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Evaluation of the Performance of the Veterinary Services

Report

World Organisation for Animal Health | PVS Pathway

PVS EVALUATION
REPORT OF THE
VETERINARY SERVICES OF

KINGDOM OF TONGA

10 - 18 September 2024

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List of acronyms, abbreviations and/or special terms

Term	Definition
AAHS	Aquatic Animal Health Services
AH	Animal Health
AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
ASF	African Swine Fever
CA	Competent Authority
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
FAO	Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
HPLC	High-Performance Liquid Chromatography
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests
MEIDECC	Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications
MLSPNR	Ministry of Lands, Survey Planning and Natural Resources
MOF	Ministry of Fisheries
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRSA	Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*
NDRMO	National Disaster Risk Management Office
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NZ-MPI	New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries
PHOVAPS	Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Production Services
QQMD	Quarantine and Quality Management Division
SPAW	South Pacific Animal Welfare Society
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TAWS	Tonga Animal Welfare Society
VS	Veterinary Services
WHO	World Health Organisation
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.1 Introduction

Following a request to WOAH from the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, an evaluation of the Veterinary Services and the Aquatic Animal Health Services based on the *WOAH PVS (Performance of Veterinary Services)* methodology was conducted from 10 -18 September 2024 by a team of independent WOAH trained PVS evaluators. The results of the PVS Evaluation of the Aquatic Animal Health Services are presented in a separate report.

The evaluation began with meetings with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forests and Acting Minister of Fisheries, as well as meetings with senior staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF) and the Ministry of Fisheries (MOF), followed by meetings with officers of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Lands Survey Planning and Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications.

The WOAH PVS Team visited sites and institutions of the public and private sectors and held discussions with government officials, public officers, livestock producers, traders, international donors and other stakeholders.

The mission concluded with a closing meeting involving senior MAFF and MOF staff, private stakeholders and with WOAH regional staff joining online. At the closing meeting the overall findings of the evaluation were discussed.

For those with less familiarity with Tonga, background information is provided in summary in Appendix 3 including a country map, geographical and climate information, human demographic data, livestock demographic data, animal and animal product trade data and general economic data.

I.2 Key findings of the evaluation

Tongan Veterinary Services Context

As with its other small Pacific island neighbours, both human and animal populations in Tonga are very small. The human population is 106,000 mostly spread across four main islands with a total land area of 747 square kilometres. Pigs and chickens are important as sources of protein (e.g. eggs) and culturally such as roast suckling pigs for feasting celebrations - the 2015 census counted 110,000 pigs and 92,000 chickens, almost all raised in free range, smallholder village and rural settings. There are approximately 30,000 dogs, mostly kept as pets, and 8,000 cats. There are approximately 18,000 cattle (mostly beef). Horse, sheep and goat populations are very small, approximately 1,000 each.

This small and sparsely distributed animal population, coupled with an extreme geographical isolation as remote Pacific islands, has seen Tonga seemingly protected from all major transboundary animal diseases. Although disease status is reported as largely unknown there has been a recent disease survey undertaken with donor support from New Zealand. The preliminary, limited results indicate that Tonga is still free of major exotic notifiable diseases such as foot and mouth disease (FMD), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), classical swine fever (CSF), African swine fever (ASF) or rabies.

Brucellosis and leptospirosis are important zoonosis that have been previously detected in Tonga.

In the absence of the most significant WOAH notifiable diseases and with the Tongan demographic and geographical context, the current priorities of the Veterinary Services are

quite different to almost all other WOAH member countries. The focus becomes protecting the islands from incursions of transboundary diseases through import risk analyses and border measures applied to formally or informally imported animals or animal products, alongside passive surveillance for early detection and emergency disease preparedness and response planning should they arrive. The priority is also protecting the human population through animal production food safety, veterinary drugs regulation and zoonoses control. Providing adequate basic clinical services to sick or injured animals is also worthwhile.

It is important to keep this unique context in mind when considering the performance of the Veterinary Services, such that the resourcing and investments are fit for purpose for Tonga.

I.2.A Human, physical and financial resources

There are no veterinarians in the public or private sectors in Tonga. Basic clinical animal health (AH) services are provided by MAFF Livestock Officers with no direct veterinary supervision. This lack of veterinarians makes it impossible to fully comply with international WOAH standards or to implement effective disease surveillance and control programmes.

There is no specific veterinary paraprofessional training available in the country and the technical staff employed by the Veterinary Services (VS) have mostly agricultural-related training. The quality and specificity of their capacities is variable, but motivated staff with some form of training are available for most of the functions under their domain.

Public service positions have adequate job descriptions, with periodical performance reviews. Continuing education is available, mainly in collaboration with donor entities and non-governmental organisations. Given the dependency on external partners, topics and number of trainings are variable and not designed specifically by the VS to suit its needs.

The MAFF operations are based on a comprehensive legislative framework. Multiannual plans and programmes with clear objectives and KPIs are publicly available, although they are more generic relating to agriculture and livestock, rather than animal health. Monitoring and reporting on policy and program implementation is also available for each fiscal year. No direct, undue political or economic influence on decision making was observed, but reliance on international donor funding can compromise independence of technical decision-making.

The government strategy for the livestock sector is focused on food security and reduced dependency on food imports, with no specific objectives related to animal disease surveillance or prevention.

Operational aspects of activities such as export certification and border control are shared between different MAFF Divisions with an unclear chain of command, informal internal coordination and overlapping of responsibilities. There are mostly informal external coordination mechanisms between competent authorities at national level, with unclear and/or non-formalised procedures.

The Therapeutics Goods Act establishes the legal framework for the control of veterinary medicinal products. However, there is no coordination between the Ministry of Health (MOH), MAFF and MOF on this topic and no enforcement of the regulation in this sector.

The overall budget of the MAFF for capital investments is limited and the availability of physical resources depends heavily on donor-funded projects. Most public services have sufficient facilities, but some reported deficiencies such as lack of vehicles and maintenance. Operational funding is regular and clearly defined by the central government. However, both the Quarantine and Quality Management Division (QQMD) and the Food Division informed that their operational funding is not sufficient to cover all their tasks.

There is no pre-established emergency funding for livestock in particular, but funds could be requested in case of state of emergency by the National Disaster Risk Management Committee.

I.2.B Technical authority and capability

Technical capability of the VS to eventually develop animal diseases prevention, control or eradication programmes is insufficient. Moreover, the MAFF Livestock Division's strategic objectives and programmes are aimed mainly at livestock production, reduction of food imports and food security.

There is no laboratory diagnosis capacity in Tonga. In case of urgent need, the VS would rely on potential access to laboratory capacity in Australia and New Zealand. However, this is not formalised and limited by strict requirements.

There is a basic legal framework providing the basis to manage the risk of introducing terrestrial animal diseases. Yet, there are very limited data on which to base any risk analysis and no specific training in risks associated with animals and animal products. Border control procedures – mainly documental - are in place and functional at designated points of entry.

The Animal Diseases Act contains provisions for disease control and a list of (outdated) notifiable diseases. Nevertheless, there is no enforcement, with no knowledge of the current animal disease status of the country and no passive surveillance capacity for early detection of outbreaks or emerging diseases. There is no public awareness of the importance of notifying animal diseases.

There is no active surveillance programme, as the MAFF does not have the resources or technical capacity to design and implement one. An "initiation of baseline survey" was started in 2023 under the lead and initiative of the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries.

The Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC) provides a central government platform, structure and coordination system for national emergencies response. However, there are no procedures in place to determine whether an AH sanitary emergency threat exists, and no field network with competencies to identify and manage disease outbreaks.

The Food Act implementing regulation is not yet in place, which leads to enforcement difficulties. In addition, the Food Division staff, training, and operational resources are not sufficient to effectively enforce the Food Act. Responsibility for aquatic products has been delegated from MAFF to MOF but there is no Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing roles and responsibilities, which has evolved into a lack of control.

There are no approved slaughter facilities in the country. Animals are slaughtered in farms on-site without pre- or post-mortem inspection or any controls on meat hygiene and safety, and no collection of information relevant to livestock diseases and zoonoses. A mobile slaughter unit is scheduled to be operational in 2025, but no evidence was provided regarding formal planning for official controls on meat hygiene and/or pre- and post-mortem inspection.

The Therapeutic Goods Act establishes that a prescription is required for veterinary medicines but there is no implementing regulation or enforcement. In practice, the VS cannot ensure responsible and prudent use of veterinary medicines. MAFF Livestock Division officers provide services to the population that include administration of antimicrobials with no direct veterinary supervision.

Tonga does not have a national coordinated antimicrobial resistance (AMR) surveillance plan under a One Health approach. No residue testing for animal products is currently being undertaken for exports or the local market.

