

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE CONTROL OF
FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

REPORT

of the

Seventy-first Session of the Executive Committee

FAO HQs, Rome

24 and 25 January 2005

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INTRODUCTION

The Executive Committee of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EUFMD) held its Seventy-first Session in FAO HQs, Rome on 24 and 25 January 2005.

Members of the Executive Committee present were: Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Germany (Chair); Dr Tibor Bálint, Hungary; Dr Sloboden Cokrevski, The FYR of Macedonia, Dr Romano Marabelli, Italy; Dr Nihat Pakdil, Turkey; Dr Vasilios Stylos, Greece and Dr Preben Willeberg, Denmark.

Present as observers were: Dr Kris De Clercq (Belgium), Chairman of the Research Group; Dr Alejandro Schudel, Head, Scientific Department of the OIE, Paris; Prof. Dr Nikola Belev, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe; Dr Alf-Eckbert Füssel, DG-SANCO; Dr David Paton, WRL. FAO was represented by Dr Joseph Domenech, Chief of the Animal Health Service, FAO. Additional observers present were: Dr Peter De Leeuw, CVO, the Netherlands and Dr Carsten Pötzsch, EUFMD Consultant, Germany.

The Secretariat was represented by Dr Keith Sumption (Secretary), Dr Dónal Sammin, (Associate Professional Officer) and Ms Egiziana Fragiotta (Administrative Clerk).

The meeting was chaired by Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Chair of the Executive Committee. She opened the meeting by wishing all a successful year and by welcoming everybody to Rome. In particular she welcomed Dr Carsten Pötzsch, the consultant hired to undertake a number of missions to the Caucasus region and who had been invited to present his report on his first mission on vaccination and surveillance in the region and Dr Peter de Leeuw who had also been invited to present the recommendations made at the Conference on “Material and Immaterial Costs of Animal Disease Control” held in Brussels in December 2004. She also stressed the importance of this session in that it would be the last one before the General Session in April it was therefore the final opportunity to prepare proposals/recommendations for the forthcoming session.

The floor was given to Dr Joseph Domenech, who welcomed those present to FAO, Rome on behalf of the Director General of FAO and Ms Louise Fresco, the Assistant Director General of the Agriculture Department. He reiterated the importance of this session and wished all a successful meeting.

Item 1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted as proposed (**Appendix 1**). The Items 3, 4 and 5, concerning strategy, funding and work programme were proposed for discussion on the second day.

Item 2. Update since the 70th Session

Report of the Tripartite for the Balkans

Dr Keith Sumption presented the recommendations of the FAO/OIE/EC Tripartite meeting held in Sofia in November 2004, on control of FMD and other exotic diseases in the Balkan region (**Appendix 2**). The meeting had been very timely for discussion of the epidemiological situation as it occurred a week after a mission to the region had been undertaken to investigate the first reported outbreaks of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) in Thrace region.

Although PPR was not the first concern of the EUFMD Commission, the extension of PPR from Anatolia into Thrace region should be taken seriously as an indicator of weakness in animal movement control that might be followed by other infections including FMD.

He emphasised the importance of the agreements reached including the reporting without delay of “list A” diseases occurring or recurring in Thrace region, and for decisions reached at the meeting.

The Executive Committee strongly supported the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Tripartite meeting. Following discussion, the following conclusions and recommendations were reached:

Concerning PPR:

- The General Directorate of Protection and Control, Government of Turkey, is urged to complete the emergency management plan for PPR and to communicate the plan to neighbouring countries and the international organisations.
- The proposed vaccination campaign to control PPR in Thrace region should be accompanied by permanent marking of vaccinated animals.
- The development of a marker vaccine for PPR is urgently needed to enable a DIVA strategy in endemically affected countries and in at risk areas.

On disease reporting:

- In addition to the reporting of confirmed cases to the OIE and neighbouring countries without delay, an “alarm system” of notifications for CVOs of neighbouring countries is encouraged.

On surveillance in Thrace region in 2005:

- A revised sero-surveillance plan for Thrace region should be developed that takes into consideration the different needs of surveillance for FMD, PPR and bluetongue (BT) for early detection of infection throughout the risk periods.
- The sero-surveillance draft plan (**Appendix 3**) developed by the EUFMD Commission with inputs from the Research Group and from experts from the SAP Institute, Ankara, should be considered a potential basis for action in 2005. The feasibility of the plan, and the requirements of the PPR and BT surveillance, should be reviewed. Financial support required, if any, should be identified.

Report of Turkey - FMD and other major infectious animal diseases

Dr Pakdil presented the report (**Appendix 4**). He indicated that the GDPC will implement the recommendations of the TPT meeting held in Sofia, and that the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture (MARA) would meet on 25 and 26 January to develop the emergency management plan for PPR in Thrace region. He included in his report a commitment to support the collaborative development of surveillance actions in eastern Anatolia.

