FAO-OIE Meeting

The 6<sup>th</sup> SAARC CVO's meeting was held in Thimphu, Bhutan back to back with the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAO-OIE Sub-Regional GF-TADs meeting from 8-10 May, 2017. These two meetings were attended by around 30 participants and co-organized by FAO, World Organization for

Animal Health (OIE), SAARC Secretariat, and the Government of Bhutan. Mr. Lyonpo Yeshe Dorji, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture & Forests, Bhutan formally inaugurated the joint meetings and Dr Tashi Samdup, Director General of department of livestock, Royal Government of Bhutan gave a welcome address. Dr Somsak Pipoppinyo, FAO Representative in Nepal and Bhutan, Mr MJH Javed, Director of Agriculture and Rural Development at SAARC Secretariat and Dr Hirofumi Kugita from OIE spoke on the occasion.

During the GF-TAD Meeting, Dr Katinka de Balogh, Senior Animal health Officer, FAO-RAP, OIE Representatives and RSU Team provided technical input on Transboundary Animal Disease (TAD) situation in the region. The 6<sup>th</sup> SAARC CVOs Meeting adopted key recommendations from the previous 4 meetings/workshops of RSU-SAARC, e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> Laboratory Director's Meeting, the 1<sup>st</sup> SAARC EpiNet Forum Meeting, 3<sup>rd</sup> PCP-FMD Regional Roadmap Meeting and the Cross Border Consultation Meeting among the Gangetic Plain Countries. All National Delegates agreed the time and venue for the next SAARC CVOs Meeting to be hosted by Pakistan in March/April 2018, with Maldives as an alternative option. RSU's technical contributions in coordination and regional harmonization of control strategies for priority TADs in among SAARC Member States were appreciated by the National Delegates while the options for sustainability of RSU-SAARC were briefly discussed.

### FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR VETERINARIANS JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY SAARC AGRICULTURE CENTRE (SAC), BANGLADESH AND RSU-SAARC IN BENGALURU, INDIA, 15-24 MAY 2017



Participants of the FETPV Training

A 'Field Epidemiology Training Programme for Veterinarians (FETPV)', sponsored by SAC and RSU-SAARC, was organized at ICAR-NIVEDI, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India from 15 -23 May, 2017. A total of sixteen



participants from six SAARC Member States participated in the training programme. The training programme was composed of lectures (theory component) followed by hands on practical encompassing all the major epidemiology themes such as basic epidemiology concepts & applications, principles of outbreak investigation, case definitions, epidemiological curves, animal and human health case studies under outbreak investigation, etc. RSU-SAARC delivered important lessons on laboratory diagnosis, economic analysis of disease burden, data presentation/reporting, as well as emerging disease threats at human-animal-ecosystem interface with special reference to South Asia in the training programme.

### **REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING PLATFORM DESIGN WORKSHOP, KATHMANDU, 25-27 MAY 2017**

A workshop was held on 25-28 May 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal to discuss and decide specification of the design of Hubnet web application and South Asia Disease Information System (SADIS) besides demonstration on project management tool to monitor remotely the activities to be / being undertaken for SADIS development. A few epidemiological data experts from the region along with expert resource persons from Massey University in New Zealand and RSU epidemiology experts deliberated and identified the specific data requirements, design and the contents of the data-base and the administrative control of the database. The system is under development at present and is expected to be piloted by FAO later this year.



Participants of the Design Workshop

### **WORKSHOP ON SAFE TRADE IN LIVE ANIMAL AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS, 19-22 JUNE 2017, KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

The RSU-SAARC in partnership with SAARC Secretariat, organized a four-day regional training on 'Enhancing Capacity for Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures for Safe Trade in Animal and Animal Products in South Asia' from 19-22 June, 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal with the participation of all the eight SAARC Member States.

About 35 participants of the SAARC countries including international SPS experts from Agencies, e.g., OIE, CABI, SARSO, as resource partners, participated in the programme. The major objective of the training was to enhance regional capacity among SAARC Member States for safe and enhanced trade in livestock and livestock products.

Welcoming the participants, Dr Somsak Pipoppinyo, FAO Representative in Nepal and Bhutan expressed his confidence that the workshop would enhance hands-on-skills of the participants in SPS management and contribute to gain access to high-end markets. Mr MJH Javed, Director of Agriculture and Rural Development at SAARC Secretariat, stressed the need for adopting SAARC standards developed by the South Asia Regional Standards Organization (SARSO), which, he said, is essential to develop regional capacity and induce meaningful change in the coming years in terms of successful implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Speaking as Chair, Dr Vijay Chandra Jha, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Livestock Services of the Government of Nepal, observed that member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are obliged to adhere to the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), ensuring that such measures are adapted to the sanitary or phytosanitary characteristics of the area where the product originated from or destined to.

