

2nd OIE Regional Meeting for OIE Reference Centres in Asia and the Pacific

12th – 13th March 2019, Tokyo, Japan

Meeting Report

Background and Objectives of the Meeting

The global network of OIE Reference Centres (RC) is the central core of the OIE's scientific excellence. As of 2018, there are 246 Reference Laboratories (RL) covering 105 disease or topics across 35 countries and 55 Collaborating Centres (CC) covering 49 topics across 28 countries. The Asia-Pacific region contains 48 RLs and 12 CCs. These RCs play an important role in the improvement of animal health and welfare within the region. Considering their pertinent roles, there is a need to improve their involvement in regional activities, particularly disease diagnostics and capacity building, such that they can optimise the services provided to the Member Countries in the region. The OIE and RC network must identify the challenges and limitations affecting these activities and determine solutions and strategies by which they can improve their service.

As per the recommendations from the past Global Conference of OIE Reference Centres, the OIE RRAP and the Government of Japan, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), jointly organised the 1st Regional Meeting for OIE Reference Centres for Asia and the Pacific in Tokyo, Japan in 2017. The aim of the meeting was to explore ways to integrate the regional action plan and ways to improve implementation by the Reference Centres, according to their Terms of Reference. Participants suggested several ideas, proposals and suggestions and discussed the means of their implementation within the region. The meeting also envisaged that the OIE RRAP would organise the regional meeting of OIE RCs on a regular basis and continue to discuss, support and strengthen the activities conducted by the OIE RCs.

As the OIE RRAP has already held or is planning to hold other meetings specifically targeting the OIE RCs working on aquatic animal or avian diseases respectively, it plans to organise the 2nd Regional Meeting for OIE Reference Centres for Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with the MAFF from the 12th to 13th of March 2019 in Tokyo Japan, inviting those OIE RCs that work in the area of ruminant and swine diseases

The main objectives of this meeting were;

1. To identify and share challenges and success stories encountered by the OIE RCs when carrying out key activities and discuss ways to improve their services
2. To explore potential strategies to promote and disseminate scientific work and capacity building activities provided by the OIE RCs

3. To identify possible mechanisms to improve and strengthen multilateral cooperation between the OIE RCs in the exchange of knowledge, reference materials and expertise for the benefit of OIE Member Countries

The Agenda of the workshop is included as **Annex 1**.

Summary of the Meeting

The 2nd Regional Meeting for OIE RCs for Asia and the Pacific involved 45 participants from the RCs in Australia, P.R. China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, R.O. Korea, New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand. Members of the MAFF, Japan Racing Association, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and FAO were also invited to attend the workshop as organisers and as observers respectively.

Day 1 (12th March 2019)

Session 1: RC's Activities/Plans for OIE Members

After the opening session, Session 1 of the meeting started with short presentations from first the CCs followed by the RLs regarding their activities over the past two years, some major success stories or challenges that they experienced and their plans for the next two years. Each block of five presentations was followed by a short question and answer period.

During this session it was made clear that the RCs have conducted a variety of activities including training workshops, seminars and capacity building activities often involving participants from multiple Member Countries with many centres also presenting their plans for future activities. Some of the RCs have undertaken networking activities with both OIE and non-OIE facilities in the specific topics and many plan on expanding the activity of existing networks or developing new networks where required. The major common challenges highlighted by the RCs included;

- The significant cost associated with running activities and the limited financial resources available to the RCs acts represents a significant barrier
- The procurement of materials and necessary reagents to effectively run these activities and their transport between Member Countries is often a difficult and slow process due to the various regulations placed on the import/export of such materials
- There is often limited follow-up or evaluation of the effectiveness of the training workshop or activity, RCs frequently must carry out the activity within their own centre and the applicability of this training within the participant's nation is uncertain due to variations in technological, material or resource availability
- The RCs don't know the requirements and current priorities or situation of the Member Countries and so cannot plan their activities to meet these requirements

When describing the factors that result in a good activity, many centres highlighted the importance of communication and collaboration with other RCs (including both OIE and Non-OIE centres) and other major stakeholders. In this regard, various centres stated that the formation of networks and active communication channels between various centres has numerous benefits including the sharing of information, materials and personnel which can greatly improve the efficacy and quality of their planned activities.

