



11th Regional Steering Committee Meeting of GF-TADs for Asia and the Pacific, 16 June 2020

Update from SAARC

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Priority Diseases

- **The Seventh Meeting of the SAARC Chief Veterinary Officers' (CVOs) Forum was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on 23-24 July 2019.**
- The Seventh Meeting of the SAARC CVOs' Forum reviewed the TADs priorities.
- It may be recalled that the Second Meeting of the SAARC Chief Veterinary Officers' (CVOs) Forum (March, 2009) identified three diseases as the SAARC Priority Trans-boundary Animal Diseases(TADs): *Peste Des Petits Ruminant* (PPR), Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI); and Food and Mouth Disease (FMD). Later, few zoonotic diseases (*including Rabies*) also drew attention.



Priority Diseases

- The Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Ministers (Thimphu, 27 June 2019), agreed to implement the recommendation of the SAARC CVOs' Forum to make the SAARC region PPR free by 2028. The Ministers also agreed to adopt appropriate measures for addressing the issues related to transboundary animal diseases (TADs), emerging zoonotic diseases/pathogens, among others.
- The Fourth Meeting of the SAARC Agriculture Ministers (Thimphu, 27 June 2019) adopted the Statement on SAARC's Cooperation on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the Regional Action Plan to be implemented to curb Antimicrobial Use (AMU)/Antimicrobial Resistance in the SAARC region, as recommended by the Sixth Meeting of the CVOs' Forum.



Priority Diseases

- The Seventh Meeting of SAARC CVOs' Forum recommended that to materialize this pledge to free the region from PPR by 2028, extensive national strategies/action plan would be required and Member States would need to augment their efforts and activities extensively.
- The Seventh Meeting of SAARC CVOs' Forum decided to constitute a Regional Advisory Group (RAG) for PPR including representatives from FAO and OIE.



New or Emerging TADs

- Considering the presence of multiple strains of both high pathogenic and low pathogenic avian influenza, all avian influenzas would be considered as a priority for the region and instead of HPAI the term AI (Avian Influenza) would be used.
- Rabies, Brucellosis, and Newcastle diseases have been recommended to be added as the new priority diseases.
- OIE and FAO conveyed their readiness to support SAARC and the Member States in this regard. OIE/FAO were requested, among others, to support on Laboratory Information and Management System (LIMS).



Fourth FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of GF-TADs for SAARC

- The Fourth FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) for SAARC was held in Islamabad on 22 July 2019 preceding the Seventh Meeting of the SAARC CVOs Forum (Islamabad, 23-24 July 2019). During the Fourth FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Meeting of the GF-TADs, the Partners agreed: ♣ To continue co-ordination within SAARC and across the sub-regions in Asia and the Pacific to enhance disease control, capacity building partnerships and information sharing. Member countries and partners agreed: ♣ to actively engage from a national and regional level with global initiatives and strategies such as Global FMD, PPR, Rabies, Avian Influenza etc. ♣ to continue to hold the sub-regional GF-TADs meeting back to back with the SAARC CVO forum every 2nd year.



SAARC-Tripartite Workshop on Rabies Elimination

- The SAARC-Tripartite Workshop on “Enhancing Progress towards Rabies Elimination Goal of ‘Zero by 30’ in the SAARC Region” was organized by WHO, FAO and OIE, in collaboration with the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 26-28 June 2019.



TADs related activities undertaken by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) during 2018-19

- Regional capacity development Programme on “Molecular diagnosis and laboratory Surveillance of PPR” was held during 21-2 July 2019 in Bangladesh.
- Regional capacity development programme on “Laboratory biosafety and biosecurity for handling transboundary animal diseases and zoonotic emerging pathogens” was held during 19- 24 August 2019 in India.
- Regional training on “Animal disease informatics and biostatistics” was held during 3-8 May 2018 in India.
- Regional capacity building training on “Hands on training on rabies diagnosis in animals” to be held in 2020, among others.



Work during COVID-19

- The Leaders of the Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held a Video Conference on 15 March 2020 to discuss measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the region.
- The Leaders shared country situations and experiences in the aftermath of the outbreak of COVID-19, as well as measures taken by them to control the spread of the virus. They recognized the unprecedented threat posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 and the urgency with which the Member States needed to work together to prevent and contain the spread of the virus. They also recognized the need to analyze and address the long-term economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.
- Among the proposals shared by the Leaders included continuing the consultation process through meetings at the ministerial and experts' level; identifying the Nodal Experts to take further action on the proposals discussed during the Conference; and formulating a comprehensive regional strategy against COVID-19 through the SAARC process and other appropriate mechanisms.



Work during COVID-19

- SAARC COVID-19 Emergency Fund was created to which all the Member States have pledged voluntary contributions.
- As a follow-up to the Conference of the SAARC Leaders, meetings of Health Professionals and Trade Officials of the SAARC countries have also been held.
- SAARC Health Ministers' Video Conference to address the COVID-19 pandemic was held on 23 April 2020. The Meeting reiterated the importance of regional cooperation and solidarity to address and mitigate the unprecedented threat posed by the pandemic to the region.