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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

on

**A new Animal Health Strategy for the European Union (2007-2013) where “Prevention
is better than cure”**

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Preamble

In December 2004, the Commission launched an external evaluation to thoroughly review the outcomes of EU action on animal health and the direction we may wish to take in the future. A combination of circumstances made it imperative to re-evaluate our policy:

- The main elements of the existing policy were drawn up largely between 1988 and 1995 when we were still a Community of twelve Member States;
- New challenges have emerged. Diseases which were unknown a decade ago have appeared - SARS is an example - while others, such as foot and mouth disease, bluetongue and avian flu, have recently presented new challenges, reminding us that they remain very serious risks;
- Trading conditions have also changed radically with the volume of trade in animal products increasing greatly, both within the EU and with third countries; and
- Science, technology and our institutional framework have evolved substantially.

A challenging EU Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013)

Based on the evaluation results and the stakeholder consultation, the Commission is pleased to present its proposal for a new EU Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013). This will allow further debate in the EU inter-institutional fora, with Council and the Parliament expected to establish their positions by the end of this year.

Overall, the strategy encompasses a challenging 6 year programme of work aimed towards clear outcomes:

- **Prioritisation of EU intervention**
- **A modern and appropriate animal health framework**
- **Better prevention, surveillance and crisis preparedness**
- **Science, Innovation and Research**

The timetable for delivery of all the specific actions included in this strategy will depend on the position of the Council and the Parliament, and also on our human resources capacity.

1. Vision

Our vision is to work in partnership to increase the prevention of animal health related problems before they happen: *“Prevention is better than cure”*.

2. Purpose

The strategy provides direction for the development of animal health policy, based on extensive stakeholder consultation and a firm commitment to high standards of animal health. It will facilitate the establishment of priorities that are consistent with agreed strategic goals and the revision of, and agreement on, acceptable and appropriate standards.

3. Scope of the Strategy

The concept of animal health covers not only the absence of disease in animals, but also the critical relationship between the health of animals and their welfare. It is also a pillar for the Commission's policy on public health and food safety.

The strategy covers the health of all animals in the EU kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos. It also covers wild animals and animals used in research where there is a risk of them transmitting disease to other animals or to humans. The strategy also covers the health of animals transported to, from and within the EU.

The strategy is aimed at the entire EU, including animal owners, the veterinary profession, food chain businesses, animal health industries, animal interest groups, researchers and teachers, governing bodies of sport and recreational organisations, educational facilities, consumers, travellers, competent authorities of Member States and the EU Institutions.

The strategy builds on the current animal health legal framework¹ in the EU and the standards and guidelines of the World Organisation for Animal Health (Office international des Epizooties – OIE). It will aim at ensuring consistency with other EU policies and EU's international commitments. It will guide the development of new policies or guidelines and will enhance existing animal health arrangements in the Community based on scientific risk assessments and taking into account social, economic and ethical considerations. It will support the achievement of a high level of environmental protection by considering the impacts on the environment in the development of the policy framework.

4. Goals

The strategy sets out some challenging aims, not just for the EU institutions and Governments, but for all citizens, to improve animal health.

The strategy's goals are:

¹ Including animal welfare measures.

- Goal 1: to ensure a **high level of public health and food safety** by minimising the incidence of biological² and chemical risks to humans;
- Goal 2: to promote animal health by preventing/reducing the incidence of animal diseases, and in this way to support **farming and the rural economy**;
- Goal 3: to improve **economic growth/cohesion/competitiveness** assuring free circulation of goods and proportionate animal movements³;
- Goal 4: to promote farming practices and animal welfare⁴ which prevent animal health related threats and minimise environmental impacts in support of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy⁵.

Simple and reliable performance indicators will help to measure progress towards the strategy's goals, guide policy, inform priorities, target resources and focus discussion. They will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and improved over time as better veterinary and other data becomes available. They will cover both hard indicators of animal health (e.g. disease prevalence, number of animals eliminated) and softer indicators tracking the confidence, expectations and perceptions of European citizens. It must be recognised that uncertainties and unforeseeable events may affect achievement of the performance indicators.