Session 2: How to Strengthen the Reference Centre's Support to OIE Members

Session 2 started with presentations from the FAO and the OIE regarding their various activities aimed at improving laboratory capacities and capabilities within the Asia-Pacific Region. The meeting participants were then separated into four groups and asked to discuss the following points followed by a report back presentation from each group;

- Identifying the issues affecting the RC's activities including capacity building activities
- How the RCs can promote their activities
- How the OIE can support the RC's initiatives

The presentations made by each group identified similar challenges to those mentioned within session 1. Several solutions to these challenges were proposed by the groups which were divided between those to be implemented by the RCs and those to be implemented by the OIE.

For the RCs these solutions included;

- Exploring different ways of shipping reference materials, samples or other laboratory reagents between Member Countries such as to reduce cost
- Developing programs of different length (e.g. 2 year master programs or PhD programs) or training individuals within their own country using locally available equipment or materials to improve follow-up and development of applicable skills by the trainee
- Developing a means to share materials, information and planned activities such as to minimise overlap and improve harmonisation and standardisation between the RCs
- Joint organisation of similar activities which would reduce their cost relative to if they were being organised separately and allows the resources of multiple centres to be utilised at once

For the OIE these solutions included;

- Communication with Member Countries to provide a set of standard rules and principles which would facilitate the transport of laboratory materials between Member Countries
- Development of an online platform which can be accessed by the Member Countries and RCs which would allow the sharing of documents and standards, information, planned activities, contact list of available experts and research in addition to other materials
- Promotion of upcoming RC activities on the regional website or via notifications sent out to Member Countries
- Communicating with member countries to determine their requirements and priorities for activities and disseminating this information to the RCs. This can also be assisted by having links to each RC on the central website and describing what activities are available at each centre
- Having a dedicated communications team or staff member to communicate with the RCs and help resolve any identified challenges or issues

- Providing limited funding to support small projects or training events or the shipment of samples during emergency situations

Day 2: 13th March 2019

Session 3: How to Strengthen Collaboration/Cooperation Amongst Reference Centres

This session was opened with a presentation from the OIE describing its existing networks (e.g. OFFLU), the activities undertaken by the existing networks and other proposed networks that were still undergoing development or validation that were being supported by the OIE. This was followed by a discussion session during which the participants proposed topics, mediums or areas of interest which would allow for the formation of networks or facilitate better collaboration and cooperation amongst the RCs. The participants were then asked to vote for the four topics which most interested them from the identified list with the eight most popular topics being utilised as the subjects for two sets of group discussions, each involving four separate topics, which followed the vote. The results for this voting system and the topics chosen can be found in **Annex 2**.

The topics of discussion chosen by the participants varied significantly and the participants were asked to attend the topic which interested them the most within each round of discussion. Following each round of discussions, a report back was given for each topic which identified challenges, solutions or strategies for cooperation and collaboration between RCs, the findings are presented in **Annex 3**. However, across the topics there was a general call for harmonisation, standardisation and increased ease of accessibility and sharing of information and communication between RLs, CCs, Member Countries and other non-OIE centres. Many of the discussion groups reached the conclusion that an all-encompassing online platform would be the ideal means to achieving this goal and that such a platform would ideally be developed and hosted by the OIE.

Session 4: Way Forward

Following lunch, a plenary discussion hosted by the OIE was initiated which aimed to cement the way forward following the meeting and obtain an agreed commitment from both the OIE and RCs in attendance regarding their course of action and their plan to operationalise the solutions and topics discussed within sessions 2 and 3. This discussion determined the priority, feasibility and who would lead the initiative with the participants being asked to commit to making presentable progress towards the notions within a 2 year time frame. The results of this discussion can be found in **Annex 4**. Throughout the meeting, the idea of an online platform has been mentioned numerous times and the possible utility and benefits provided by such a platform has also been discussed. Thus, it was unanimously agreed that the creation of an online platform should take first priority moving forward. It was also decided that developing new networks or improving upon existing networks and collaborative efforts would also benefit the RCs in the planning and execution of any future events.

Finally, the meeting was concluded by the provision of closing remarks from the OIE RRAP.

The Meeting Thanked:

The funding received from the people of Japan through Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for hosting the 2nd OIE Regional Meeting for OIE Reference Centres in Asia and the Pacific as well as the experts from OIE Reference Centres, partners and observers for their active participation.