Animal feed is not specifically covered by legislation and there is no management or regulation on its manufacture, import and/or use.

The VS currently do not regulate the identification of animals, either individually or by premises, nor trace and/or control their movements.

There is no specific animal welfare regulation in Tonga but fragmented, outdated and partial legal provisions exist in various pieces of legislation. Their implementation is not enforced by the authorities and public awareness on the topic is limited.

I.2.C Interaction with stakeholders

The VS maintain mostly informal communication with the private sector. The MAFF has a weekly radio programme where different Divisions can contribute with content, as well as a television space when needed. However, content on animal health issues is not considered on a regular basis.

The Food Division has developed dedicated content promoting food safety awareness and announcements for the general public.

Informal contact between the VS and large groups such as the Livestock Farmers Council is fluid and on a permanent basis. This group is also a member of the Agricultural Sector Growth Committee at ministerial level. Other stakeholders such as animal welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also maintain informal communication channels with the VS.

Tonga CA staff regularly participate in international and regional meetings and reporting back to colleagues is normally conducted although not formalised. Tonga is not a member of WOAH; however, they have been invited and participate in regional workshops designed for the Pacific Islands.

The MAFF has established successful joint programmes with stakeholders – in particular with the Tonga Livestock Farmers Council.

Clinical services are generally available to animal owners in Tongatapu, but the quality and coverage is variable. Basic clinical services are provided by MAFF Livestock Officers as part of the “Animal Health Services Programme”. In addition, an NGO organises regular field clinics staffed by voluntary veterinary professionals, students and paraprofessionals from New Zealand.

I.2.D Access to markets

National legislation covers most aspects of the veterinary domain, but the lack of implementing regulations hampers the applicability of i.e. the Animal Diseases Act and the Food Act.

Consultation with stakeholders on the developing of legislation has been done recently but it is not mandatory.

As there are no AH programmes related to prevention, control or eradication of diseases, there is no inspection, communication, or specific awareness activity in this field. There are also no enforcement activities in the fields of veterinary medicines, feed and animal welfare.

Food safety legislation was developed in line with international *Codex Alimentarius* standards.

The MAFF has the authority to issue sanitary certificates based on international standards. Through the Livestock Division, it has agreed bilateral arrangements with Australia and New Zealand for the certification of live animals. Nevertheless, the certificates are not completed by a veterinarian with a thorough understanding of the disease/health status of the shipments.

Tonga is not a member of WOAH and has no notification obligation. However, the country regularly provides updates for both terrestrial and aquatic animals. New food regulations were notified according to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement obligations in 2022.

Table 1: Summary of WOAH PVS evaluation results

PVS Evaluation Summary Results	Result
I. HUMAN, PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES	
I.1.A. Staffing: Veterinarians and other professionals	**1**
I.1.B. Staffing: Veterinary para-professionals	**2**
I.2.A. Competency and education of veterinarians	**N/A**
I.2.B. Competency and education of veterinary paraprofessionals	**2**
I-3. Continuing education	**2**
I-4. Technical independence	**2**
I-5. Planning, sustainability and management of policies and programmes	**3**
I-6.A. Internal coordination (chain of command)	**2**
I-6.B. External coordination (including the One Health approach)	**2**
I-7. Physical resources and capital investment	**2**
I-8. Operational funding	**3**
I-9. Emergency funding	**3**
II. TECHNICAL AUTHORITY AND CAPABILITY	
II-1.A. Access to veterinary laboratory diagnosis	**1**
II-1.B. Suitability of the national laboratory system	**N/A**
II-1.C. Laboratory quality management systems	**N/A**
II-2. Risk analysis and epidemiology	**2**
II-3. Quarantine and border security	**3**
II-4.A. Passive surveillance, early detection and epidemiological outbreak investigation	**1**
II-4.B. Active surveillance and monitoring	**2**
II-5. Emergency preparedness and response	**2**
II-6. Disease prevention, control and eradication	**1**
II-7.A. Regulation, inspection (including audits), authorisation and supervision of establishments for production and processing of food of animal origin	**1**
II-7.B. Ante- and post mortem inspection at slaughter facilities and associated premises	**1**
II-8. Veterinary medicines and biologicals	**2**
II-9. Antimicrobial Resistance and Antimicrobial Use	**2**
II-10. Residue testing, monitoring and management	**1**
II-11. Animal feed safety	**1**
II-12.A. Premises, herd, batch and animal identification, tracing and movement control	**1**
II-12.B. Identification, traceability and control of products of animal origin	**2**
II-13. Animal welfare	**2**
III. INTERACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS	
III-1. Communication	**3**
III-2. Consultation with stakeholders	**2**
III-3. Official representation and international collaboration	**3**
III-4. Accreditation/authorisation/delegation	**1**
III-5. Regulation of the profession by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB)	**1**
III-6. Participation of producers and other stakeholders in joint programmes	**3**
III-7. Veterinary clinical services	**2**
IV. ACCESS TO MARKETS	
IV-1.A. Veterinary Legislation: Legal quality and coverage	**3**
IV-1.B. Veterinary Legislation: Implementation and compliance	**2**
IV-2. International harmonisation	**2**
IV-3. International certification	**2**
IV-4. Equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements	**3**
IV-5. Transparency	**2**
IV-6. Zoning	**1**
IV-7. Compartmentalisation	**1**

I.3 Key recommendations

I.3.A Human, physical and financial resources

To improve their human, physical and financial resources, the VS should consider the following recommendations:

- Continue making use of existing initiatives to provide relevant training for VS staff in animal and public health topics. Include training for livestock officers on improving the clinical services provided and that international standards require proper veterinary supervision of their activities.
- Continue efforts to try to recruit a permanent veterinarian in the country. Consider increasing the incentives for a veterinary professional to practice in Tonga. In the meantime, keep liaising with NGOs to provide clinical services by qualified veterinary professionals.
- Review School of Agriculture curriculums to ensure relevant animal and public health topics are included and regularly updated. Explore paraveterinary training opportunities offered throughout the region and consider establishing a CE programme for CA staff that covers animal health and food safety of products of animal origin, including a dedicated budget.
- Consider specific animal diseases prevention and preparedness objectives for future review and updating of the government´s strategic planning for the agricultural sector.
- Develop SOPs for activities with shared responsibilities between MAFF Divisions. Periodically review and update internal coordination mechanisms, and establish periodical coordination meetings with documented outcomes.
- Establish formal collaboration and coordination mechanisms between public health, animal health and environmental sector ministries (MOH, MAFF, MOF, MNRE).
- Include animal health (terrestrial and aquatic) as a specific topic in the new national Plan on AMR and the review of the national policy on medicines, under the One Health approach. Include all relevant stakeholders in the National AMR Committee.
- Consider Public-Private Partnerships as alternative means for developing future infrastructure in the VS domain i.e. slaughter units or AH laboratory capacity.
- Conduct benefit-cost analyses for future new or expanded operations of the VS. Plan and prioritise activities and develop costed operational plans to advocate for increased government funding.
- Define AH priorities, develop an agreed list of priority notifiable zoonoses, and establish contingency plans for outbreaks or emerging diseases and SOPs including emergency financial arrangements and administrative procedures to access funds.

I.3.B Technical authority and capability

To improve their technical authority and capability, the VS should consider the following recommendations:

- Pursue coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities (MAFF, MOF, MOH) for joint provision of basic laboratory capacity in animal health and food safety. Review and explore regional opportunities (The Pacific Community (SPC), New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries, etc.) related to access to more advanced laboratory diagnostic services in the Pacific, including for notifiable disease incursions, and for capacity building activities. According to defined priorities, explore possibilities

for procurement of rapid tests for basic primary diagnosis of diseases and train staff on their use.