5. Action Plan

The action plan will aim to explain the significant breadth of activity which is being carried out or will be carried out at EU level through legislative proposal or other mechanisms in order to deliver the different strategy goals over the next six years.

The action plan to deliver the strategic goals (section 4) will focus on four main pillars, or areas of activity:

1. Prioritisation of EU intervention,
2. The EU animal health framework,
3. Prevention, surveillance and preparedness, and
4. Science, Innovation and Research.

Two key underlying principles will apply to all the work of the Commission: partnership and communication:

² Referring to animal diseases, food borne diseases and biotoxins.

³ The movement of animals has to reach a balance where the free movement of animals is proportionate to the risk of introducing and spreading of diseases and to the welfare of the animals during transport.

⁴ In coherence with the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 - COM(2006) 13)

⁵ The European Council adopted in June 2006 an ambitious and comprehensive renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy - DOC 10917/06.

Working in partnership

A partnership approach built on trust, openness and a willingness to take difficult decisions is essential for success. The strategy can only bring about real change if everyone involved in animal health works together and with all interested citizens. There are many excellent examples of partnership in action in the current Community Animal Health Policy. We must take advantage of existing collaborations, encourage new initiatives and make more use of non-legislative alternatives to regulation. An "**Animal Health Advisory Committee**"⁶ will include representatives from non governmental organisations across the animal health sector, consumers and governments. The "Animal Health Advisory Committee" will provide **strategic guidance** on the appropriate/acceptable level of animal or public health protection, and on priorities for action and communication. It will also follow the **strategy's progress**: it will be consulted on all impact assessments and will advise the Commission on the best means of delivering agreed outcomes.

In collaboration with the Council, the Commission will organise a conference to present the strategy's progress (mid term review – 2010).

Communication

Animal health is a concern for all European citizens. This concern stems from the public health and food safety aspects of animal health but also from the economic costs that animal disease outbreaks can trigger and the animal welfare considerations, including the implications of disease control. The Commission is committed to pursue its objectives of **clarity** and **transparency** when communicating with consumers and stakeholders what the EU is doing and why. European and national entities need to cooperate to ensure a coherent message and enhance public confidence.

Communicating the strategy

There will be **annual reporting** on the strategy's progress and wider communication of policies and initiatives. Communication will take different forms depending on the message that is being delivered and the target audience. It will include participation in international or national events, developing relationships with the media and non governmental organisations, improving websites to include comprehensive relevant information for all interested parties, checklists, manuals and a forum for Questions & Answers.

Communication in case of crisis

Good communication on risk to stakeholders/consumers is also of utmost importance, as an incorrect public perception of risk may force the regulator to take unjustified or disproportionate measures in the case of a crisis. The Animal Health Advisory Committee will advise the Commission to further improve communication during a crisis situation.

⁶ The Animal Health Advisory Committee will be created as a working group of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health – Article 4.2 of Commission Decision 2004/613/EC of 6 August 2004.

Pillar 1	Prioritisation of EU intervention
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The new Animal Health strategy must be seen as an integrated risk assessment and management strategy focusing on biological and chemical risks of EU relevance

1.1. Categorisation of animal-related threats

Profiling and categorisation of biological and chemical risks will provide the basis for decisions on where the responsibility for action lies.

Identified threats to animal health must be assessed to determine:

- their **relevance** to the four high level goals of the EU strategy;
- the “**acceptable level of risk**” for the Community;
- the relative **priority** for action to reduce the risk.

For serious threats to human health and the rural economy, we must strive to reduce the risk to a negligible level. But zero risk cannot be achieved. So even when dealing with high priority threats where a negligible level of risk is sought, we must analyse the cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of possible interventions to ensure best use of limited resources, both in terms of EU funding and cost to producers. This is critical to our food supply and key to the sustainability of the environment and the rural economies of Member States.

Where a potentially serious threat to health is identified, but there is scientific uncertainty about its likelihood of occurring, proportionate provisional measures should be taken to ensure a high level of health protection pending further scientific information clarifying the extent of the risk (the **precautionary principle**).