In discussion, the Secretary thanked the representative of Turkey for the letter received indicating full support for implementation of the recommendations of the Sofia meeting. He suggested that the paper provided may be further revised to clarify possible inaccuracies and indicated that he would contact Dr Tufan on the specific points.

It was also agreed that in addition to FMD distribution maps, similar maps of PPR, BT and sheep and goat pox (SGP) distribution will be provided in future reports.

Report on vaccination and surveillance for FMD in the South Caucasus

Dr Carsten Pötsch presented a report on his first mission to the south Caucasus countries conducted in October-November 2004 (**Appendix 5**).

He presented his findings on the use of the vaccine provided to the countries by FAO with EC funding. Vaccine provision was sufficient for 93-100% of large ruminants in the vaccination zone to receive one cattle dose. Potential gaps in vaccination coverage had been identified and steps taken to reduce the problem, including the use of reserve quantities of vaccine held on behalf of FAO at FGI-ARRIAH. However, several significant problems were noted that required to be addressed by the countries and which might require a longer term package of support measures.

He gave his findings on the reporting system, the uncertainties in the assessment of FMD risk and on the development of sero-surveillance plans to identify possible circulation of virus in risk areas. Development and implementation of sero-surveillance at national level should be strongly encouraged, and one way to ensure this would be to “institutionalise surveillance” through support to each country to undertake the action under external support which is continued for sufficient time to enable the benefit to be established and the most cost-effective programme put into place.

The Executive Committee indicated their appreciation of the work undertaken by Dr Pöttsch and approved the outline plans for his second mission in spring 2005.

Conclusions

- The report of the first mission would provide an important basis for development of a long-term project as recommended by the 70th Session and by the OIE meeting in May 2004.
- The report of extensive internal migration of animals suggests that a significant shift in husbandry practices has occurred over 5 years that has serious consequences for design of control programmes. The impact of these movements required to be further considered for the success of buffer zone vaccination.
- An external quality assurance scheme is required to provide confidence in the technical capacity of the national laboratories to undertake sero-surveillance.

Recommendations

- The long-term objectives, including regionalisation of infection, should be identified and agreed with each country.
- The continuous provision of technical coordinator for surveillance and control EUFMD Commission should support the freedom from FMD disease status identification of needs.
- Further investigation of animal marketing and movements in the border regions was strongly encouraged.
- The Armenian authorities should provide an explanation as to the reason that only 30,000 of the 50,000 doses of vaccine provided by FAO/EC had been supplied to area of Nagorny-Karabakh.
- The FAO workshop in Tbilisi in December had been a defining moment in development of regional veterinary service cooperation and the momentum gained in the last period of 2004 should be continued.
- There is considerable insecurity in the regional political and animal health situation, and EUFMD/OIE/EC actions to stabilise the FMD situation should be strongly supported.
- A steering committee meeting for FMD control in the Caucasus should be organised between the EUFMD and OIE General Sessions (in early May 2005).

Report on the EUFMD Action to eastern Anatolia to support development of FMD investigation guidelines

The action had taken place in September 2004 with funding from the EUFMD Commission as agreed at the 70th Session. The action had been a very valuable learning experience for all concerned, and had highlighted aspects of the epidemiology and control of FMD in eastern Turkey that required to be followed up by the GDPC.

Following discussion, it was agreed:

- The exercise had provided a very significant insight into FMD epidemiology in Erzurum area, and by extension, other parts with similar husbandry practises.
- The exercise indicated the complexity of FMD in regions where multiple serotypes are circulating.
- FMD investigation procedures require further development and testing, before consideration for general application in FMD investigation.
- Experience in the investigation of FMD outbreaks in field situations should be encouraged for state veterinary officers from countries free of FMD, and the EUFMD Commission should identify options to assist State Veterinary Services (SVS) to gain field experience of FMD.
- The recommendations from the mission require to be further considered, being highly relevant to development, monitoring and implementation of effective FMD control in Anatolia.

Iran Surveillance Project

The Secretary reported that the French Government had made arrangements for the secondment of a veterinary officer, Dr Francis Geiger, to work under FAO supervision in Iran for a period of 3 years from January 2005. Dr Geiger would be financially supported by France, with the expectation that the financial resources for surveillance activities would be through the EUFMD Commission, under the envelope of funding requested from DG-SANCO by the EUFMD Commission in 2003.

The commitment of the officer to the project was taken following the positive signals received from DG-SANCO in September 2004. However, since a letter indicating the funding agreement had not been received from DG-SANCO before the end of 2004, it would now be necessary to renew or extend the Implementing Agreement between EUFMD/FAO and EC relating to EUFMD activities, for the period 2005-2008 to enable the funding to be operated under this new legal basis.

Dr Füssel indicated that he was positive that the internal procedures required to approve the Implementing Agreement with FAO, including financing of measures in third countries to safeguard European countries, could be resolved since there was general agreement of the importance of the actions and process to address FMD threats through the agreement with FAO. In discussion it was agreed that further delays to implementation of the Iran project were not acceptable, and that there is urgency in the need to conclude negotiations on the new Agreement through which actions are supported.