- Develop competencies to undertake simple risk assessments and progressively develop risk analysis skills. Explore the development of data capture, storage and digitalisation/systematization capacity that allows the analysis of information and serves as foundation for risk-based decision-making. Develop capacity and tools for risk communication following risk assessment and risk management results.
- Train MAFF staff specifically on risks associated to imports of animals and animals' products. Ensure the addressing of the risk of illegal and unsupervised activities that may be an important pathway for disease introduction in the country. Increase operational capacity and cooperation with other competent authorities at the border, such as Customs and the police.
- Review current legislation and ministerial policies to modify the Animal Diseases Act establishing an updated list of diseases and the obligation to notify. Consider developing criteria for listing animal diseases of national concern. Promote public awareness of the importance of reporting suspected diseases and animal mortality.
- Continue collaboration with the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (NZ-MPI) to establish a surveillance baseline that can be used for decision-making and defining priorities for listing animal diseases. Seek international opportunities to develop technical capacity to design and implement disease surveillance (national or regional level approach). Once access to laboratory and technical capacity have been achieved, consider adding disease surveillance to the MAFF Livestock Division's permanent programmes, with associated budget, KPIs, etc.
- Formally delegate food safety activities related to aquatic animals from MAFF to MOF by means of a MOU. Ensure the prompt approval of the Food Regulation. Periodically revise existing regulations and draft new food safety standards in line with *Codex Alimentarius* and applicable WOAH standards.
- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit considers adequate sanitary and food hygiene standards, ante-and post-mortem inspection, as well as data collection. The plan should consider coordinated efforts between the MAFF Food and Livestock Divisions and specialised training for meat inspectors. Also, develop a programme to licence and regularly inspect slaughter facilities and/or sites known to be functioning regularly (i.e. pig farms).
- Develop implementing regulations for the Therapeutic Goods Act for proper marketing and use of veterinary medicines and biologicals. Include veterinary medicines in the Medicines Policy currently under review. Consider awareness campaigns to discourage the improper use of antimicrobials by livestock farmers. Update and approve the national AMR plan including all relevant stakeholders under a One Health approach.
- Implement an official programme to monitor/enforce a swill feeding ban and/or to manage swill feeding risks.
- Depending on feasibility studies, work on the gradual implementation of livestock identification and traceability. Risk assessment should be used to prioritise species for early/pilot adoption of animal identification and traceability. Consider awareness campaigns for food producing establishments on the importance of traceability and control of the food chain.
- Develop a national animal welfare policy with the involvement of different stakeholders and ensure enforcement of current regulations in place, including training of VS staff and public awareness campaigns. Consider developing a single piece of animal welfare legislation, based on the WOAH Animal Health Code covering areas such as slaughter, land and sea transport, on-farm welfare, stray animals control, etc.

I.3.C Interaction with stakeholders

To improve their interaction with stakeholders, the VS should consider the following recommendations:

- Develop an animal health and animal welfare communications strategy. Make use of available coverage provided by radio and TV programmes for relevant content on animal and public health. Review and update communication materials on a regular basis.
- Schedule regular meetings with stakeholders and keep documented records of agendas/agreements. Include as many private sector stakeholders as possible in formal consultation procedures.
- Consider formal procedures for reporting back to colleagues after international meetings.
- Consider granting 'official status' to potential private veterinarians that arrive in the country to undertake official tasks and programmes. Study the possibility of working on a regional approach to develop regulations for the veterinary profession and veterinary paraprofessionals.
- Continue to liaise with the South Pacific Animal Welfare Society and the Tonga Animal Welfare Society to provide clinical services by qualified veterinary professionals and train Livestock Officers on basic clinical skills. Include training on the limits to clinical services provided by paraprofessionals (i.e. surgeries) and the need for proper veterinary supervision of their activities.

I.3.D Access to markets

To improve their access to markets, the VS should consider the following recommendations:

- Develop a complete suite of implementing regulations for relevant Acts in the VS domain, taking into account international and regional standards and best practices.
- Approve the Food Act implementing regulations and promote compliance using stakeholder awareness programmes. Include clarification on inspection of aquatic animals/fisheries products between MAFF and MOF.
- Participate actively in any regional (SPC, Australia, New Zealand) SPS harmonisation initiatives in the field of AH.
- Consider that only officers under direct veterinary supervision should be permitted to certify health status of animals in compliance with international standards.
- Study joint collaboration between MAFF and MOF for international negotiation, agreement, and fulfilment of equivalence and/or other types of SPS agreements with trading partners.
- Evaluate benefit/cost and convenience of a potential WOAH membership***.***

PART II: CONDUCT OF THE EVALUATION

At the request of the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga, the Director General of the WOAH appointed an independent WOAH PVS team consisting of Dr Ana Afonso (Team Leader – Aquatic Animal Health Services), Dr Pablo Belmar Kretschmann (Technical expert – Veterinary Services), and Dr Kevin Ellard (SPC Observer) to undertake an evaluation of the veterinary services of the Kingdom of Tonga. The evaluation was carried out from 10-18 September, 2014.

The evaluation was carried out with close reference to the WOAH standards contained in Chapters 3.1., 3.2., 3.3. and 3.4., and in other chapters as relevant, of the WOAH *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (the Terrestrial Code), using the WOAH *PVS Tool* (7th edition, 2019) to guide the process. Relevant Terrestrial Code references are referenced for each critical competency.

This report identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the veterinary services of Tonga as referenced to the WOAH standards. The report also makes some general recommendations for actions to improve performance.

II.1 WOAH PVS Tool: method, objectives, and scope of the evaluation

To assist countries to establish their current level of performance, form a shared vision, establish priorities, and carry out strategic initiatives, WOAH provides an evaluation tool called the WOAH Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services (WOAH PVS Tool) which comprises four fundamental components:

- Human, physical, and financial resources
- Technical authority and capability
- Interaction with stakeholders
- Access to markets

These four fundamental components encompass 45 Critical Competencies, for each of which five qualitative levels of advancement are described. For each Critical Competency, a list of suggested sources of verification was used by the WOAH PVS Team to help determine the level of advancement.

The report follows the structure of the WOAH PVS Tool incorporating the descriptions and levels of advancement for each Critical Competency.

The objective and scope of the WOAH PVS Evaluation includes all aspects of the veterinary domain relevant to the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the quality of Veterinary Services.

II.2 Context of the evaluation

II.2.A Availability of data relevant to the evaluation

A list of documents received by the WOAH PVS Team before and during the PVS Evaluation mission is provided in Appendix 5. All documents and pictures listed in Appendix 5 are referenced to relevant Critical Competencies and provide material evidence for the levels of advancement and related findings.

Table 2 provides an overview of the availability of the main categories of documents or data needed for the evaluation, considering the requirements set out in the WOAH Terrestrial Code.

Table 2: Summary of data available for evaluation

Main document categories	Data available in the public domain	Data accessible only on site or on request	Data not available
→ **Animal census:**			
○ at 1st administrative level		x	
○ at 2nd administrative level		x	
○ at 3rd administrative level			N/A
○ per animal species		x	
○ per production systems			x
→ **Organisations charts**			
○ Central level of the VS		x	
○ 2nd level of the VS		x	
○ 3rd level of the VS			N/A
→ **Job descriptions in the VS**			
○ Central levels of the VS		x	
○ 2nd level of the VS			N/A
○ 3rd level of the VS			N/A
→ **Legislations, regulations, decrees …**			
○ Animal health and public health	x		
○ Veterinary practice			N/A
○ Veterinary statutory body			N/A
○ Veterinary medicines and biologicals	x		
○ Official delegation			N/A
→ **Veterinary census**			
○ Global (public, private, veterinary, para-professional)			N/A
○ Per level			N/A
○ Per function			N/A
→ **Census of logistics and infrastructure**			x
→ **Strategic plan(s)**		x	
→ **Operational plan(s)**		Some	
→ **Activity reports**		x	
→ **Financial reports**		x	
→ **Animal health status reports**			x
→ **Evaluation reports**			x
→ **Procedures, registers, records, letters …**		x	

II.2.B General organisation of the Veterinary Services

For the purposes of this evaluation, the V*eterinary Services* include the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests and certain aspects of the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Fisheries and evaluation of the *Aquatic Animal Health Services* are included in a separate report.