Enclosed Documents

Annex 1 – Meeting Agenda

Annex 2 – Results of voting and Topics of discussion for Session 3

Annex 3 – The individual findings for each of the topics discussed in Session 3

Annex 4 – The results of the plenary discussion held in Session 4

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Programme

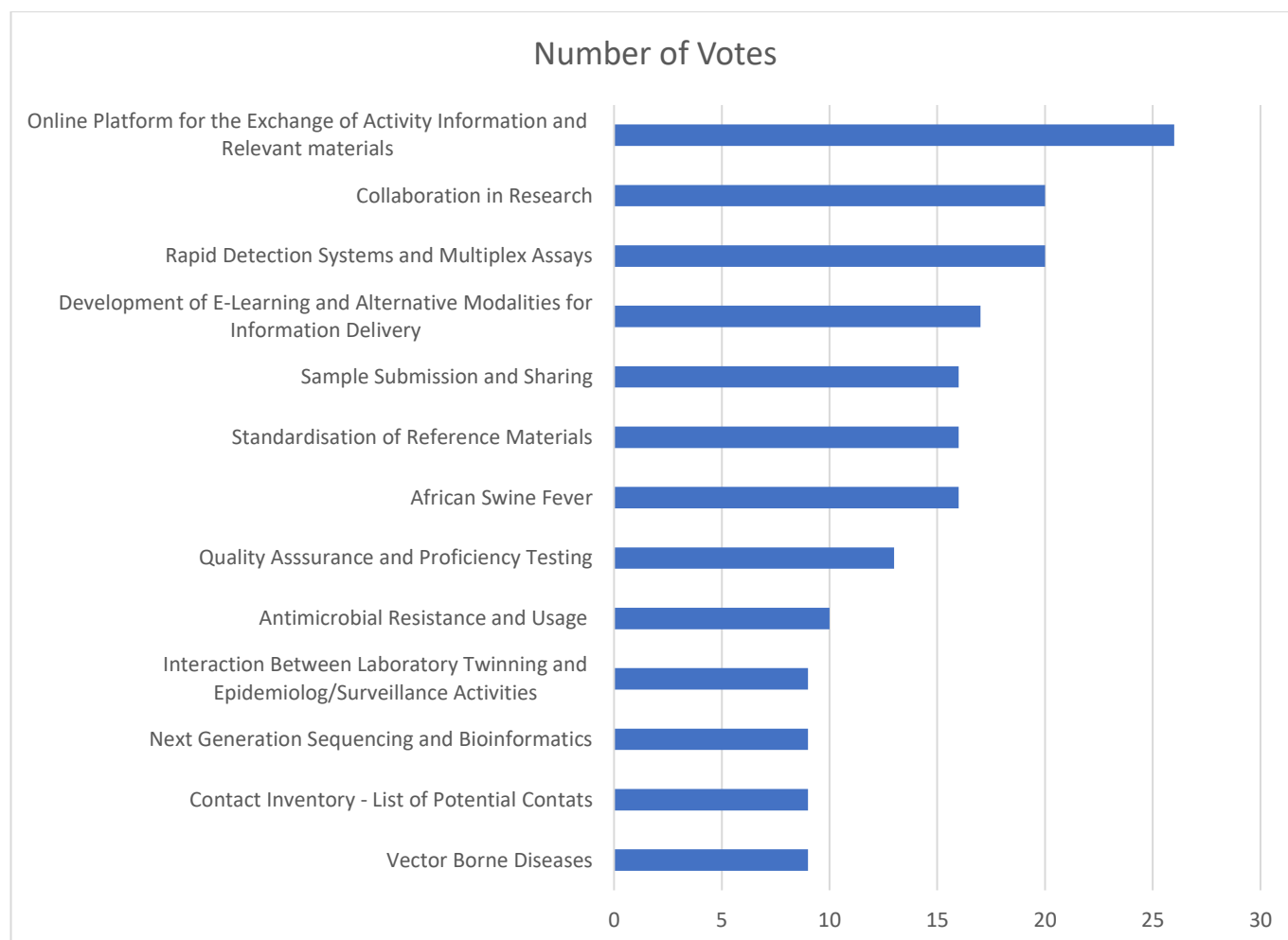
DAY 1		
Time	Theme	Speaker
09:00 – 09:30	Registration of participants	OIE
OPENING SESSION (MC: Akinobu Kawamura)		
09:30 – 10:10	Welcome remarks by the host country	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE
	Opening remarks by the OIE & Introduction of the Meeting	
	Self-introduction	All participants
	Group photo	
Session I: RCs' activities/plans for OIE Members (Chair: Part A – Dr Ken Nouda Part B – Dr Sonoko Kondo)		
10:10 – 11:25	Part A: Collaborating Centres	(11 CC x 5 min) + Q&A
11:25 – 11:45	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>	
11:45 – 12:45	Part B-1: Reference Laboratories	(10 RL X 5 min) + Q&A
12:45 – 13:45	<i>Lunch</i>	
13:45 – 14:45	Part B-2: Reference Laboratories	(10 RL X 5 min) + Q&A
Session II: How to strengthen RC's supports to OIE Members (Chairs: Prof. Cord Heuer and Prof. Qin Wang)		
14:45 – 15:00	FAO activities to support laboratory capacity strengthening	Dr Yeun-Kyung Shin, FAO
	OIE activities to support laboratory capacity strengthening	OIE
15:00 – 16:00	Group discussion- - Share the good/model practices, overcoming challenges/constraints - Promoting the RC's activities - Potential plan in two years - How OIE can support the RC's initiatives	All participants
16:00 – 16:20	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>	
16:20 – 16:50	Group discussion (continued) – prepare report back	All participants
16:50 – 17:20	Report back from each group	
17:20 – 17:25	Wrap up of Day 1 and preparation for Day 2	OIE
17:30 – 19:30	<i>Dinner hosted by the OIE</i>	