It was recommended that the matter be taken up at the highest level in DG-AGRI by the President and Dr Willeberg agreed to do this on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Report of the Research Group Session held in Crete

Dr Kris De Clercq presented an overview of progress (**Appendix 6**) of the group to meet the targets agreed between the group and the Executive in December 2003.

He then presented a report of the Closed and Open Sessions of the Standing Technical Committee held in Chania, Crete, in October 2004. The principal conclusions and recommendations are given in **Appendix 7 and action list in Appendix 8**. On behalf of the Committee he thanked Dr Stylas and the Veterinary Services of Greece for hosting the Session, which was famous for the excellent atmosphere and hospitality. The Session had a very full programme extending from early morning to late at night for 5 days, covering 10 major items of concern.

The first day of discussions was restricted to the elected members and invited observers.

He asked the Executive to note:

- The **adoption of a paper on biosecurity standards for FMD laboratories undertaking serology** for FMDV infection, which should greatly facilitate countries in developing decentralized facilities to achieve high throughput serology for post-outbreak surveillance.
- The position paper of the Group on a European diagnostic reagent bank, which is considered necessary to safeguard the capacity to undertake high throughput sero-surveillance.
- The **progress of the working groups relating to problems with implementing DIVA strategies**. This includes the comparative evaluation of NSP tests, and the working group on post-vaccination surveillance. The former group will complete their work by April in time for the EUFMD General Session. The latter group, following discussion at the Chania Session, developed a position paper for the Technical Committee which was forwarded by the Secretary of the EUFMD to the OIE in December (**Appendix 9**) "*Considerations of the Standing Technical Committee of the EUFMD Commission*". The timetable of Executive Sessions did not allow this position paper to be first reviewed by the full Executive, but an expedited submission was made because of the urgency to submit in advance of the January meetings of the OIE Commissions.
- That the Zimbabwe mission had provided **confidence in the use of NSP tests** for detection of animals exposed to SAT viruses, with sensitivity estimates of NSPE for detection of FMDV carriers (75-90%) which were very similar to those obtained with experimental sera during the NSPE workshop in Brescia in May 2004.
- That the group had developed draft guidelines for **monitoring performance of FMD vaccines and vaccination in the field, as requested by the 69th Session**.

The Report of the Session ran to nearly 500 pages, and was now available on the website. The Session had been attended by a record number of observers from across the world and could be considered of global significance.

He asked the Executive to note the recommendations of the Open Session; a response was required to a number of these.

The Item on achieving compliance with the sero-surveillance requirements of the EC Directive was especially important.

The Executive should be aware that:

- Uncertainty remains over: (i) the level of certainty with which freedom from infection must be demonstrated; (ii) how to interpret results from herd-based tests when herds comprise small numbers of animals and (iii) details of how to resolve test specificity problems by retesting and resampling.
- Each country is recommended to include in their Laboratory Contingency Plans, decision trees to indicate the follow-up tests to be conducted and each should make quantitative estimates of follow-up testing.

The Executive should be aware that EUFMD funding had supported the WRL to implement the FAO standardization exercise which had again provided very useful service and information.

- An overall, high level of consistency in results between laboratories for both reference sera and proficiency panel using both NSP and SP tests.
- An annual round of inter-laboratory proficiency testing is essential for quality accreditation, which should be the core activity of future Phase exercises.
- An improved proficiency panel is needed for NSPE.

The final item of the Open Session concerned the maintenance and development of European expertise relating to control of FMD; it was recommended that the role of the EUFMD Research

Group be further considered and developed to help meet the needs of the European member states for a range of competences in their national FMD expert groups.

Prof. Willeberg explained how he had been given the role of liaison with the Research Group (RG) and considered that the Session was a highly important event, and probably the most significant global consultation on FMD research progress to be made on a regular basis. He applauded the RG for the hard work undertaken in preparation for the Session and during the long days. He presented a summary of a consultation with participants representing the CVOs of several European countries. These findings had been presented as feedback to the Session, and he considered several points needed to be addressed in the selection of the future members, in the organisation of the future Sessions and in the setting of priorities for action.

The Chairperson thanked the Group for their excellent report. The Report of the Session of the Standing Technical Committee was endorsed by the Committee.

They recommended that the Secretary and Chairman take into consideration the feedback of the CVO group in making the arrangements for the next Session.

Risk situation – Report of the WRL

Dr David Paton presented the report of the WRL for the period following the 70th Session (**Appendix 10**). In 2004 FMD was reported from 48 countries.

There was no reported occurrence of FMD in officially free countries which do not practice vaccination, and restoration of status in parts of South America. In January 2005, the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases has decided to restore the status of FMD free zone with vaccination to the zone of **Argentina** situated north of the 42° parallel with effect from 19 January 2005 and to restore the status of FMD free country with vaccination to **Paraguay** with effect from the same date.