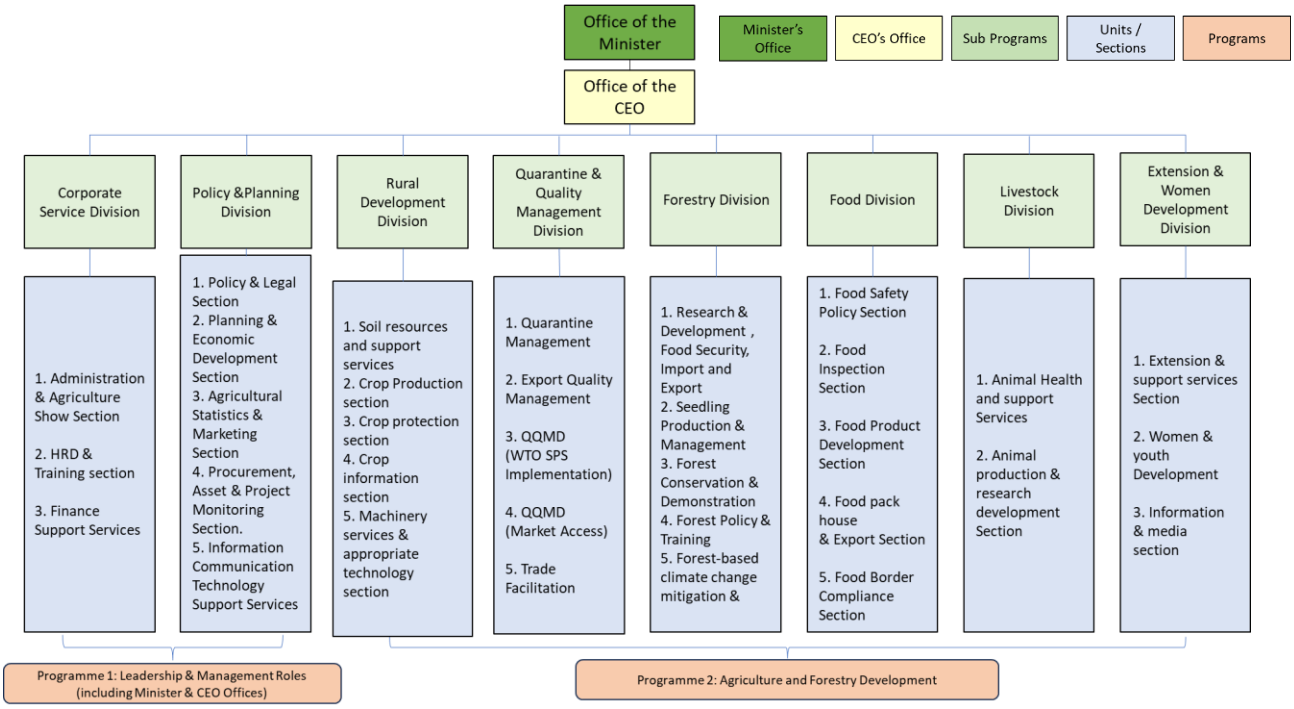
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests is the primary governmental body responsible for overseeing agricultural development, food security and forest management in Tonga. The

MAFF's mission is to enhance agricultural productivity, ensure food security, and promote sustainable use of natural resources.

The MAFF adopts the structure below in order to deliver the outputs allocated to each division. The Minister provides overall leadership while the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provides overall management. Each Deputy Director (Sub Programs) manages a Division and reports to the CEO who reports to the Minister.

Organisational Structure of the MAFF



The MAFF is responsible for:

- Providing research and extension services in vegetables/crops/fruit-trees, livestock and forestry to maintain nutritive and healthy food security.
- Improve livelihood by building capacity of rural farmers to increase production of commercial crops.
- Provide food safety services for all food produced or imported for sale.
- Provide quarantine services in preventing foreign weeds, pests and diseases of plants and livestock and also to facilitate export.
- Quick disaster relief and economic recovery from preparedness program on home-gardening, famine crops, etc.
- Sustainable management of soils, plant and livestock genetic resources, ecology and other sustainable land management practices.

Livestock Division

The MAFF Livestock Division is the competent authority (CA) for terrestrial animal health in Tonga. It also provides basic clinical services through Livestock Officers stationed in Tongatapu and in 5 outer islands, as the country does not have permanently employed Tongan veterinarians to support the livestock sector.

The Division's strategic objectives and associated programmes are not aimed at animal health, but mainly at the development of livestock production to improve the economic and social state of livestock farmers, as well as ensuring food security by reducing dependency on food imports.

Besides the delivery of basic animal health services, its areas of action are mainly: managing a pig and sheep breeding farm, raising and selling scheme; capacity building for farmers; a chicken hatching and distribution programme; an artificial insemination programme and bee-keeping and feed development projects.

The Livestock Division currently has a total of 20 active staff, including 9 non-permanent labourers. 5 staff are stationed in outer islands.

Food Division

The MAFF Food Division is the CA to develop, manage and administer the food safety system and implement the Food Act (2020) in Tonga. The Division is in the last stages of the process of developing an implementing regulation for the Food Act that will facilitate the implementation of its provisions and make them fully operational.

The primary responsibility of the Food Division is to ensure that food consumed, produced, distributed and marketed in Tonga, including imported foods, meet the required standards of food safety. These responsibilities would include the overall control of fish and fisheries products, nevertheless, this is currently not being done as the MAFF is seeking to sign a Memorandum of Understanding delegating the enforcement of the food safety legislation for these products to the Ministry of Fisheries.

The Food Division also has a border control section actively involved in inspecting imported food products in collaboration with the Quarantine and Quality Management Division.

The Division operated at the time of the PVS Evaluation with 20 staff of which 14 were permanent and 6 daily paid workers, including 1 staff stationed in Vava'u.

Quarantine and Quality Management Division

The MAFF QQMD is responsible for overall quarantine and border security in Tonga, including live animals and animal products.

The Division is made up of 3 sections (Import, Export and Support Services) and currently has 36 staff, including 5 stationed in Vava'u.

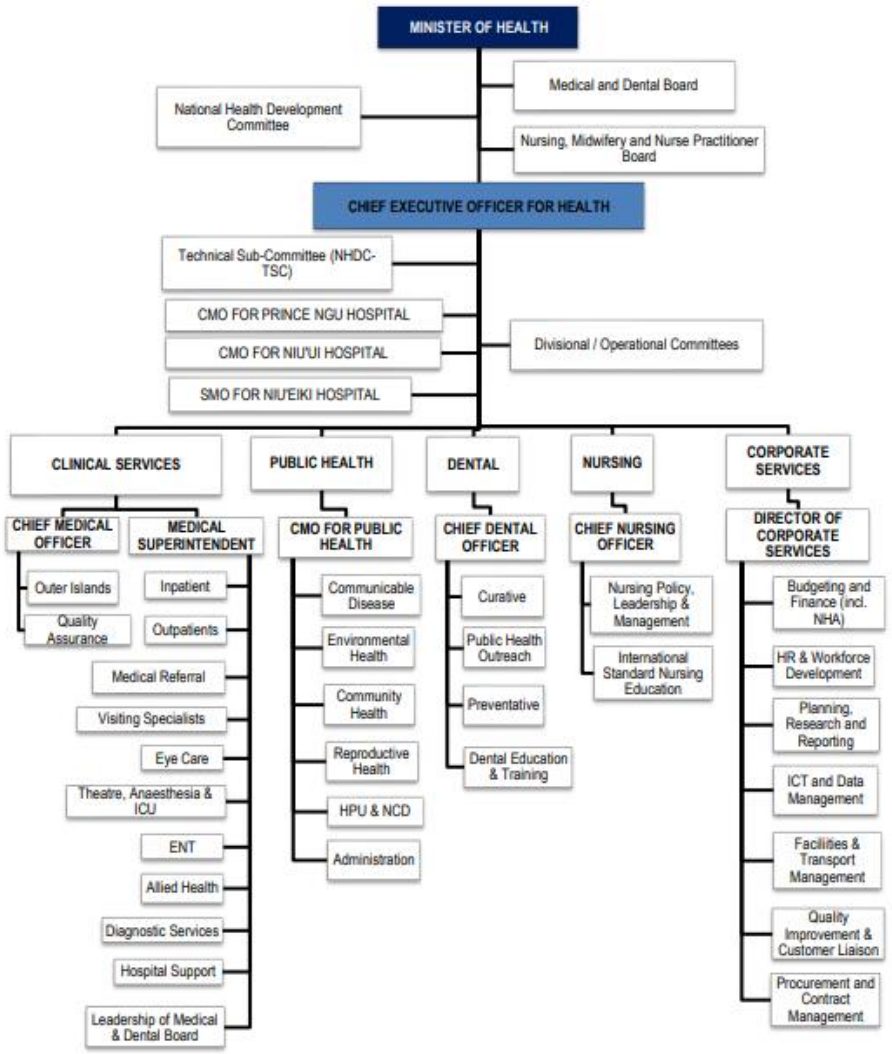
Tonga has 6 main ports of entry, which are; Fua'amotu International Airport, Queen Salote Wharf, Vuna Wharf and Faua wharf in Tongatapu; and Lupepau'u airport and Halaevalu Wharf in Vava'u.

Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is the CA for implementing and enforcing activities legislated in the following Acts that are relevant for the VS:

- Therapeutics Goods Act 2001(Amendment Act 2004)
- Pharmacy Act 2001(Amendment Act 2004)
- Drugs and Poisons Act 1930 (Amendment Act 2001)
- Public Health Act 2008 (Amendment Act 2012)

Organisational Structure of the Ministry of Health



As seen in the organisational structure figure above, the MOH is divided into five functional divisions:

- Corporate Services Division
- Public Health Division
- Medical/Clinical Services Division
- Nursing Division
- Dental Division

Divisional heads are responsible to the CEO of Health for the implementation of each Division's services.