DAY 2		
Time	Theme	Speaker
Session III: How to strengthen collaboration/cooperation amongst RCs (Chairs: Dr Paul Chiew and Dr Debbie Eagles)		
09:30 – 09:50	Existing and proposed collaboration/cooperation and their activities	OIE
09:50 – 13:00	Open discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying potential topics or themes of collaboration/cooperation between OIE RCs Group discussion – Part 1 on selected topics or themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report-back from each group <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tea/coffee break [20 mins]</i></p> Group discussion – Part 2 on selected topics or themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report-back from each group 	All participants
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
Session IV: Way Forward (Chair: Dr Hirofumi Kugita and Prof Yoshihiro Sakoda)		
14:00 – 15:20	Plenary discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of previous sessions - Identifying areas which require cooperation amongst OIE RCs - Identifying possible approaches for cooperation and how to operationalise them 	All participants
Closing Session		
15:20 – 15:30	Closing	Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE
15:30 -	Tea/coffee break	
SESSION for Japanese Institutes (hosted by MAFF)		

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Results of Voting and Topics of Discussion for Session 3



Round 1 Discussion Topics

- Online Platform for the Exchange of Activity Information and Relevant materials
- African Swine Fever
- Standardisation of Reference Materials
- Fourth topic omitted due to lack of participants

Round 2 Discussion Topics

- Rapid Detection systems and Multiplex Assays
- Collaboration in Research
- Development of E-Learning and Alternative Modalities for Information Delivery
- Sample Submission and Sharing

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The Individual Findings for Each of the Topics Discussed in Session 3

Online Platform for the Exchange of Activity Information and Relevant Materials

The RCs desire an all-encompassing platform where they may announce events, present upcoming research, job opportunities, services provided, upload materials such as standards and training information and make requests to Member Countries and the OIE. They stress that the platform should be easy to use and have an easily navigated layout and would ideally be developed and maintained by the OIE with continued inputs being provided by the RCs at their own initiative or upon the request of the OIE. Both the RCs and OIE recognised the significant amount of time and resources that would be required to develop such a platform but the benefits are very clear and substantial.

African Swine Fever

This discussion highlighted the need for diagnostic capabilities to be present in each country for African Swine Fever in lieu of the recent outbreaks and spread of the disease. The desire for rapid detection methods for field confirmation of the disease was highlighted. The group believes that collaboration and the sharing of information between relevant authorities such as labs, regional governmental bodies and other stakeholders would be of significant benefit in developing such tools and highlights the need for improved multisectoral collaboration on matters of significant importance such as ASF.

It was suggested that the OIE can potentially facilitate these exchanges of information by organising the events or meetings.

Standardisation of Reference Materials

This group initially discussed the various challenges faced by laboratories and basic requirements. It was decided that laboratories require the ISO 17025 accreditation but also that the maintenance of the accreditation is often a time consuming and costly process. The participants involved agreed that standard materials that are shared between reference laboratories should include accompanying information (metadata) such as expected CT values, % inhibition or sequence information. It was also suggested that such information may be contained within a repository of information that would ideally be hosted by the OIE and allow the RCs to share and submit information.

The availability of materials within each country was identified as a limiting factor against the capabilities of some laboratories and although the sharing of materials between countries can improve this situation, it is often difficult due to import/export regulations and MTAs. Finally the group highlighted the importance of quality assurance for commercially available diagnostic kits and the difficulties associated with the standardisation process according to standards provided by the OIE, suggesting that the OIE could potentially support this process by making it easier or cheaper or advocate to get more commercial companies on board

Rapid Detection Systems and Multiplexed Assays

The discussion focused on the need to develop rapid detection systems for field or laboratory diagnosis of disease and the characteristics of these tests. The participants agreed that the kits need to have high sensitivity, specificity and accuracy, be easy to use and robust and have clear and concise instructions regarding the samples required and how they should be collected. The participants highlighted the need for multisectoral collaboration between commercial companies, reference centres and universities in the development of these tests and the associated costs involved.