However, FMD outbreaks were reported in South Africa in the surveillance zone around the free zone (export zone), and also in parts of the world where circulation was not recently reported, in Russia, Mongolia, Brazil, Peru and Colombia.

Isolates were received by the WRL from 23 countries in 2004, of which 21 were from Asia (4 countries in the Middle East, 2 in southern Asia and 4 in South East Asia) and Africa (11 sub-Saharan countries), and 2 from Europe (one country, SVD virus confirmed). The number of countries is below the 30 year average, and this is considered to reflect an increased difficulty to submit samples mainly as a result of transportation issues. There were as usual no virus isolates or samples received from South America. The increasing collaboration with the Botswana Vaccine Institute has greatly assisted in characterisation of southern African isolates, but the very limited number of submissions from the Middle East is problematic.

The rate of characterisation has increased, with 182 isolates sequenced (VP1), 54 antigenically characterized by ELISA and 57 antigenically characterised by virus neutralisation. The typing of virus isolates at WRL is partly supported by contract with the EUFMD Commission. A summary of findings was provided, in the form of a paper prepared for the OIE SCAD meeting of early January 2005.

It is of significance that:

- Type Asia-1 was reported in Iran, which is a risk for the animal health status of Turkey and Europe;

- Type C has “re-emerged” with official reports from Brazil and Kenya, and suspected outbreaks in Pakistan and Ethiopia¹;
- There has been an eastward movement of type A into Vietnam, reported for the first time.

Regarding the European antigen and vaccine banks, the recommendations remain unchanged from that recorded in 2003 in the Report of the Session of the EUFMD Research Group².

Of most concern is the variability in A and SAT types, which requires constant monitoring. Detailed investigation is warranted to better understand the circumstances under which variant type A emerge in Iran and other Near East countries.

He brought to attention that constraints on sample submission increased with each year; adding to the issues affecting exchange of viruses, which include intellectual property (IP) issues. He brought up the issue that WRL function is also affected by the lack of isolates being received from the Regional Reference Laboratories. This issue is of major importance and was pleased to report that the WRL, together with OIE and the FAO/EUFMD Secretariat had been working together to identify solutions.

One mechanism is that of the coordination action on FMD and CSF which was launched in January 2005, in which the OIE and FAO/EUFMD are partners in the Steering Committee. This should complement the work of the OIE ad hoc group on antigen and vaccine banks, where the EUFMD Secretary had acted as rapporteur and in which both he and Dr De Clercq had participated. He summarized the Terms of Reference of this ad hoc group; these include reaching agreement on information to be shared between RRL laboratories.

Discussion

The issue of level of protection of O Manisa coverage against prevailing O types in South America was raised. Dr Paton indicated that the results available suggested it would be prudent to have adequate access to stocks of O BFS or O Campus.

Dr Domenech indicated how FAO projects are supporting FMD surveillance. Of note for the Commission are the projects of FAO in 5 countries in Central Asia which began in 2004, and in West Africa (regional FAO TC project). The lead technical officers are based in Rome and work closely with the EUFMD Secretariat.

Dr Bálint considered that national and international needs for information exchange for risk assessment of FMD should over-ride the IP considerations of individuals. This point should be taken up by the international organizations in developing standards for information exchange.

The Secretary brought to attention the recommendation from the Session of the Research Group that the global function of the WRL function be discussed at the EUFMD General Session. Following this, Dr Paton asked for the viewpoint of the OIE on issue of world reference laboratories.

In response, Dr Schudel mentioned the difficulty that selection of a WRL would pose for the OIE, requiring the agreement of the 167 member countries. The OIE recognized that FMD

¹ Effort has been made by the WRL and EUFMD Commission to obtain samples for typing at the WRL. FAO support (through the EUFMD Commission) to cover transportation costs were made available to support delivery from Kenya. Further information on the type C virus isolated from the outbreaks in Brazil was reported by PAHO at the Crete Session of the EUFMD Research Group.

² Report of the Session of the Research Group of the Standing Technical Committee of the EUFMD Commission, held at Gerzensee, Berne, 16-19 September 2003. FAO, pp 9-10.

surveillance information coverage at global level is not sufficient; modalities to improve this were being developed, including the twinning approach being taken to support development of the PakChong laboratory in Thailand. The need for a RRL for East Asia is recognized and in this context he mentioned the possibility that the LanZhou Laboratory in PR China might also become a future regional facility.

Dr Füssel strongly supported the argument that for the foreseeable future it will be necessary for WRL to have access to virus isolates from risk areas, to ensure timely testing and relevant antigenic matching is undertaken to inform the managers of the antigen banks held in Europe.

Dr Domenech supported this and gave the FAO viewpoint that there is a clear need for a specific WRL, not just for the needs of today but to safeguard reference materials for all subsequent test development and analysis.

