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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: TAIEX workshop: "The role of wildlife in animal health management"
(Sofia, 8-9 March 2018)
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the session of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 16 April 2018.

TAIEX workshop: 'The role of wildlife in animal health management' (Sofia, 8-9 March 2018)

Background

The Bulgarian Presidency has identified the topic of wildlife in the context of animal health management as one of its priorities for the semester in the veterinary area.

In the light of the constantly evolving epidemiological situation in the EU with regard to certain animal diseases, such as African swine fever (ASF) and avian influenza (AI), the topic of wildlife as a factor in these diseases has been raised and discussed on a number of occasions. However, the Presidency has chosen to address this topic more thoroughly and consistently, in particular in the Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs), in view of its high importance in the context of animal disease management and in order to explore the prospects of a more harmonised approach to wildlife management in this context.

The Presidency's overarching aim is to identify particular needs and possible ways forward in relation to wildlife management in the context of animal disease management, taking into account multiple related aspects such as surveillance, enforcement of practical measures, the economic impact, training, awareness and preparedness, scientific research and regional strategies, and paying particular attention to biosecurity and to cooperation with hunters, stakeholders, and third countries.

The workshop

As a continuation of this priority topic, a TAIEX workshop was organised on 8 and 9 March in Sofia, Bulgaria in cooperation with the European Commission (DG SANTE). The event gathered together animal health and wildlife management experts from the competent authorities of the Member States (MS) and third countries (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and the Russian Federation), along with representatives of hunting organisations from the MS, the European Commission, EFSA, the OIE, the FAO and the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative. The workshop was opened by Commissioner Andriukaitis and Bulgaria's Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Mr Rumen Porodzanov, who emphasised the importance of the coordinated efforts to tackle diseases, especially in view of the spread of ASF.

The aim of the event was to give an overview of the role of wildlife in the context of animal health management in the EU and neighbouring third countries. The workshop was focused on the strengthening of measures related to wildlife management and the future prospects of harmonising and adapting these measures in view of the existing threats of introduction and spread of animal diseases affecting both wildlife and domestic animals (including ASF, AI, rabies and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)). The event was also a platform for improving cooperation at regional level between the EU and neighbouring third countries, as well as cooperation with hunters.

The workshop comprised four thematic sessions, as follows:

- **General framework** – giving an overview of the current policies, standards and requirements related to wildlife at international and EU levels – including the future outlook for the Animal Health Law and EU financial support;
- **Cooperation** – focusing on the role of hunters and their views and experiences in wildlife management, the role of EFSA, and practical examples of cooperation with regard to tuberculosis;

- **Wildlife diseases in the EU and neighbouring countries** – dedicated to the role and management of wildlife in particular diseases in the EU and neighbouring third countries, such as ASF, FMD, AI and rabies;

- **Specific aspects and management of wildlife diseases** – an in-depth look at the related control and surveillance measures, biosecurity, databases and analysis and EU-funded research in this field.

An additional side session was held on other relevant diseases which have an impact on animal or human health, such as chronic wasting disease (CWD), for which the Canadian experience with the disease was presented, and brucellosis.

Outcomes

Further to the presentations given and the intensive discussions within the workshop, the Presidency emphasises the following conclusions:

- 1) Given the significant role of hunters in relation to wildlife, and in particular its management in the context of diseases of major concern such as ASF, it is relevant to consider the development of efficient mechanisms for strengthening cooperation with them at national, EU and regional level.
- 2) As part of such cooperation and in order to ensure a more integrated approach to the management of diseases in wildlife, a forum or network for exchanging expertise and best practices between competent authorities, vets and hunters should be established for national and EU experts. Training and awareness campaigns for hunters should also be provided, in order to promote knowledge and best practices.

- 3) Despite the fact that different organisations and hunting practices exist in different MS, these should not be an obstacle to the reinforcement and proper implementation of good biosecurity practices related to hunting activities.
- 4) Different disease strategies should be developed depending on the disease and the regional specificities.
- 5) Coordinated efforts on research activities regarding wildlife ecology, surveillance and diagnostics should be continued and further strengthened at national and EU levels.
- 6) Practical mechanisms for regional cooperation with neighbouring third countries, such as the one under GF-TADs, should also be further developed and applied jointly by EU and international organisations.

In the light of the above, the Bulgarian Presidency will continue the work on the role of wildlife in animal health management in the Working Party of CVOs. Considering the activities proposed by the Presidency on this subject (workshop, questionnaire, discussions), a document reflecting the outcomes of the topic will be presented to the CVOs on 15 May 2018.