

7th Sub-regional GF-TADs Meeting for the Pacific

2nd November 2023, Nalagi Hotel, Nadi, Fiji

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 7th Sub-regional GF-TADs meeting for the Pacific was held on 2nd November as a back-to-back event with the PHOVAPS Forum 2023. Attendees included representatives of 14 Pacific countries including participants from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, New Zealand and Australia. The last (6th) sub-regional meeting was held virtually in 2021. Regional partners in attendance include FAO, WOAH, Australia DFAT, DAFF, ACDP and The Pacific Community.

The meeting noted that:

1. The Global GF-TADs Strategy 2021-2025 aims to establish strategies for priority transboundary animal diseases (TADs) at the regional and sub-regional levels, develop capacities to prevent and control TADs and improve the sustainability of TADs strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships.
2. The GF-TADs Regional Strategy for the Asia and the Pacific 2023-2027 highlights the priority TADs in the Asia-Pacific region to include the following: swine diseases – Foot-and-Mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF), and other swine diseases (classical swine fever (CSF), porcine respiratory & reproductive syndrome (PRRS), porcine epidemic diarrhea (PED)), peste de petits ruminants (PPR), avian influenza (AI) and lumpy skin disease (LSD).
3. Considering the increased movement of people and products globally, the geographic isolation that had protected the Pacific Island Countries and Territories from major TADs is no longer sufficient, particularly in areas where there are regular traffic of fishing vessels, boats, yachts and people coming from outside the region (e.g., tourists, business, diplomats, defence personnel, contract workers).
4. The conduct of disease surveillance activities across the Pacific region is still very limited to detect TADs.
5. The Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Animal Health and Production Services (PHOVAPS) is the established sub-regional coordination mechanism for the veterinary services in Pacific region. The Animal Health and Production (AHP) section of the SPC Land Resources Division officially serves as the PHOVAPS Secretariat.
6. Guided by the activity framework set forth in the Pacific Animal Health and Production Framework (PAHPF) and the Pacific Capacity Building Plan (PCBP), PHOVAPS had developed and endorsed a PHOVAPS Interim Workplan 2024-2025 to address identified priority areas of the region for improving the general animal health and production systems in the Pacific Island countries.
7. Improving animal genetics and breeding is considered a priority for the livestock production of the Pacific Islands. It is also important to note that importing live animals (both terrestrial and aquatic), meat and meat products can also introduce new TADs in the countries.
8. PHOVAPS had identified One Health as one of the key priority areas for technical support. Several Pacific Island countries had started engagement with the Quadripartite (FAO, WOAH, WHO, UNEP) to utilise tools for identifying gaps in the collaboration and communication between the animal and human health services. These tools include the Joint External Evaluations (JEE) (measures national status and progress in achieving International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities), Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) and PVS-IHR National Bridging workshops (NBW).
9. Several Pacific Island countries are actively participating in the Pacific Wildlife Health Network with the overall goal of protecting wildlife health worldwide to achieve One Health. Through such networks, One Health, multisectoral collaboration and capacity for wildlife health management, monitoring and surveillance systems can be strengthened. These networks can be used to increase awareness and

knowledge of risk pathways for TADs such as avian influenza, together with best practices in wildlife health management through information sharing and knowledge exchange.

10. Multiple introduction pathways exist in the aquatic animal health sector with Import of broodstock and ballast water or biofouling associated with shipping exist being key pathways. Hard coral tissue loss disease has been identified as a priority condition that threaten the Pacific if introduced. A regional framework for aquatic biosecurity for the Pacific has recently been updated to support the aquatic animal health of the Pacific.
11. Similar to terrestrial animal health and production sector, laboratory access and trained personnel for aquaculture and aquatic animal health is also lacking in the Pacific. There is opportunity for further discussion within the region to develop capacity concurrently with the terrestrial livestock sector.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Revisiting the GF-TADs workplan developed during the 12th Regional GF-TADs Steering Committee meeting for Asia and the Pacific held in Tokyo, Japan in February 2023, the status of the activities identified for the Pacific are as follows:

Table 1 Activities identified for the Pacific region during the 12th Regional GF-TADs Steering Committee meeting for Asia and the Pacific, in Tokyo, on 6th – 7th February 2023.

| Activities | 2023* | Lead Organisation |
|--|-------|--|
| Objective 1: Establish strategies for priority TADs at the Regional and Sub-Regional level | | |
| Sub-regional GF-TADs Meeting (PHOVAPS) | ● | SPC |
| Sub-regional risk pathway | ○ | none identified |
| Emergency Preparedness & Response | Δ | SPC, NZ MPI, DAFF Australia |
| Animal Health Surveillance | Δ | SPC, NZ MPI, DAFF Australia |
| Training and awareness - ASF | ● | SPC, PHAMA Plus. NZ MPI, DAFF Australia, FAO |
| Biosecurity & border | ○ | SPC, DAFF Australia |
| Veterinary Legislation Support (Vanuatu, Fiji) | ○ | WOAH |
| Objective 2: Develop and strengthen to prevent and control TADs | | |
| Pacific subregional laboratory network | Δ | SPC, ACDP |
| Objective 3: Improve the sustainability of priority TADs strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships | | |
| <i>no specific activity identified</i> | x | |

*Legends: ●= Physical (completed), ○= Physical (planned), Δ = ongoing

2. The Pacific region is free of the major global TADs, however due the particular risk of introduction of TADs in the Pacific, there is a need for strong **sub-regional (Pacific) coordination** to maximise the support and resources available from regional partners. This message needs to be shared with policymakers and government leaders to raise the level of understanding of the importance of allocation of resources for preparedness and response to TADs.
3. The priority terrestrial animal TADs identified for the Pacific are ASF, AI, FMD, LSD, PPR and rabies.
4. Pacific members need to have **increased awareness** on the global disease situation and critical risk pathways particularly for those TADs occurring in neighbouring regions.
5. Awareness and advocacy for priority TADs remain a high priority.
6. **Prevention of disease introduction** is crucial for the Pacific since disease outbreak response and eradication require high financial, technical, and human resources.
7. Pathogen introduction is possible even with good quarantine procedures; hence, it is essential that all Pacific members understand and **identify the risk pathways** of priority TADs as well as of diseases of aquatic animals.

8. With support from regional partners, there is opportunity for the region to address TADs thru **improved biosecurity, early detection (ERP) and risk pathway analysis** to allow for pre-border mitigation of disease incursions, capacity development for pre-border (IRA for imports) and post-border awareness-raising.
9. **Prioritised allocation of resources for risk-based surveillance of TADs**, risk communication and risk management are necessary to prevent of TADs entry and ensure early detection at the border and response in the event of an incursion.
10. **Development, reviewing and updating of emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRP)** is a priority. There is benefit to have country EPRP with emphasis that internal coordination and stakeholder involvement is needed in order to effectively implement during time of emergency and outbreak. Simulation exercises are helpful to test and review EPRP to keep updated information and commitments from relevant stakeholders.
11. The countries recognise the huge need to **increase the technical capacity of the veterinary services** in the region. With the absence or limited presence of veterinarians in majority of the Pacific Island countries, capacity building on emergency planning and response for Paravets in the region is essential.
12. Since **laboratory capacity and access** is limited to the Pacific Island region, rapid field test remains the most cost-effective and practical means of preliminary diagnosis of animal diseases in the region.
13. **A laboratory network** to facilitate efficient sending of animal samples to an identified (Pacific) regional laboratory and reference laboratories for diagnosis and/or confirmatory testing will be valuable for TADs preparedness and response. The experience of PNG in their response to an ASF outbreak in 2020 had demonstrated that a sample referral system can potentially work effectively in managing TADs in the region.
14. **Passive surveillance** in addition to establishing active surveillance is critical.
15. Inclusion of optional units in aquaculture and aquatic animal health in Paravet modules may be a good consideration for the region.
16. Similarly, for countries to consider **inclusion of aquatic animal health** in PVS Evaluation missions that will be executed for the Pacific Island countries as part of capacity building in the aquatic animal health sector of the region.
17. Under the One Health Framework, propose to the PHOVAPS to consider the inclusion of aquatic sectors in the One Health Technical Working Group.
18. The PHOVAPS Secretariat (SPC) will advise the GF-TADs Asia-Pacific Secretariat (WOAH) of the **official representative for PHOVAPS**, and to request for the PHOVAPS Chair to be part of the next GF-TADs Steering Committee meetings for the Asia and the Pacific region.
19. As an output of this GF-TADs meeting for the Pacific Island region, a **2-year Sub-regional GF-TADs Workplan 2024-2025 for the Pacific** (Annex 1) has been developed in line with the PHOVAPS Workplan 2024-2025. Implementation of the GF-TADS workplan for the Pacific will be guided by the PHOVAPS Council.