Highlighting the objectives and expected outcomes of the training, Dr Santanu Bandyopadhyay, FAO Regional Support Unit (RSU) Coordinator, reiterated that the participants will have an opportunity for an analytical overview of the harmonization principles, equivalence, protection, transparency and SPS measures under the SPS agreement. At the end of the training programme, a doable action plan for strengthening SPS capacity in the region was developed.



Participants of the SPS Training Workshop

## The ADB-funded Project in RSU-SAARC is concluding

The current ADB-JFPR funded project, "Regional Capacity Development for Regional Cooperation on Food Security through Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases in South Asia (GCP/RAS/294/ASB)", implemented by FAO's Regional Support Unit for SAARC (RSU-SAARC), will be concluded on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2017. Following this, the RSU-SAARC will undergo a transition from FAO-facilitated RSU to self-sustained SAARC-RSU with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2017. At this juncture, it will not be out of place to review the RSU and its relevance for South Asia ever since the establishment of this Unit in 2010.

In partnership with the SAARC Secretariat since 2010 and with around US\$ 6 million funding support from the European Union (EU) (2010-2014) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2015-2017), FAO and SAARC created a Regional Support Unit (RSU) and a Regional Epidemiology Centre (REC) and also designated 3 Regional Diagnostic Laboratories (RDLs) on PPR, FMD and HPAI in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan respectively. Since its establishment, RSU is mandated to build national and regional epidemiology and laboratory capacities through REC and RDLs. This is achieved by harmonizing and coordinating approaches, protocols to prevent, control, and eradicate TADs and Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs) in eight SAARC Member States (MSs): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. As was the agreement from the very beginning, the time has now come for RSU to be fully institutionalized within SAARC mechanism. While the SAARC Secretariat in consultation with the constituent MSs is fully engaged in the mechanism of institutionalizing RSU, it is the most appropriate time to reflect briefly on what could have been possible to accomplish since its inception.

Over the past eight years, many activities and specific programmes or projects were implemented by FAO and the SAARC Secretariat, together with the support and participation of the MSs, most of which have been shared with the readers through the publication of 42 volumes of this Bulletin. Among the generic areas of achievements, the following can be counted as the major impact of RSU over the years of its existence since 2010. In short, the RSU-SAARC in partnership with the MSs have helped considerably in the following broad areas of TADs management in South Asia:

- Harmonization in regional disease control strategies and alignment with global strategies.

- Capacity building in veterinary epidemiology, laboratory diagnosis, disease risk assessment
- Encouraging cross-border dialogue among MSs for mutual confidence building in disease management and sharing of epidemiological information
- Bringing the latest knowledge of disease management and technology for the benefits of the MSs through training and workshops
- Stake-holders such as small livestock farmers, government policy makers, livestock industry partners, civil society agencies and the veterinary and public health services benefitted from reduced impact of priority TAD through strategic interventions
- Improved food and nutritional security and improved livelihood opportunities in the region

Control of TADs is not just a one-time intervention but is a continuous process. While the milestones set to be achieved for PPR global control is 2030 and FMD disease freedom by 2025, the threat due to HPAI is beyond any perceivable time-frame at the moment. The world including South Asia are continuously facing threats from existing and newly emerging diseases at the animal human interface. The situation is also becoming somewhat precarious due to complicities arising out of extensive livestock farming, increasing proximity of livestock to wild-life and human population, increasing demand for food as well as perceptible changes in the climate and environment. The close cultural and geographical proximities of South Asian Countries and traditional informal trade and movement of livestock, oblivious of threat of disease transmission, would always require a regional harmonized approach to manage these priority existing diseases as well as any newly emerging diseases in the future. The RSU of and for SAARC is an important instrument to mitigate and overcome the above threats on a regional basis through a spirit of cooperation. It is a unique non-political institution totally dedicated towards the societal benefit in terms of food security, livelihood security and public health security for the entire region. Therefore sustaining the RSU for the SAARC MSs is an undeniable necessity for the regional prosperity and cooperation in general and to sustain the efforts particularly for meeting the milestones set for the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

While this transition from FAO-facilitated RSU to self-sustained SAARC-RSU takes effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2017, the current Technical and the Operation teams of RSU would like to bid adieu to all the readers, contributors and patrons of this Bulletin. With the strong intent of the MSs led by the SAARC Secretariat, which is already evident, this Bulletin will be back soon under a new team and with a new look.



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