Profiling and categorisation of risks is an important and difficult process, which has already begun at EU level. Decisions must be based on sound science and appropriate risk assessment (pillar 4). But science alone will not provide all the answers. The Commission will therefore engage representatives of all interested parties in the risk management process to gain the widest possible agreement and shared responsibility for the judgements made and to deliver agreed objectives.

Targets will be set at community level, national level and, where appropriate, regional level. Suitable **performance indicators** will allow the assessment of progress over the next six years.

The appropriate **amount of resources** to be applied to achieve the desired level of protection, and the development of a responsibility and cost sharing scheme, will be based on the categorisation of biological and chemical risks.

Expected outcomes:

- **Categorisation of biological and chemical risks** according to level of relevance for the EU

- Agreement on the **acceptable level of risk**
- Setting of **priorities**, quantifiable **targets** and performance **indicators**
- Setting of the **amount of resources** to be committed to identified threats

Pillar 2	A modern animal health framework
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Towards a single regulatory framework, with a greater focus on incentives rather than penalties, consistent with other EU policies and converging to international standards

2.1. A single and clearer regulatory framework

The impact of epidemic livestock diseases such as Avian Influenza or Foot and Mouth Disease can be devastating on farmers and the economy as a whole – in a specific country, a continent or even globally.

International organisations such as OIE and the World Bank consider Animal Health as a *global public good*. The EU considers the maintenance of “Animal Health Services”⁷ in line with international standards (in terms of legislation, structure, organisation, resources, capacities, the role of the private sector and paraprofessionals) as a minimum goal. This is a public investment priority.

Constantly evolving legislation is one of the main mechanisms for EU intervention in animal health, both in the pursuit of Community policy and to implement international obligations. Better regulation principles will be applied through a strengthened partnership and enhanced communication.

The future strategy will aim at replacing the existing series of linked and interrelated policy actions by a single policy framework. The Animal Health Strategy will strive for a single clear regulatory framework converging as far as possible with the OIE/Codex recommendations/standards and guidelines. This regulatory framework will include animal nutrition and animal welfare measures.

The European Commission is responsible for ensuring that unjustified national/regional rules do not constitute a potential obstacle to the internal market. However, the EU regulatory framework also needs to be suitably flexible to allow for judgements of equivalence, settlements of dispute and efficient responses to changing situations. Specific attention must be paid to the position of animals kept on a non-commercial basis (i.e. as a hobby) and wildlife, insofar as this impinges on central goals⁸.

Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined. An incentive-oriented approach is needed at all levels. A revision of the current co-financing instrument is required.

⁷ Means the Competent Administration, all the Competent Authorities, and all persons authorised, registered or licensed by the Animal Health statutory body (as defined in the OIE code).

⁸ e.g. Natura 2000 which is established through Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds.

More effective procedures will be used for a number of Commission Decisions. The SCFCAH⁹ will focus on Decisions in which MS and stakeholders have a key interest. Non-regulatory tools must be encouraged as far as possible.

Expected outcomes:

An EU Animal Health General Law:

- **A single horizontal legal framework** will define and integrate common principles and requirements of existing legislation (intracommunity trade, imports, animal disease control, animal nutrition and animal welfare)
- Existing legislation will be **simplified** and replaced by this new framework as appropriate, seeking **convergence to international standards** (OIE/Codex standards) while ensuring a **firm commitment to high standards** of animal health.

2.2. Developing efficient cost and responsibility sharing schemes

Animal diseases

Existing compensation schemes are mainly focused on providing a compensation mechanism for animal owners in the event of a disease outbreak. Appropriate sharing of costs, benefits and responsibilities could contribute significantly to the key objectives of the strategy. It could contribute to preventing major financial risks for Member States and the Community by providing incentives for prevention of animal related threats. It would also seek to strengthen Community economic and social cohesion and specifically to reduce the gaps between levels of animal health in the various regions.

On the one hand, Governments have an important role to play in securing our external borders against disease incursions and leading the response to outbreaks of exotic disease. Provision of state compensation is also of utmost importance to compensate for private property destroyed for the public good at least to the extent that the owner is not responsible for the outbreak. In this the protection of public health is a key consideration.