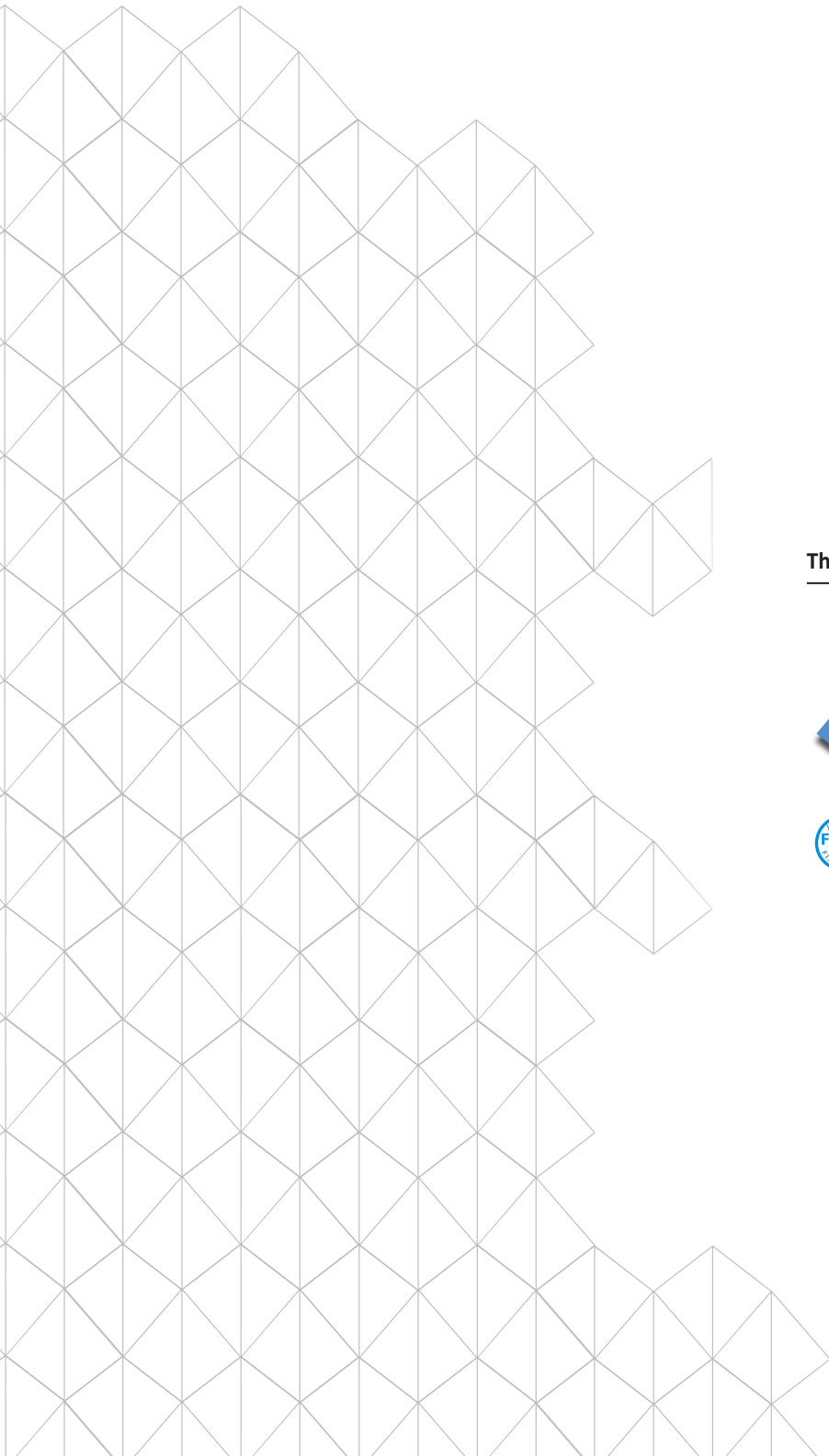
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Annex 1 Proposed sub-region GF-TADs Workplan for the Pacific 2024-2025.