The Therapeutics Goods Act establishes that the Ministry is responsible for maintaining a list of medicinal drugs that require registration, which includes "medicinal drugs available from veterinary practitioners for animal use". It is also responsible for defining the national policy on medicines, the imports of medicinal drugs, registration and inspection of pharmacies, and the development of the National Multi-Sectorial Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, which is done in collaboration with public and private stakeholders under the One Health approach.

In addition - and until the draft implementing regulation for the Food Act is approved and in force - the Ministry is still enforcing certain aspects of the old Food Safety Act (repealed in

2014). These activities are mainly issuing permits for food establishments and conducting inspections of food processing premises (including fisheries products).

II.2.C Animal disease occurrence

No up-to-date testing information is available for the occurrence of animal diseases in the country. A baseline survey is currently underway supported by New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries (see CC II.4-A and II.4-B).

However, and despite not being a WOAH member, the VS submits periodical reports on the disease status of the country. The WOAH – WAHIS Standard report for Tonga (8/04/24) is shown below:

Animal Health Situation

Diseases for which at least one exceptional event is ongoing:

Outbreaks of all ongoing disease events in the country

Reporting History for the past two years

Number of Immediate Notifications submitted: 0

Average time elapsed from start of event to its confirmation (days): 0

Average time elapsed from confirmation of event to submission of IN (days): 0

Ongoing Events

Submitted Six-Monthly Reports

	SEM01 2022	SEM02 2022	SEM01 2023	SEM02 2023
Terrestrial	Submitted	Pending	Submitted	Pending
Aquatic	Submitted	Submitted	Submitted	Submitted

II.3 Organisation of the evaluation

II.3.A Timetable of the mission

Appendix 2 provides the timetable of the mission and details of the facilities and locations visited by the WOAH PVS Team and Appendix 3 provides the air travel itinerary of team members.

II.3.B Categories of sites and sampling for the evaluation

Table 3 lists the categories of sites relevant to the evaluation and the number of each category of sites in the country. It indicates how many of the sites were visited, in comparison with the suggested sampling framework ("ideal" sampling) recommended in WOAH PVS Manual.

Table 3: Site sampling

	Terminology or names used in the country	Number of sites	"Ideal" sampling	Actual sampling
ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATION OF THE COUNTRY				
1st administrative level	*Tongatapu*			1
2nd administrative level	*Outer islands*			0
VETERINARY SERVICES ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE				
Central (Federal/National) VS	*Tongatapu*			1
Field level of the VS (animal health)	*Outer islands*			0
VETERINARY MEDICINES & BIOLOGICALS				
Production sector	N/A			
Import and wholesale sector	N/A			
Retail sector	N/A			
Other partners involved	*MOH*	1	1	1
VETERINARY LABORATORIES				
National, Regional and local labs	N/A			
Associated, accredited and other labs	N/A			
ANIMAL AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS MOVEMENT CONTROL				
Bordering countries	N/A			
Airports and seaports border posts		6	6	1
Main terrestrial border posts	N/A			
Minor terrestrial border posts	N/A			
Quarantine stations for import or export	N/A			
Internal check points	N/A			
Live animal markets	N/A			
Zones, compartments	N/A			
PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTION OF ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS				
Export slaughterhouses	N/A			
National market slaughterhouses	N/A			
Local market slaughterhouses	N/A			
Slaughter areas/slabs/points	N/A			
On farm or butcher's slaughtering sites	*On site slaughtering*	unknown	-	1
Processing sites (milk, meat, eggs, etc)	*Sausage processing*	1	1	0
Retail outlets (butchers, shops, rest.)	*Butcheries*	9	9	1
TRAINING AND RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS				
Veterinary university	N/A			
Veterinary paraprofessional schools		1	1	1
Veterinary research organisations	N/A			
STAKEHOLDERS' ORGANISATIONS				
Agricultural Chamber / organisation				
National livestock farmers organisations		1	1	1
Other stakeholder/consumer organisations	AW NGOs	2	2	2

PART III: RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION & GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the veterinary services, and makes general recommendations, across the four main fundamental components of the PVS tool:

FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS	
1.	HUMAN PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES
2.	TECHNICAL AUTHORITY AND CAPABILITY
3	INTERACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS
4.	ACCESS TO MARKETS

The activities of the Veterinary Services are recognised by the international community and by WOAH Members as a 'global public good'. Accordingly, it is essential that each country acknowledges the importance of the role and responsibilities of its Veterinary Services and gives them the human and financial resources needed to fulfil their responsibilities.

This WOAH PVS Evaluation examined each Critical Competency under the 4 fundamental components, listed strengths and weaknesses where applicable, and established a current level of advancement for each Critical Competency. Evidence supporting this level included interviews and field observations associated with the mission, and also documentary evidence, as listed in Appendix 5. General recommendations are provided where relevant.

The current level of advancement for each Critical Competency is shown in cells shadowed in grey (15%) in the table and indicated in the line **LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - x**.

III.1 Fundamental component I: Human, physical and financial resources

This component of the evaluation concerns the institutional effectiveness and sustainability of the VS as demonstrated by the levels of human, physical and financial resources available and their efficient application. It comprises fourteen Critical Competencies:

Critical Competencies:

Section I-1	**Professional and technical staffing of the Veterinary Services (VS)**
	A. Veterinary and other professionals (university qualified)
	B. Veterinary paraprofessionals
Section I-2	**Competency and education of veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals**
	A. Veterinarians
	B. Veterinary paraprofessionals
Section I-3	**Continuing education (CE)**
Section I-4	**Technical independence**
Section I-5	**Planning, sustainability and management of policies and programmes**
Section I-6	**Coordination capability of the Veterinary Services**
	A. Internal coordination (chain of command)
	B. External coordination (including the One Health approach)
Section I-7	**Physical resources and capital investment**
Section I-8	**Operational funding**
Section I-9	**Emergency funding**

Terrestrial Code References:
Points 1-7, 9 and 14 of Article 3.1.2. on Fundamental principles of quality: Professional judgement/Independence/ Impartiality/Integrity/Objectivity/Veterinary legislation/General organisation/Procedures and standards/Human and financial resources.
Point 4 of Article 3.2.1. on General considerations.
Point 1 of Article 3.2.2. on Scope.
Points 1 and 2 of Article 3.2.3. on Evaluation criteria for the organisational structure of the Veterinary Services.
Point 2 of Article 3.2.4. on Evaluation criteria for quality system.
Article 3.2.5. on Evaluation criteria for human resources.
Points 1-3 of Article 3.2.6. on Evaluation criteria for material resources: Financial/Administrative/Technical.
Points 3 and Sub-point d) of Point 4 of Article 3.2.10. on Performance assessment and audit programmes: Compliance/In-Service training and development programme for staff.
Article 3.2.12. on Evaluation of the veterinary statutory body.
Points 1-5 and 10 of Article 3.2.14. on Organisation and structure of Veterinary Services/National information on human resources/Financial management information/Administration details/Laboratories engaged in diagnosis/Performance assessment and audit programmes.

I-1. PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL STAFFING OF THE VETERINARY SERVICES (VS)

DEFINITION
The appropriate level of staffing of the VS to allow for veterinary and technical functions to be undertaken efficiently and effectively.
A. Veterinary and other professionals (university qualified)
The appropriate level of staffing of the VS to allow for veterinary and other professional functions to be undertaken efficiently and effectively.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. The majority of positions requiring veterinary or other professional skills are not occupied by appropriately qualified professionals.
2. The majority of positions requiring veterinary or other professional skills are occupied by appropriately qualified professionals at central and state/provincial levels.
3. The majority of positions requiring veterinary or other professional skills are occupied by appropriately qualified professionals at local (field) levels.
4. There is a systematic approach to defining job descriptions and formal, merit-based appointment and promotion procedures for *veterinarians* and other professionals.
5. There are effective procedures for formal performance assessment and performance management of *veterinarians* and other professionals.

I-1.A.a. Findings:

There are no veterinarians at the MAFF Livestock Division or employed by the public or private sector in Tonga.

For the fiscal year 2023/2024, the Livestock Division consisted of a total of 20 active staff (including 9 non-permanent workers). Besides Tongatapu, 5 outer islands have a permanently stationed Livestock Officer.

The number of permanent staff (and some of them being granted study leave for long periods) is not sufficient to comply with the objectives set for the different programmes assigned to the Division, and hence the need to hire non-permanent workers on a yearly basis. Clinical services are provided to the population by MAFF Livestock Officers as one of the objectives of the Livestock Division's "Animal Health Services Programme".

The PVS team was informed that a former MAFF Livestock Officer is currently studying veterinary science at Massey University in New Zealand on a scholarship.