On the other hand, responsibility for the health of animals lies primarily with animal owners and collectively with the industry. As a result, animal owners and industry are better placed than others to deal with many of the risks of animal diseases.

There is a clear recognition that the policy needs the full participation and commitment of all parties, including the insurance sector. Ownership of risk is a key issue and new mechanisms must be introduced to involve major stakeholders in decision-making on significant policy issues, in particular for emergency measures.

A feasibility study will be necessary to reflect on concrete proposals for the gradual development of an EU harmonised scheme.

⁹

SCFCAH - Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health.

Feed sector

In the feed sector, when large-scale incidents occur, public authorities tend to be heavily burdened with the costs of withdrawal, transport, storage and destruction of feed, food and animals, as well as the costs of analysis and other administrative outlay. Feed business operators are liable for any infringements of the relevant legislation on feed safety and for the direct consequences of the withdrawal from the market, treatment and/or destruction of any feed, animals and food produced there from¹⁰. In 2007, the Commission will submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council setting out the possibilities for an effective system of financial guarantees for feed business operators.

Expected outcomes:

- Animal Diseases: development of an **harmonised EU framework of the criteria for responsibility and cost-sharing**, on the basis of:
 - Categorisation of biological and chemical risks according to EU relevance (pillar 1).
 - Incentives encouraging risk-reducing behaviour from all parties involved.
 - Possibility of covering indirect losses.
 - Balancing costs (public/private funding) and responsibilities. Solidarity aspects have to be considered.
 - Prevention of distortion of competition.
 - Compatibility with EU international commitments.
 - Effectiveness and flexibility of implementation at national or regional level.
 - Consultation mechanism between cost sharing partners, especially during crisis.

2.3. Community influence on international standards

The EU legislation is already largely based on OIE/Codex recommendations/standards and guidelines, respecting its commitments within the framework of the WTO Agreement on the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS Agreement). However, there are areas where the EU could improve its convergence with these standards (e.g. disease status, imports, quality and evaluation of Veterinary Services, laboratory testing, animal nutrition, vaccination).

Where OIE/Codex have adopted standards, the EU will comply with these when applying animal health measures. However, if there is a scientific justification, the

¹⁰ Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2003 laying down requirements for feed hygiene.

EU may introduce or maintain sanitary or phytosanitary measures which result in a higher level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection. The EU will continue to be very active in promoting its own standards in the OIE/Codex and ensure as far as possible that they are also adopted accordingly at international level. It is necessary to encourage other members of the OIE/Codex to use the international standards in the setting of their own standards.

With regard to imports, the EU should improve communication concerning its requirements vis-à-vis its trading partners. The EU should also build up its negotiating strength on matters relating to exports. The EU should endeavour to encourage other members of the OIE/Codex to improve the alignment of their legislation to international recommendations/standards and guidelines and to ensure uniform interpretation and avoid potential distortion in international competition.

Given that the Community has exclusive competence in almost all of OIE's areas of activity, in the long term, it is also desirable for the Community to become a member of OIE, as it has of the Codex Alimentarius. This will help reinforce coherence between standards, guidelines and other provisions adopted by the OIE and other relevant international obligations of the European Community.

Expected outcomes:

- **Support of EU positions** on the basis of sound scientific evidence, whenever necessary.
- **Community membership of the OIE** in order to strengthen the active role of the Community.

2.4. Towards an export strategy at community level

The high level of animal health within the EU will make a key contribution to growth and jobs in Europe by ensuring that farmers, European companies remain competitive and that they have genuine access to the export markets¹¹. We need to ensure that European companies, often small and medium-sized companies (SMEs), are able to compete fairly in those markets. Unjustified sanitary barriers tend to be increasingly important. They are complicated, technically challenging and time consuming to detect, analyse and remove.

Import conditions for food of animal origin and animal products are largely harmonised. However, this is not the case for exports.

The Commission has exclusive competence for negotiation of bilateral agreements with third countries in the SPS field. For certain third countries, common EU export requirements are specifically defined in bilateral veterinary agreements¹². Ongoing

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "global Europe: a stronger partnership to deliver market access for European exporters" - COM(2007) 183, 18.4.2007.