Dr Schudel suggested that the network on AI be considered a potential model for coordination between reference laboratories. One laboratory could provide the secretariat, which might provide a model system to be considered for FMD. OIE is working to develop capability in the regional laboratories, and he considered that it is not the time to select one laboratory as pre-eminent.

Dr Schwabenbauer summarized arguments; it was clear that each region has to find suitable vaccine for their region and that by themselves, excellent laboratories within a region may not provide the required global information to meet our needs. There must be confidence in information quality and timeliness. She suggested the AI model be further explored as a possible model for FMD.

The suggestion was agreed by the Executive and supported by Dr Paton. Dr de Leeuw cautioned that it is good science to compare results, and exchange of material and test results should be ensured in any proposed system. He was concerned that competition between RRL for funding should be avoided.

Dr Domenech indicated that FAO supported the development of network of laboratories, with particular laboratories having functions including coordination and harmonisation. The trend towards joint FAO and OIE recognition of laboratories was likely to continue.

Dr Füssel indicated that EC could play a role in improving submission. Trade arguments could assist for submission from regions where export to EC is permitted. He indicated that DG-SANCO fully supported efforts to ensure that cross-checking of antigenic matching, and characterisation tests occurred in Europe, as the information was highly important for risk management.

The Executive Committee agreed that the Secretary continue to work closely with the WRL and OIE on the above issues, and that the support given by the Commission to the WRL for virus characterisation and other service functions should be reviewed. They encouraged specific proposals to address constraints to be identified and costed. The OIE plan to take forward discussions on the coordination of FMD reference laboratories by means of a meeting in April 2005 of their ad hoc group on FMD antigen and vaccine banks. Members of the EUFMD research group and of the Coordination Action on FMD/CSF will also be present. Position papers from this meeting will go to the Biological Standards Committee meeting at OIE in September 2005, with a view to ratification by member states in the OIE General Assembly of May 2006.

Item 3. Strategy paper – EUFMD over the next 4 years

The Secretary introduced the paper on the draft Strategic Plan for the Commission for the period 2005-8 (**Appendix 11**). This plan had been developed after the 70th Session, and revised following discussion on the first draft with members of the Executive at a meeting during the Avila Conference in September 2004. The Plan proposes a Vision for the Commission's activities which emphasizes continual freedom of the FMD free countries of Europe, progressive reduction of incidence, distribution and risk of FMD in Turkey, and enhanced European expertise in each member state. In presenting the Strategy, he recognized that actions of the Commission can only succeed in a supportive environment of national and international measures working towards similar objectives. The Strategy for the Commission would be to focus on four key themes, of FMD control projects, FMD risk assessment through observation of epidemiological trends, on coordination of technical studies required to address constraints, and on capacity building to raise expertise across Europe. In developing the strategy, the needs of beneficiary countries across the width of Europe needs to be recognized by a balance in the actions. Surveillance for risk, and raising expertise should be considered to benefit members which are located at long distance from south-eastern Europe.

The plan envisaged the strategy being translated into activities under each of the above themes. A fifth theme might be information dissemination; although this could also be considered integral to each of four themes, there might be merit in having specific inputs to guarantee activities and outputs across the main four themes.

He suggested that campaign objectives needed to be set for FMD control in Europe, against which progress could be measured. The proposed campaign objectives could not be guaranteed by the project activities, rather they should be considered higher level objectives to which the actions would contribute, assuming that concerted actions take place in the epidemiological region that are supportive. The role of the Commission would be to propose, implement or support activities that lead to defined outputs, and the management role would be to monitor the process to ensure the outputs were delivered, taking into consideration the relevance of these outputs in relation to those of other projects at national or international level. He suggested that in the other themes, higher level objectives (targets) needed to be identified, and thereafter activities and outputs in specific project documents.

The Financial Strategy was outlined. It would be necessary to correct the baseline funding through reversing the effect of the dollar depreciation, and to complete renegotiation with the EC to enable the basis for support of jointly agreed actions to be continued to 2008. In addition, support for at least one APO position was vital, and it would be necessary to make greater use of in-house and out-sourced personnel to deliver projects identified. Further, a broader base for funding of activities might be achieved.

The Executive Committee discussed elements of the plan and made suggestions for improvements. It was recommended that:

- Supporting information should be strengthened, with specific reference
 - o to the current political context of the non-EU member states and expected change in the period
 - o the technical and other problems to be addressed
 - o the issue of capacity building required in European countries which are not-EU members, or which border to EU and/or EUFMD member countries;
- Specific project documents be developed, under each of the Themes.
- Plans should be further developed at least to Concept Notes stage for the 36th General Session.