It is suggested that the OIE could assist the development of these kits by communicating with the companies who are willing to develop them, determine the needs of individual member countries in terms of diagnostic requirements and mediate between the laboratory and industry parties.

Collaboration in Research

This group discussion focused on the strategies by which the OIE can increase cooperation between RCs on research topics. This included the organisation of regular annual meetings involving reference centre experts or directors for the same diseases/topics which would allow the discussion of urgent research topics whilst minimising overlap. It was suggested that it would be beneficial if the OIE could provide a prioritised list of research topics to the RCs and facilitate sharing of reference material, staff and experts via an online platform.

Development of E-Learning and Alternative Modalities for Information Delivery

This discussion identified that most RCs already have materials that they have developed which can be placed onto an E-learning platform to assist with training activities. However, the scope and target of these materials varies significantly between each centre and will require significant organisation, standardisation and further development prior to being distributed as part of an online training course. It was suggested that the OIE develop and host this online platform.

Sample Submission and Sharing

The participants of this group discussion identified several challenges which limit the sharing and submission of samples including;

- Lack of sample information (metadata)
- Inappropriate samples or samples not meeting diagnostic requirements
- Some laboratories do not know how to classify samples
- Transport of samples between countries to reference laboratories is often difficult and expensive

The discussion then provided some potential solutions to the OIE these issues including;

- Provision of standard, easy to recognise packaging materials by the OIE to assist in speeding up transport time
- Development of an online platform by the OIE to allow sharing of laboratory documents such as submission forms, guidelines and required information
- Communication between the OIE and relevant authorities to try and speed up the transport of samples, particularly during outbreak scenarios
- Having a source of emergency funds available to support the transport of samples during emergency situations

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The Results of the Plenary Discussion of Session 4 -Actions in 2 years-

Type of support/ cooperation/ collaboration	Priority	Feasibility	Lead
<p>Web-based platform: The OIE is recommended to support communication and collaboration between Reference Centres through the development of an all-encompassing online platform through which information regarding events, Member Countries needs and priorities, services offered by Reference Centres, scientific materials and others on a number of topics can be circulated to other Reference Centres and to Member Countries. OIE RRAP is renovating the OIE regional website by the end of 2019 and the platform will be developed within 2020.</p>	+++	++	OIE (RCs)
<p>Participation of Reference Centres experts to the OIE events: The OIE continues to invite experts from Reference Centres to attend OIE events (meeting, workshop, hands-on training, etc.).</p>	++	++	OIE
<p>Reference Centre's scientific events: The OIE continues to support the implementation of the Reference Centre's scientific and capacity building activities across various levels (regional and national).</p>	++	++	RCs and OIE
<p>Networks among Reference Centres: Reference Centres are recommended to improve upon existing networks and develop new networks and coordinate activities to facilitate collaboration and communication and reduce overlap. In addition, it is recommended that they establish or maintain regular communications with other Reference Centres for the purposes of sharing research proposals, available research positions and opportunities for collaboration.</p>	++	+	RCs
<p>Share reference materials/samples amongst Reference Centres:</p>	++	+	RCs

Reference Centres are recommended to consider or continue to share reference materials between centres in order to facilitate harmonization and standardization between centres.			
Ensure the visibility of the OIE Reference Centres: Reference Centres are recommended to ensure the visibility of the OIE Reference Centres status in their activities by using the OIE emblem according to the 'Guidelines on the Use of the OIE Emblem by OIE Reference Centres / Guidelines on the Use of the Title of OIE Expert'.	+	++	RCs
Integration of sub-regional networks into regional networks: In the Asia-Pacific region, there are several sub-regional networks and activities on various topics. It is important to integrate the activities and outcomes of sub-regional networks into regional networks to harmonise their activities.			OIE, RCs, FAO

The Results of the Plenary Discussion of Session 4 -Actions to be considered in the future-

Type of support/ cooperation/ collaboration
Sample submission from Member Countries to Reference Centres
Assessment and prioritization of needs of Member Countries for the support from Reference Centres (e.g. directing questionnaires to identify the needs of Member Countries and collaboration with FAO)