¹² Including Chile, Mexico, USA, Canada, New Zealand and European Free Trade Association countries.

trade negotiations, in particular the negotiations for Free Trade Agreements with Korea, India and ASEAN¹³ include SPS chapters.

The Commission is in a discussion with Member States on the implications of the implementation of existing and future policy on SPS negotiations with third countries in relation to exports. The aim is to ensure respect of the Treaty obligations in relation to the Common Commercial Policy and to present a unified Community approach in negotiations with third countries.

The new EU Animal health strategy will contribute to adapt the mix of policy instruments to deliver on export market access, to revive the partnership with stakeholders, and to prioritise in order to make the best use of resources.

Expected outcomes:

- A more efficient and transparent service for businesses, including SMEs, results-oriented and focussing on concrete sanitary problems that EU businesses face in third country markets.
- **Better prioritisation** of actions against sanitary barriers in order to target human resources and to achieve the greatest economic impact.
- **A strengthened role** in negotiating EU export conditions and tackling export problems through the development of locally based EU Market Access Teams drawn from Commission Delegations, Member State Embassies and business organisations, where appropriate.

Pillar 3	Animal-related threat prevention, surveillance and crisis preparedness
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Identifying problems before they take hold, and being ready to manage outbreaks and crisis

3.1. Supporting on-farm biosecurity measures

Biosecurity refers to those measures taken to keep diseases out of populations, herds, or groups of animals where they do not currently exist or to limit the spread of disease within the herd.

Successful biosecurity measures must address isolation of new animals brought to the farm, isolation of sick animals, regulation of the movement of people, animals, and equipment, correct use of feed, and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting facilities.

This responsibility lies with the animal owners, including hobby farmers. However, as some contagious pathogens may easily spread from one farm to another a collective approach must be taken in addressing prevention and biosecurity measures.

¹³ Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Effective on-farm biosecurity measures will constitute an important criterion of zoning and compartmentalisation¹⁴ procedures for disease control and/or trade purposes. Disease free status, biosecurity measures, animal welfare measures and veterinary control will also be possible means of rating holdings and supporting the development of the responsibility and cost sharing scheme.

Expected outcomes:

- **Guidelines** taking into account the level of risk associated with different types of production systems and species (e.g. intensive production, extensive production, high density area, hobby farmers). These guidelines will be coherent with the EU animal health legal framework.
- **Provision of funding** to finance and promote on-farm bio-security measures relating to infrastructures, via existing funds.

3.2. Identification and Tracing

The EU traceability framework (identification systems, labelling, and TRACES, the Community TRAdE Control and Expert System) aims to improve the quality, accuracy, availability and timeliness of the provision of data on live animals, food from animal origin and feed. It allows for traceability across MS borders.

Currently, individual identification, e.g. for bovine animals, is achieved via identifiers, a paper-based system of animal passports and holding registers combined with national identification databases that are not connected between Member States. Traceability for live animal transport is achieved via a paper-based certification system in combination with TRACES.

The gradual introduction of electronic identification raises the question of how, in the mid to long-term, the different elements of the traceability system for live animals can be combined and an EU integrated electronic system developed. Due to the cost/benefit ratio, small-scale livestock producers face specific challenges to introduce electronic identification. The future system should pay particular attention to the situation of SMEs, building on a thorough impact assessment.

Increasing the accuracy and timeliness of this data should result in improved information for veterinary surveillance and better ways of dealing with disease outbreaks, while efficiency should reduce costs both for industry and government.

Expected outcomes:

- **TRACES** achieves its objective of becoming a **single portal for all veterinary matters**.

¹⁴ Zoning and compartmentalisation are procedures implemented by a country under the provisions of the OIE Code with a view to defining subpopulations of different animal health status within its territory for the purpose of disease control and/or international trade. Compartmentalisation applies to a subpopulation when management systems related to biosecurity are applied, while zoning applies when a subpopulation is defined on a geographical basis.