I-1.A.b. Strengths:

- Scholarships available for students to pursue veterinary medicine studies abroad via programmes aimed at Pacific Islands.
- Livestock officers available to provide basic animal health services to livestock farmers, particularly on the main islands.

I-1.A.c. Weaknesses:

- No direct veterinary supervision of Livestock Officers' providing clinical services.
- Lack of incentives to attract veterinary professionals to the country.

I-1.A.d. Recommendations:

- Continue making use of existing initiatives at regional level and international expertise to provide relevant training for VS staff in animal and public health topics. Include training to improve clinical services provided; to recognise and report suspect notifiable diseases, the limits to clinical services provided by solely by paraprofessionals (i.e. surgeries) and the need for proper veterinary supervision of their activities.
- Continue and increase the use of clinical advice provided by a foreign NGO veterinarian via telemedicine service as a form of supervision and provision of verbal or written advice. This might include the opportunity for real time or delayed sharing of videos/photos to exclude exotic notifiable diseases.
- Continue to liaise with NGOs to provide clinical services by qualified veterinary professionals.
- Continue efforts to try to recruit a veterinarian in in the country. Consider increasing the incentives for a veterinary professional to practice in Tonga or developing a Tongan-funded scholarship with the obligation for those supported to attend a foreign veterinary school to return to work in Tonga.

I-1.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 2, 5

I-1. PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL STAFFING OF THE VETERINARY SERVICES (VS)

DEFINITION
The appropriate level of staffing of the VS to allow for veterinary and technical functions to be undertaken efficiently and effectively.
B. Veterinary paraprofessionals
The appropriate level of staffing of the VS to allow for *veterinary paraprofessional* (according to the WOAH definition) functions to be undertaken efficiently and effectively. This covers WOAH *veterinary para-professional* categories having trained at dedicated educational institutions with formal qualifications which are recognised by the government or the VSB.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The majority of positions requiring *veterinary paraprofessional* skills are not occupied by personnel holding appropriate qualifications.
2. Some positions requiring *veterinary paraprofessional* skills are occupied by personnel holding appropriate qualifications. There is little or no veterinary supervision.
3. The majority of positions requiring *veterinary paraprofessional* skills are occupied by personnel holding appropriate qualifications. There is a variable level of veterinary supervision.
4. The majority of *veterinary paraprofessional* positions are effectively supervised on a regular basis by *veterinarians*.
5. There are effective management procedures for formal appointment and promotion, as well as performance assessment and performance management of *veterinary paraprofessionals*.

I-1.B.a. Findings:

Technical staff employed by the VS has mostly agricultural-related training. The quality and specificity of their capacities is variable. Training on animal health and food safety aspects is insufficient and there is no veterinary supervision of paraprofessionals.

For the fiscal year 2023/2024, the Livestock Division consisted of a total of 20 staff (including 9 daily paid workers). 4 staff have university degrees, and the rest have technical education.

The post denomination of each staff and the vacant positions are explained in the following figure:

Post/Level	No. of employee	Status
Deputy	1	1
Senior Livestock Officer	1	1
Agriculture/Livestock Officer	3	2 (1 vacated)
Technical Officer Grade II	3	2 & 1 Study leave
Senior Livestock Assistant	5	4 & 1 study leave
Livestock Assistant	2	1 & 1 vacated
Daily Paid Laborer	10	9
Total staff & daily paid laborer	**24**	**20 currently active on duty**

In the case of the MAFF Food Division, it currently has 20 staff (6 daily paid workers). 6 have university degrees and the rest technical education.

MAFF positions have job descriptions, responsibilities and competencies required. Performance reviews are conducted by the direct manager.

Clinical services are provided by MAFF Livestock Officers with no direct veterinary supervision (see CC III-7).

I-1.B.b. Strengths:

- A number of paraprofessionals employed by the VS have relevant qualifications in animal science and production.
- Job descriptions exist with requirements listed.
- The VS makes efforts to provide periodical training on animal health and production to its staff.

I-1.B.c. Weaknesses:

- Training and competencies development for VS staff is dependent on international donors and partners.
- No direct veterinary supervision of paraprofessionals providing clinical services.

I-1.B.d. Recommendations:

- Continue making use of existing initiatives at regional level and international expertise to provide relevant training for VS staff in animal and public health topics. Include training to improve clinical services provided; to recognise and report suspect notifiable diseases, the limits to clinical services provided solely by paraprofessionals (i.e. surgeries) and the need for proper veterinary supervision of their activities.
- Review School of Agriculture curriculums to ensure relevant animal and public health topics are included and regularly updated, including WOAH notifiable diseases.

I-1.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 2, 5, 31, 36, 39

I-2. COMPETENCY AND EDUCATION OF VETERINARIANS AND VETERINARY PARAPROFESSIONALS

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to effectively carry out their veterinary and technical functions, as indicated by the level and quality of the qualifications of their personnel in veterinary and veterinary paraprofessional positions.
A . Veterinary and other professionals (university qualified)
This references the WOAH recommendations on the Competencies of graduating veterinarians ('Day 1 graduates') to assure National Veterinary Services of quality, and WOAH guidelines on Veterinary Education Core Curriculum.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – N/A
1. The veterinarians' knowledge, skills and practices, are of a variable standard that allow only for elementary clinical and administrative activities of the VS.
2. The veterinarians' knowledge, skills and practices are of a uniform standard sufficient for accurate and appropriate clinical and administrative activities of the VS.
3. The veterinarians' knowledge, skills and practices are sufficient for all professional/technical activities of the VS (e.g. surveillance, treatment and control of animal disease, including conditions of public health significance).
4. The veterinarians' knowledge, skills and practices are sufficient for specialised technical activities (e.g. higher level epidemiological analysis, disease modelling, animal welfare science) as may be needed by the VS, supported by post-graduate level training.
5. The veterinarians' knowledge, skills and practices are subject to regular updating, and are internationally recognised such as through formal evaluation and/or the granting of international equivalence with other recognised veterinary qualifications.

I-2.A.a. Findings:

There are no permanent Tongan veterinarians, or any Tongan university providing a veterinary qualification.

I-2.A.b. Strengths:

- N/A

I-2.A.c. Weaknesses:

- N/A

I-2.A.d. Recommendations:

- N/A

I-2.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5):

I-2. COMPETENCY AND EDUCATION OF VETERINARIANS AND VETERINARY PARAPROFESSIONALS

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to effectively carry out their veterinary and technical functions, as indicated by the level and quality of the qualifications of their personnel in veterinary and *veterinary paraprofessional* positions.
B. Veterinary paraprofessionals
This references the WOAH Competency Guidelines for Veterinary Para-professionals and WOAH Curricula Guidelines for *Veterinary Para-professionals*.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. Positions requiring *veterinary paraprofessional* skills are generally occupied by those having no formal training or qualifications from dedicated educational institutions.
2. The training and qualifications of those in positions requiring *veterinary paraprofessional* skills is of a variable standard and allows for the development of only basic competencies.
3. The training and qualifications of *veterinary paraprofessionals* is of a fairly uniform standard that allows the development of some specific competencies (e.g. vaccination on farms, *meat* hygiene control, basic *laboratory* tests).
4. The training and qualifications of *veterinary paraprofessionals* is of a uniform standard that allows the development of more advanced competencies (e.g. blood and tissue sample collection on farms, supervised *meat* inspection, more complex *laboratory* testing).
5. The training and qualifications of *veterinary paraprofessionals* is of a uniform standard and is subject to regular evaluation and/or updating.

I-2.B.a. Findings:

Technical staff employed by the VS has mostly agricultural-related training. Training on animal health and food safety is insufficient.

There is no specific veterinary paraprofessionals training available in the country. The Tonga National University offers a degree in agricultural science (3 years) and a diploma in the same topic (1 year). The 3-year degree is new and there are no graduates yet, 10 students have completed the 2nd year (14 started). In 2025 the university will also offer a certificate in animal care.

The curriculum includes 2 courses in animal health in the second and third year. There are also courses on animal production, animal nutrition, breeding and basic anatomy/physiology. These courses lead to a specialisation in animal production within the degree.

The curriculum was discussed with MAFF. The degree is mostly about agricultural production with limited practical training. Basic notions of disease diagnostics and therapeutics are taught by MAFF staff. Zoonotic diseases are part of the curriculum but there is no training on meat inspection or other food safety aspects.

The Tonga National University is working with a NZ university partner on a pilot programme to develop a curriculum which could open doors for access to veterinary school in NZ. The idea is to align on basic content so that future students could have their Tongan qualifications recognised when applying to NZ universities.

Another College of Agriculture based in one of the outer islands offers a similar degree on crop and livestock production.