Item 4. EC funding – revision of the EC/EUFMD Implementing Agreement

The Secretary explained to the Committee how the re-negotiation of the Implementing Agreement between EC and FAO on the permanent actions to be carried out by the EUFMD Commission, utilised the “Framework Agreement” between the United Nations agencies and the European Commission developed in 2003. He reminded the Executive of the flexible structure of the agreement in place between 2001-4, which enabled rapid action to be implemented once decisions on how to proceed were agreed between the EUFMD Commission and DG-SANCO. Further, the agreement could be revised with agreement of both parties, as occurred in 2003 to include actions to support FMD control in the Caucasus. The requirement to have donor agreement on a case by case basis for expenditure is an unusual feature, which has led to some problems in implementing recommendations of the Executive. To reduce delays in implementation a period of 30 days for response from DG-SANCO was specified in the first agreement. He provided the Executive with two draft components of the Implementing Agreement (EC-UN Agreement document, and Annex 1, Description of the Action).

In the first document, the Special Conditions for the agreement were proposed, indicating that the project would be implemented by FAO in agreement with the responsible services of the EC. To this end EUFMD-FAO shall ensure that each expenditure and commitment with a third party relating to this Project is approved by the Commission in accordance with the procedure provided. The reports of the Sessions of EUFMD and its Executive Committee will be considered as official technical reports for the project.

The description of the project activities followed form of the EUFMD strategic plan, as discussed at Avila and subsequently endorsed under Item 3. The main project activities were identified under five headings:

Category 1: Emergency actions

Category 2: Routine activities carried out to assist risk assessment of FMD entry and assessment of European vaccine bank suitability

Category 3: Coordination of technical actions and studies on FMD control at regional level and to address technical constraints to policy implementation

Category 4: Capacity building for prevention and control

Category 5: Activities, which are not listed above, to be carried out under the Project subject to prior agreement of the Executive Committee of EUFMD and the Contracting Authority. For the years 2005 –2008 the special measures to be taken are as follows:

- 5.1. A programme for the control of FMD in Turkish Thrace, including but not limited to the supply of vaccine, vaccination in certain provinces of Thrace, the organisation and implementation of epidemiological investigations, laboratory studies, which may extent to Anatolia, in support of surveillance objectives. In exceptional circumstances, this control programme may be extended to major infectious disease threats where necessitated by the situation.
- 5.2. Continuous clinical, serological and vector surveillance in the Thrace regions of Bulgaria and Greece for FMD, sheep pox, bluetongue, and pest of small ruminants.
- 5.3. A programme for the control of foot-and-mouth disease in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, including supply of vaccine, vaccination in certain parts of their territories, the organisation and implementation of epidemiological investigations, laboratory studies and capacity building in support of surveillance objectives.
- 5.5. A programme for the protection of the borders of Turkey against entry of exotic FMD from neighbouring countries, including actions to improve surveillance for exotic FMDV strain circulation in the Republic of Iran.

Dr Füssel indicated that it was the proposal of DG-SANCO that project activities relating to FMD control in Anatolian region of Turkey were removed as a separate item, and placed under Section 5.1, relating to FMD surveillance in Thrace region. This modification was made to avoid potential overlap with activities funded by other EC Directorates relating to animal disease control in Anatolia. However, considering that the latter may not be implemented until 2006 or later, the Implementing Agreement was seen as a valuable mechanism for ensuring FMD actions could proceed according to the risk situation.

The Executive Committee recommended:

- That FAO and DG-SANCO proceed, with some urgency, to conclude the agreement based on the documents presented.
- That the Chairperson seek assurance from the Commissioner for Agriculture that the agreement will be rapidly concluded in order to enable actions to be implemented without further delay.

Item 5. Work programme for the biennium 2005-2006

The Secretary outlined the work programme for 2005 and indications of likely timetable of events in 2006. These activities were grouped into:

- Sessions of the Executive Committee, General Session and Research Group (6 meetings in the period).
- FMD surveillance and control projects, with estimated start dates assuming that the EC-FAO Implementing Agreement is rapidly concluded.
- FMD surveillance and control projects to be implemented under FAO (TCP) funding, including the regional projects in Thrace region on active surveillance for FMD, PPR, BT and SGP, and the Regional project in the Caucasus.
- Activities aimed at improving virus submission to the WRL from the Horn of Africa (Sudan, Kenya).
- Activities under Letter of Agreement, including collection of sera from vaccinated and exposed pigs in Hong Kong.
- Activities in support of international standards development (OIE ad hoc groups), and FMD risk analysis to Europe (EFSA working group).
- Information gathering and reporting.

He expected that other activities would be implemented in the period following agreement on specific actions under the new implementing agreement.

The Coordination Action, funded by DG-Research, would also be implemented in this period following the start of this project on 1st January.

The Executive approved the proposed timetable for activities of the Secretariat.

Item 6. Financial statement for 2004 and budget of the Commission for the biennium 2006-7

The Secretary presented the financial report for the three Trust Funds operated by the Commission (**Appendix 12**). Regarding MTF/INT/011/MUL, he drew attention to the balance of US\$ 178,384 at 31/12/04. The expenditure had been kept in line with the budget, with only a minimal overspend against the annual contributions agreed in 2003 despite very significant depreciation of the dollar. The increase in the balance over the 12 months relates to the payment of several years of arrears by one country. However, the cost base had risen dramatically as a result of the dollar depreciation, and proposed contracts for surveillance and other activities including workshops had to be curtailed during 2004 or funded from other resources. This in effect reduced the ability of the Commission to act independently of other support, when decided by the situation and supported by the Executive.