- **Interoperability of national identification databases.**
- **Introduction of electronic procedures** (longer term).
 - Feasibility study for the introduction of electronic identification (with particular focus on ruminants) on either a voluntary or compulsory basis.
 - Introduction of electronic certification to replace paper certification for the movement of live animals (intra-community trade and imports).
 - Creation of a wider, integrated electronic system, with a unified database encompassing all elements of the current system under certification, animal identification, and animal health and welfare status.

3.3. **Better border biosecurity**

The EU is the biggest food importer in the world. The Member States' responsibility in border control is to protect the community from potential animal and public health risks arising from international trade of live animals and their products. The challenge is to improve border biosecurity without severely disrupting cross-border movement of people and agricultural goods. In fact, the main safety feature of border controls on declared imports for animal health purposes is the document check, and the EU is dependent upon the accuracy and honesty of the declarations in these documents.

Veterinarians need to work more closely with customs, both at border inspection posts and at points of entry to the Community where goods or animals may enter illegally. There are fundamental questions about: the assessment of risk; trust between national governments; and what can and cannot be accomplished in border inspection facilities and other points of entry (efficiency/effectiveness).

On the other hand, it may be difficult for certain developing countries to comply with EU standards and thus engage in trade. The EU should build on ongoing initiatives and improve cooperation with third countries, providing them with technical assistance to help them to satisfy EU animal health requirements for imports and to fight against exotic diseases at source.

Expected outcomes:

- **Revision of the current legislation** and the development of a policy designed to deliver a better risk-based approach to border inspections and to target illegal trade. Development of EU based risk assessment to target higher risk consignments (products/countries) and assist in selection of containers to be examined physically.
- To optimise the **coordination of agencies/services regulating imports** (customs/veterinary services).
- To make **travellers** aware of restrictions and of their **responsibilities** and to ensure proportionate enforcement.

- To improve **risk management at third country level** and to provide **assistance for third countries** (via the external co-operation instruments, training, knowledge sharing and support through regional expertise).

3.4. **Surveillance and crisis preparedness/management**¹⁵

Veterinary Surveillance

Veterinary surveillance provides early warning and prompt detection of animal-related threats, together with tracking and analysis of the way diseases occur and spread.

The information generated provides crucial scientific evidence for the EU institutions and governments to support decisions on prevention and control measures, as well as assessing the effectiveness of existing approaches. Surveillance provides the wider public, farmers and pet owners with information which they and veterinary surgeons can use to decide how best to protect their own health and the health of their animals. It is also essential to better understand and assess the impact of climate change on animal health in order to enable better "adaptation" of the veterinary measures.

Animal keepers and veterinarians also need effective training to be able to identify the signs of disease at an early stage.

Emergency preparedness

Animal-related emergencies must be dealt with swiftly and effectively using an agreed approach. The possibility for the Commission to take fast-track decisions for emergency action is of high value in limiting and controlling animal-related threats at EU level.

In response to ethical concerns and the growing demand for improved animal welfare, the EU has already moved to a more flexible approach to vaccination, as well as improving its policy to control major animal diseases. To decrease the number of animals eliminated will be one of the objectives of the new EU animal health policy (goal 4). However, different elements¹⁶ make it important that the decision to use vaccination is taken on a case by case basis.

Preparation, contingency planning exercises and implementation of emergency preparedness plans are the responsibility of the governments. These plans should be agreed in advance with the cost sharing scheme partners.

A key factor in being able to manage an outbreak successfully is knowing where animals and their products are, and controlling their movements.

¹⁵ Including collaboration with third countries.

¹⁶ Vaccine availability and effectiveness, demands for valid tests if possible differentiating infected from vaccinated animals, OIE international guidelines and possible trade implications, cost-effectiveness analysis, possible risks related to the use of vaccines.

Expected outcomes:

Surveillance:

- To improve surveillance prioritisation according to the categorisation of animal-related threats. Determine appropriate indicators and modalities for data collection.
- To encourage collaborative networks of interested parties, especially through the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and the European Food Safety Authority, to improve data collection, risk analysis and information to the public, as well as training to allow early detection of animal health problems,
- To provide funding:
 - to support epidemiosurveillance via existing funds,
 - to maintain the EU diagnostic capability (e.g. funding of laboratory networking) and,
 - to provide appropriate training (e.g. *“better training for safer food”*¹⁷ initiative).
- To adapt the Animal Diseases Notification System (ADNS) to allow better value to be derived from surveillance activities and information to be shared widely¹⁸.