I-2.B.b. Strengths:

- Tongan educational institutions are now providing local training opportunities in agricultural courses with specialisation and subjects on livestock production.

I-2.B.c. Weaknesses:

- No national training available on specific and relevant animal and public health topics.

I-2.B.d. Recommendations:

- Review School of Agriculture curriculums to ensure relevant animal and public health topics are included.
- Explore training opportunities offered throughout the region (e.g. paraveterinary training in Hawaii, SPC paraveterinary specific trainings from Fiji).
- Continue VS efforts to provide periodical training on relevant animal and public health topics to its staff.

I-2.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 45, 46

I-3.CONTINUING EDUCATION (CE)

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to maintain, update and improve the knowledge, attitudes and skills of their personnel, through an ongoing staff training and development programme assessed on a regular basis for relevance and targeted skills development.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS have no access to veterinary or paraprofessional CE.
2. The VS have access to CE (internal and/or external training) on an irregular basis but it does not take into account needs, or new information or understanding.
3. The VS have access to CE that is reviewed and sometimes updated, but it is implemented only for some categories of veterinary professionals and paraprofessionals.
4. The VS have access to a CE programme that is reviewed annually and updated as necessary, and is implemented for all categories of veterinary professionals and paraprofessionals.
5. The VS have up-to-date CE that is implemented or is a requirement for all relevant veterinary professionals and paraprofessionals and is subject to dedicated planning and regular evaluation of effectiveness.

I-3.a. Findings:

The Livestock Division coordinates a yearly capacity building scheme to provide training programmes on animal health and production aspects to the staff. This is done mainly by group trainings (face to face and online) in collaboration with local and mostly international donor entities and non-governmental organisations.

Given the dependency on external partners, capacity building topics and number of yearly trainings are variable and are not planned or designed specifically by the VS to suit it needs, but selected according to availability and offers to participate.

An example of capacity building activities conducted by the Livestock Division in 2023 are summarised below:

Training Course	Provider - Location	Participants
Cattle & Sheep Artificial Insemination and semen extraction from sheep	FAO & ABS New Zealand (Tonga)	Livestock technical staff
Animal Disease Surveillance & Paravet Training and Workshop	MPI – New Zealand (Tonga)	Animal Health & Production Technical staff
Hatching of Chicks	CHINA AID (Tonga)	Hatchery team
International Workshop on Juncao Technology	UNDESA (Fiji)	2 staff
Vet services skills & knowledge training	SPAW (Tonga)	Animal health team
Pacific Partnership 2023 Tonga Veterinary Animal Mission	US Army (Tonga)	All staff
Staff Weekly performance & capacity training	HOD & Senior Staffs (Tonga)	All staff
Open-Source Software Training	SPC (Tonga)	2 staff
Paravet Training Introductory Course (Kobo Toolbox, Drone use, etc)	SPC (Tonga)	Livestock Division staff, Food, Quarantine and outer islands staff
Human Resources – Policy, Finance	CSD (Tonga)	Livestock Staff

In 2021 and 2022 similar courses were available in topics such as: sheep artificial insemination using laparoscopic techniques (ABS - funded by FAO), livestock emergency guidelines & standards (FAO livestock consultant), bee keeping & honey production training (Fiji Beekeeping Association - funded by FAO), African Swine Fever online preparedness course (FAO), maintenance for incubator and hatching machine (China AID).

In addition, the MAFF and MOH have specific onboarding and continuing education training on hygiene standards and food safety of animal products for staff conducting inspections.

I-3.b. Strengths:

- The CA seek opportunities for CE and support/coordinate the participation of staff on regional and international trainings available from partners and donors.

I-3.c. Weaknesses:

- Dependency on external partners does not encourage the development of a CE programme specifically suited for local CA needs and priorities.

I-3.d. Recommendations:

- Continue taking advantage of training opportunities offered internationally and throughout the region. Develop a mechanism to select priority topics including donor training in animal health.
- Consider establishing a CE programme that covers all aspects of animal health and food safety of products of animal origin, including the possibility of dedicated budget.
- Consider a follow-up assessment of the trainings provided.

I-3.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 30, 31, 36, 46

I-4. TECHNICAL INDEPENDENCE

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to carry out their duties with autonomy and without undue commercial, financial, hierarchical and political influences that may affect technical decisions in a manner contrary to the provisions of WOAH (and of the WTO SPS Agreement where applicable).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The technical decisions made by the VS are generally not based on scientific considerations.
2. The technical decisions consider scientific evidence, but are routinely modified based on non-scientific considerations.
3. The technical decisions are based on scientific evidence but are subject to review and occasional modification based on non-scientific considerations.
4. The technical decisions are made and generally implemented in accordance with scientific evidence and the country's WOAH obligations (and with the country's WTO SPS Agreement obligations where applicable).
5. The technical decisions are based on a high level of scientific evidence, which is both nationally relevant and internationally respected, and are not unduly changed to meet non-scientific considerations.

I-4.a. Findings:

The MAFF operation is based on a comprehensive legislative framework. Staff are appointed and evaluated in an independent manner. Salaries are low and more qualified professionals often look for opportunities abroad. No direct undue political or economic influence on decision making was observed, but scientific and technical competencies are insufficient to ensure a sound basis for technical independence, and reliance on international donor funding may compromise independence of technical decision-making.

I-4.b. Strengths:

- Independent staff recruitment and promotion process.
- No evidence of undue political or economic influence on decision making.

I-4.c. Weaknesses:

- Lack of technical competencies on relevant topics.
- Low salaries threaten; a) retention and succession of knowledgeable staff, and b) technical independence.

I-4.d. Recommendations:

- Technical decisions should be documented and records of the decision-making process maintained for transparency.

I-4.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 36

I-5. PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND MANAGEMENT OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS leadership and organisation to develop, document and sustain strategic policies and programmes, and also to report on, review and evolve them, as appropriate over time.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. Policies and programmes are insufficiently developed and documented. Substantial changes to the organisational structure and/or leadership of the VS frequently occur (e.g. annually) resulting in a lack of sustainability of policies and programmes.
2. Some basic policy and programme development and documentation exists, with some reporting on implementation. Sustainability of policies and programmes is negatively impacted by changes in the political leadership or other changes affecting the structure and leadership of the VS.
3. There is well developed and stable policy and programme documentation. Reports on programme implementation are available. Sustainability of policies and programmes is generally maintained during changes in the political leadership and/or changes to the structure and leadership of the VS.
4. Policies or programmes are sustained, but also reviewed (using data collection and analysis) and updated appropriately over time through formal national strategic planning cycles to improve effectiveness and address emerging concerns. Planning cycles continue despite changes in the political leadership and/or changes to the structure and leadership of the VS.
5. Effective policies and programmes are sustained over time and the structure and leadership of the VS is strong and stable. Modification to strategic and operational planning is based on a robust evaluation or audit process using evidence, to support the continual improvement of policies and programmes over time.

I-5.a. Findings:

The MAFF operation is based on a comprehensive legislative framework. Multiannual plans and programmes with clear objectives and KPIs are publicly available. Monitoring and reporting of policies implementation are also available for each fiscal year.

There is a documented policy, strategic planning and associated programmes for the MAFF. The MAFF's Corporate Plan 2023-2026 aims to coordinate the agricultural sector and organise priorities during this period. It outlines the MAFF approaches to achieving targeted outputs and sets KPIs for each Division of the Ministry to manage its performance. The plan is in line with the Tongan government's Sustainable Development Goals, Government Priority Agendas, the Tonga Agricultural Sector Plan 2016 – 2020, and the Tonga Strategic Development Framework II. It is also in line with recommendations developed by international partners supporting these plans for specific sectors, such as the SPC Pacific Animal Health Production Framework 2021-2025.

The ministerial outputs set for the Livestock Division are "sustainable livestock production; reduced imports, and better livestock veterinary services". The associated strategies for these outputs are: "Improved animal production and health services provided for the country, improved advisory and training services provided for livestock farmers and animal owners, and improved Livestock Division management".

As mentioned above, the strategy is mostly focused on food security and reduced dependency on food imports, with no animal health objectives related to surveillance of or preparedness for diseases but derived from the need to improve animal production and services offered to livestock farmers.

Reports on programme implementation for the latest fiscal year were available for the Livestock, Food and QQMD Divisions of the MAFF. In general terms, all these reports

highlighted the need for more staff and operational resources in order to maintain an adequate level of performance.

I-5.b. Strengths:

- There are strategic plans in place that undergo periodic review and updating, with associated reports on programme implementation available.
- MAFF's Plan considers improvement of animal health services and management of the Livestock Division.