| Objective 1 | Establish strategies for priority TADs at the Regional and Sub-Regional level | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|------|------|-------------------|--|
| Expected Product/Result | 1. TADs prioritization facilitated/coordinated 2. Regional and sub-regional TADs control strategies are formulated in alignment with global and regional strategies 3. Mechanisms for harmonization/coordinated planning established | | | | |
| Activities | | 2024 | 2025 | Lead Organisation | Comments |
| Pacific | Sub-regional GF-TADs Meeting (PHOVAPS) | ○ | | WOAH, FAO | |
| | Develop or update (sub-)regional strategies or roadmaps of priority TADs for the Pacific. | | | SPC | |
| | Participate in the development of new AI Global Strategy | | ○ | WOAH, FAO | |
| | Sub-regional risk pathway | | | | FAO has some activities on the risk pathway. |
| | Emergency Preparedness & Response Program | ○ | ○ | SPC | |
| | Training and awareness for priority TADs (ASF, Avian diseases, FMD, LSD, PPR, rabies) | ○ | ○ | SPC | |
| | Animal Health and Production Legislation | | | | |
| | Strengthen biosecurity practice in aquaculture | | ○ | SPC, WOA | |

| Objective 2 | | Develop and strengthen to prevent and control TADs | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|------|-------------------|---|
| Expected Product/Result | 1. Capacity gaps are identified and priorities for capacity building are addressed. 2. Strengthening capacity of laboratory and epidemiology for prevention and control of TADs. 3. Multi-disciplinary planning for the prevention and control of priority TADs is strengthened. 4. Providing harmonised mechanisms/tools to monitor the control of priority TADs. | | | | |
| Activities | | 2024 | 2025 | Lead Organisation | Comments |
| Pacific | Participate in the annual Regional Avian Disease meeting/workshop | ○ | ○ | WOAH, FAO | Some countries from the Pacific have been invited to the workshop. The number depends on budget availability. |
| | Veterinary Legislation Support (Vanuatu, Fiji, PNG) | ○ | ○ | WOAH | VLSP Support Program |
| | Participate in Standing Group of Experts meeting for ASF annually | ○ | ○ | WOAH, FAO | |
| | Participate in regional workshop or training for LSD | ○/□ | | WOAH, FAO | |
| | Establish and strengthen the roles of leading laboratory for each priority disease, if not exist yet | ○ | | SPC, ACDP | |
| | Information sharing on novel scientific data or control measures | | | | |
| | Apply “Strengthening biosecurity”, “Compartmentalisation”, etc | ○/□ | | WOAH | |
| | Raising awareness of AMU/AMR in aquaculture | ○/□ | | WOAH | |
| Objective 3 | | Improve the sustainability of priority TADs strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships | | | |
| Expected Product/Result | 1. Strengthen engagement and coordination with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector 2. Strengthening coordination amongst FAO and WOAHA at the global level and at the regional level 3. Improve policy dialogue to advocate the TADs control for Members 4. Promote Sustainable funding mechanisms | | | | |
| Activities | | 2024 | 2025 | Lead Organisation | Comments |
| Pacific | Resource mobilization to improve diagnostic capacity for aquatic diseases | | | | |
| | Apply for WOAHA endorsement of Official Control Program/ Disease-free status for PPR and FMD | | | | |

Legends: ●= Physical (completed), ○= Physical (planned), □= Virtual (planned), ■= Virtual (completed), x = pending, Δ = ongoing



This event is organized under the umbrella of



GF-TADs

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF
TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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