Regarding the budget for the Trust Fund supported by EC (DG-SANCO), MTF/INT/003/EEC, a deficit of US\$4,168 was recorded in the statement. The Secretary reported that in fact a small positive balance of circa US\$ 5,000, and exact position would be corrected in the budget revision in January 2005. The use of the positive balance would be discussed with the Chairperson and DG-SANCO. The anomaly in the accounts arose because funds had been committed for purchase of some items, but the purchases were not made because priority was given to other items, in particular to purchase vaccine for the Caucasus.

Regarding the budget of the Commission for the next biennium, he drew attention to the need to set a budget that would be put before the Commission members for ratification at the 36th Session.

In the paper presented (**Appendix 13**), attention was drawn to the impact of the 26% drop in the value of contributions made by members over the 2 year period since the budget for 2004 and 2005 was prepared, as a result of the dollar depreciation. If the effect of the depreciation was not addressed, loss of around US\$ 100,000 would be projected for 2006 and 2007. The impact of the ability of the Executive to commit funds to activities had been highlighted.

A budget for 2006-7 was proposed, in which the depreciation was addressed and a 0% (zero-growth) or 4% inflation figure applied budget lines where growth in costs is expected. The 4% inflation had been stipulated by FAO planning and budget division, and is used in FAO planning purposes.

In the zero-growth, depreciation adjusted budget, the contribution in euro of countries would be equivalent for 2006-7 and 2004-5. In the 4% growth, depreciation adjusted model, the increase in contribution required, expressed in euro, is equivalent to 1.45% per year. Since under the Constitution, the budget should be expressed in US dollars, the country contributions were calculated and shown in the paper.

The Item was opened for discussion. The use of the figure of 4% for growth in costs was queried, and it was suggested by one member that a lower growth cost figure be applied. Since there was no clear support from other members of the Committee for a change, it was accepted to use this figure for budgetary planning.

In conclusion, the Committee:

- approved the financial statements for the year ending 31st December 2004;
- agreed that the effect of the depreciation of the dollar against the euro should be rectified in the proposed budget for 2006-7;
- agreed that the annual budget for MTF/INT/011/MUL be proposed as US\$ 496,210 for the biennium 2006-7.

Item 7. Election of the Research Group of the Standing Technical Committee

This item had been referred from the 70th Session. The importance of balance in the composition of the Committee was recognized at the 70th Session, and the forthcoming election gave an opportunity to ensure that the expertise matched the need of the Commission. Further, since a number of vacancies had arisen because of resignations relating to change in work situation, new members were required to be elected. It was agreed that in order to prepare for the election it is necessary to define the type of expertise required in the Committee, for identification of the technical gaps which require to be filled. Dr De Clercq and Prof. Willeberg agreed to prepare a document, which was presented and discussed on the 25th (**Appendix 14**).

The types of expertise required were agreed, together with the names of the experts with the requisite background. The Secretary was asked to write to the CVO of each country in which an

expert is working, to explain the situation and to ask for their support at the election. The Committee further agreed that if following an election, a further vacancy should arise, the paper should provide the basis for the selection of an expert to serve on the Committee.

Item 8. Proposed changes to Rules of Procedure for EUFMD Sessions

The Secretary provided a briefing on the discussions held with the Legal Council of FAO on the participation of alternates (deputies) for elected members at Commission Sessions.

Following advice from the Legal Council (**Appendix 15**), he proposed that new text be considered by the Executive, with the view to adoption at the General Session, regarding the participation of alternates.

The Executive considered that participation of alternates could assist to maintain quorum at Sessions but could lead to dilution of the profile of the Commission if such persons lack the experience and position for the items under discussion. It was considered essential to limit the use of the option of sending an alternate, without going so far as requiring judgement to be made upon the admission of a proposed deputy.

The Executive recommended that:

1. The alternate to a member of the Executive should be the deputy Chief Veterinary Officer in the national administration of an elected member, or where this position does not exist, the most senior administrator with responsibility for contagious disease control policy.
2. The wording proposed by the Legal Council of FAO be proposed to the EUFMD General Session for adoption at the 36th General Session.
3. That the obligations of members to participate in the Sessions and in the subsequent work of the Commission be made clear to prospective members and the effect of the change in the Rules be reviewed at subsequent Sessions.