Emergency preparedness:

- Initiative to improve EU preparedness against major threats to animal health. These components may also be useful for identifying and responding to potential bioterrorism attacks:
 - Rapid response network,
 - Supporting the diffusion of expertise and tools to allow humane killing of animals in emergency situations,
 - Communication capacity during crisis,
 - Crisis management units and community veterinary emergency team,
 - Reinforcement of the necessary EU antigen/vaccine banks.

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on better training for safer food - COM(2006) 519.

¹⁸ And thereby to help EU Member States fulfil international requirements and avoid duplication of effort taking into account the need to report similar information via the World Animal Health Information System of the OIE.

- To define and facilitate fast track approaches for EU-wide marketing **authorisation of veterinary products (e.g. vaccines)** used for the prevention of animal diseases subject to Community emergency measures.

Pillar 4	Science, Innovation, and Research
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To stimulate and coordinate risk analysis, science, innovation and research, hence contributing to a high level of public health and to the competitiveness of EU animal health businesses

4.1. Science

The Community is committed to scientific excellence, independence, openness and transparency.

A network of **Community and National Reference Laboratories** dealing with animal diseases has been gradually set up. Scientifically sound and uniform testing is of fundamental importance for appropriate disease diagnosis and for the application of the necessary control and eradication measures.

The **European Food Safety Authority** and the **European Medicines Agency** also mobilise and coordinate scientific resources from throughout the EU to provide high-quality and independent scientific advice and risk assessments. This provides risk managers (the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States) with a sound foundation for animal health policy.

Expected outcomes:

- To strengthen the collaboration between European agencies and national bodies.
- Based on an evaluation, to review and where necessary extend the activities of the Community Reference Laboratories.

4.2. Innovation and Research

For the development of modern research in a global environment, it is vital to organise co-operation at different levels, co-ordinating national or European level policies, promoting networking between teams and increasing the mobility of individuals and ideas. With decisive actions at European level in the area of animal health, the current fragmentation of Europe's efforts can be overcome.

The new 7th framework programme (2007-2013) will be an important tool in support of animal health and welfare research, alongside national efforts and other European co-operative research activities.

A series of initiatives aimed at promoting animal diseases and welfare research have already been launched - including the call for the creation of an ERANET¹⁹ on animal health, an information platform on the protection and welfare of animals and the launch of the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health (ETPGAH) in 2004.

The industry-led Technology Platform should mobilise both public and private sectors in Europe to commit funds to carry out research through public-private partnerships. It should facilitate the development of new and effective tools (in particular vaccines and diagnostic tests) for controlling animal diseases of major importance to Europe and the rest of the world. A coherent regulatory framework is a pre-condition for an effective Animal Health policy and the development and use of animal medicines and new generation of vaccines.

Furthermore the Commission has proposed in its Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals to establish a European Centre on Animal Welfare. This would coordinate and stimulate research in order to upgrade existing standards.

Expected outcomes:

- To define a **research action** plan involving the industry and other relevant stakeholders. This plan will **prioritise** animal-related threats and will **identify** the “**gaps**” in existing control tools for surveillance, diagnosis, vaccination and treatment.
- To ensure the **appropriate level of funding** to implement the research action plan through public-private partnerships.
- To develop a suitable framework at Community level to mitigate disincentives to manufacturers and maintain EU capacities, in particular for the reinforcement of the antigen/vaccine banks.
- To provide support for research in third countries through **international cooperation**, especially for exotic diseases of high relevance or for neglected zoonoses which have a serious impact on those countries.

¹⁹ The objective of the ERA-NET scheme, in the context of the European Research Area (ERA), is to step up the cooperation and coordination of research activities (i.e. programmes) carried out at national or regional level in the Member States and Associated States through the networking of research.

EU ANIMAL HEALTH STRATEGY