Item 9. Items for the Agenda – 36th General Session, April 2005

The Secretary introduced the item by drawing attention to the requirements of the Constitution and Rules of Procedure on the items to be included in the Provisional Agenda. Items can be included where agreed by the Executive Committee or General Session at previous meetings. A draft Agenda was therefore prepared by the Secretariat to include the required items. He brought to attention the regular items reported at the Session included the status of vaccine and antigen reserves in member countries, and every 3 Sessions, approximately, the level of diagnostic capacity was discussed. Four items had been raised at the Standing Technical Committee for attention of the Executive. These were:

1. The World Reference Laboratory, its international function and support
2. Standards for treatment of pig meat from vaccinated herds
3. Sero-diagnostic capacity in member states
4. FMD expertise and information management

It was agreed that Items 1 and 4 should be discussed at the Session. These areas are important within the EUFMD Strategic Plan. Item 2 was considered a technical item where the questions required to be very carefully identified, and these may then be addressed to the Standing Technical Committee. These questions may best to be identified by members of the Executive rather than the 36th Session; the Chairperson and Dr Willeberg agreed to discuss and identify these questions. If so agreed, they would prepare a request to the Chairman of the Research Group.

Item 3 was addressed at the 35th Session and recommendations made, therefore a progress report on this item would be required.

The Draft Agenda for circulation would therefore include the items indicated in **Appendix 16**. Since there is a constitutional requirement to publish the Agenda at least 50 days before the Session, some further proposals for the Agenda could be considered until the end of February.

Item 10. Other items as proposed by the Secretariat, President or Observers

Recommendations of the International Conference on “the material and immaterial costs of animal disease control”

Dr Peter de Leeuw presented the main conclusions and recommendations (**Appendix 17**) of this Conference which occurred in Brussels on 15-16 December under the Dutch Presidency of Council of the European Union. The background of the Conference was the occurrence in the Netherlands over the past 10 years of three major animal health crises, exceeding the worst case scenario which had been considered in the development of the control policy. The Conference was organised to look at stakeholder opinion on aspects of financing of control measures and compensation to farmers and other affected persons.

One major finding was that consumers’ organisations did not require the marking of products from vaccinated animals.

He drew attention to recommendations that were relevant to EUFMD Commission activities:

- “...the Community as well as individual Member States should provide more support to the control of these (major epidemic animal diseases) diseases outside the EU” (recommendation four (R4)) . This fully supports the position that defensive actions should be supported against FMD in third countries, outside of the borders of Europe, as recommended by the EUFMD Commission and FAO.
- “Differentiated disease control measures may be appropriate for animals not kept for commercial purposes and other special categories”(R 12). He considered that the issues with differentiation of controls for hobby animals needed to be addressed, possibly through workshops or sessions organized by EUFMD.
- “Industry and authorities should work together for the development and licensing of new vaccines and diagnostic tests designed for specific (strategic) purposes” (R13). He considered the issue of access to FMD facilities by biotechnology developers should be addressed. The launch on the 16th December of the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health was a promising step and he considered that FAO and the EUFMD Commission should play a role in the steering of this initiative, in the setting of priorities and in other aspects relating to uptake and impact of new technologies.
- Recommendations 14 to 16, concerning financing of disease control measures, with increasing expectation that the producer would pay for disease control – for example, “the EU should stimulate the establishment of insurance schemes, private or public/private funds to face animal disease risks, while continuing to ensure financial support for the implementation of Community measures for disease control”(R16). The implementation of this recommendation could have significant advantages, but some risks, and possibly might provide models for other parts of the world. Public funding to safeguard Community animal health would continue to be essential.

The Chairperson considered that there are several ways the recommendations will be implemented, and one duty of the CVOs is to develop and assist implementation of Community Animal Health Policy for the EU. Meetings to evaluate Community policy are planned and it will assist liaison with FAO/EUFMD that Dr Marabelli will be in the Steering Group for this task.

Dr Marabelli indicated that the EU is trying for a balance between public and private sources of finance. He considered that developing a reliance on industry to control or finance control in regions of higher disease occurrence could be dangerous.

Dr Belev emphasized the need to have capacity in veterinary services, structure, finance and organisation to take necessary control measures.

The Chairperson said she had concerns that development of compartmentalization in disease control may result in autonomy between those providing certifying the health of a “compartment” and those of the state in which animals are located. On the organisation of veterinary services, as there are different models, she supported the initiative of the OIE to have the meeting on this in September.

Closure of the Session

The Chairperson thanked the members and observers for their participation in the Session. She thanked the Secretary and Ms Fragiotta, for the hospitality and arrangements to ensure a smooth and successful meeting. She considered that progress was being made on several fronts, but was concerned that the agreement with EC for the next period was required to ensure that momentum and progress in other areas, particularly in field activities, could continue in 2005.

On behalf of the Committee, she recorded her appreciation of the efforts of Dónal Sammin to support FMD control in the European region over the past 2 years. The impact of the work would be seen for years to come in the many reports, publications and memories of those who worked with him. She also took the chance to thank the Government of Ireland for their support over the past years, and their rapid response to the 70th Session held in Dublin, in the form of support for the replacement APO to start in February.