I-5.c. Weaknesses:

- Strategies in the livestock sector set goals that may be hampered by the lack of technical capacity to effectively implement them in the long term.
- Lack of budget for operations can compromise implementation of current programmes.
- There are no specific programmes tackling emerging, zoonotic and/or transboundary animal diseases prevention, surveillance, and/or control.

I-5.d. Recommendations:

- Consider more specific animal diseases surveillance, prevention and preparedness objectives for review and updating of agricultural sector strategic planning, including improving technical capacity of the VS to effectively implement them.

I-5.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 6, 7, 31, 26, 36

I-6. COORDINATION CAPABILITY OF THE VETERINARY SERVICES

DEFINITION
A. Internal coordination (chain of command)
The capability of the *Veterinary Authority* to coordinate their mandated activities with a clear chain of command, from the central level (the Chief Veterinary Officer or equivalent), to the field level of the VS, as relevant to the WOAH *Codes* (e.g. *surveillance*, disease control, food safety, emergency preparedness and response).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. There is no formal internal coordination and the chain of command is not clear.
2. There are internal coordination mechanisms for some activities but the chain of command is not clear.
3. There are internal coordination mechanisms and a clear and effective chain of command for some activities, such as for export certification, border control and/or emergency response.
4. There are formal, documented internal coordination mechanisms and a clear and effective chain of command for most activities, including *surveillance* (and reporting) and disease control programmes.
5. There are formal and fully documented internal coordination mechanisms and a clear and effective chain of command for all activities, and these are periodically reviewed/audited and updated to re- define roles and optimise efficiency as necessary.

I-6.A.a. Findings:

The MAFF is organised at central level at Nuku´alofa and extension services at various outer islands. The VS activities related to animal and veterinary public health are conducted mainly from the central level and are focused on border control, food safety and provision of basic clinical services to livestock farmers. There are no specific activities targeting animal diseases surveillance or prevention.

Operational aspects of activities such as export certification and border control are shared between different MAFF Divisions, with an unclear chain of command, informal coordination and overlapping of responsibilities.

Food safety competencies for aquatic products inspection have been delegated from MAFF to MOF but there is still lack of formal clarity on roles and responsibilities.

I-6.A.b. Strengths:

- Internal coordination mechanisms and chain of command exist within MAFF Divisions.

I-6.A.c. Weaknesses:

- The chain of command and information flow is not always clear between central and extension services.
- No formal coordination mechanisms or SOPs for activities with shared responsibilities between different MAFF Divisions (i.e. border control, certification).

I-6.A.d. Recommendations:

- Develop SOPs for activities with shared responsibilities between MAFF Divisions. Periodically review and update coordination mechanisms. Consider periodical coordination meetings with documented outcomes.

I-6.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 10, 12, 14, 20, 30, 31, 36, 57

I-6. COORDINATION CAPABILITY OF THE VETERINARY SERVICES

DEFINITION
B. External coordination (including the One Health approach)
The capability of the *Veterinary Authority* to coordinate its resources and activities at all levels with other government authorities with responsibilities within the veterinary domain, in order to implement all national activities relevant to the WOAH *Codes*, especially those not under the direct line authority of the Chief Veterinary Officer (or equivalent). Relevant authorities include other ministries and *Competent Authorities*, such as government partners in public health (e.g. zoonoses, food safety, drug regulation and anti-microbial resistance), environment (e.g. *wildlife* health), customs and border police (e.g. border security), defence/intelligence (e.g. bio-threats), or municipalities/local councils (e.g. local slaughterhouses, dog control).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. There is no external coordination with other government authorities.
2. There are informal external coordination mechanisms for some activities at national level, but the procedures are not clear and/or external coordination occurs irregularly.
3. There are formal external coordination mechanisms with clearly described procedures or agreements (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding) for some activities and/or sectors at the national level.
4. There are formal external coordination mechanisms with clearly described procedures or agreements at the national level for most activities (such as for One Health), and these are uniformly implemented throughout the country, including at state/provincial level.
5. There are external coordination mechanisms for all activities, from national to field, and these are periodically reviewed and updated to re-clarify roles and optimise efficiency.

I-6.B.a. Findings:

There are mostly informal external coordination mechanisms between competent authorities at national level, with unclear or non-formalised procedures.

The MAFF Food Division is responsible for all food safety activities including licencing of processing establishments and inspection and export certification of animal products since the implementation of the Food Act 2020. However, the Food Act implementing regulation is not yet in place (it is in the last stages of drafting) which leads to enforcement difficulties. The MOH is formally no longer responsible for food safety of products of animal origin, but it is still responsible for enforcement of occupational health regulations and food processing workers health certification.

Responsibilities for the food safety of aquatic animal products is intended to be delegated from the MAFF to MOF, but there is still no MoU between the two ministries which has evolved into a lack of control (The MOF was established as an independent entity in 2016 and currently does not have the resources nor the technical competencies to assume such functions). This also creates confusion in producers and importers.

Emergency response coordination is done by MEIDECC with representation of all ministries in the various clusters. There has never been an emergency response associated with animal health initiated by MAFF.

The Therapeutic Goods Act establishes that the MOH is responsible for veterinary medicinal products (imports, registration and inspection of pharmacies). However, there is no coordination with the MAFF on this topic and no practical enforcement of the regulation in this sector.

The MOH is also responsible for defining the national policy on medicines and the development of the National Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (latest one for the period 2017-2022). However, the MOF was not included in the National AMR Committee under a One Health approach.

There was no evidence of formalised coordination or cooperation procedures between MAFF and other CA such as Customs or the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MNRE)

I-6.B.b. Strengths:

- Plan to formally delegate food safety activities related to aquatic animal products from MAFF to MOF by means of a MoU.
- Country emergency preparedness planning utilises a 'whole of government' approach with clear coordination mechanisms.

I-6.B.c. Weaknesses:

- Communication and coordination between ministries not well established and mostly on an informal basis.
- Absence of formal MoU on food safety and certification of fishery products, and the absence of an implementing regulation for the Food Act create grey areas with no enforcement/double responsibility. Roles and responsibilities, and therefore coordination, between MAFF, MOF and MOH on food safety aspects are still unclear.

I-6.B.d. Recommendations:

- Establish formal collaboration and coordination mechanisms between public health, animal health as well as environmental sector ministries (MOH, MAFF, MOF, MNRE)
- Include animal health (terrestrial and aquatic) as a specific topic in the developing process for the new national Plan on AMR and the review of the national policy on medicines, under the One Health approach. Include all relevant stakeholders in the National AMR Committee.
- Develop an agreed list of priority notifiable zoonoses.
- Formalise, document and report external communication and coordination activities (meetings and committees).
- Consider requesting WOAH and World Health Organisation (WHO) to organise a National IHR-PVS Bridging Workshop to help One Health capacity building and operational planning at national level.

I-6.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 10, 12, 13,14, 18,19, 20, 30, 31, 36, 42, 57

I-7. PHYSICAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT

DEFINITION
The access of the VS to functional and well-maintained physical resources including buildings, transport, information technology (e.g. internet access), cold chain, and other necessary equipment or structures. This includes whether major capital investment is available.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS have no or unsuitable physical resources at almost all levels and maintenance of existing infrastructure is poor or non-existent.
2. The VS have suitable physical resources at national (central) level and at some state/provincial levels, but maintenance, as well as replacement of obsolete items, occurs rarely.
3. The VS have suitable physical resources at national, state/provincial and some local levels but maintenance, as well as replacement of obsolete items, occurs irregularly.
4. The VS have suitable physical resources at all levels and these are regularly maintained. Major capital investments occur occasionally to improve the VS operational infrastructure over time.
5. The VS have suitable physical resources at all levels (national, state/provincial and local levels) and these are regularly maintained and updated as more advanced items become available. Major capital investments occur regularly to improve the VS operational capability and infrastructure.

I-7.a. Findings:

The MAFF central offices are adequate and well maintained.

The Livestock Division has a central office and veterinary clinic facilities in the main island that are in adequate condition. There is also an office available for Livestock staff in each of the 5 outer islands where they are stationed.

The central offices have phone landlines, mobile phones for officers and internet access. The connection in the outer islands offices is limited. Livestock Division officers sometimes have to rely on private vehicles and taxis in Tongatapu.

The facilities at the airport QQMD office are outdated, in need of maintenance, and lack quarantine capacities for live animals. On the other hand, a new incinerator for Fua'amotu International Airport has recently arrived and is expected to be operational soon (see CC II-3).

The QQMD has 2 cars available in Tongatapu; 1 at headquarters and the other at the airport office. QQMD officers reported lack computers and vehicles, particularly for inspection of vessels.

The MAFF Food Division officers reported lack of vehicles to conduct inspections.

The overall budget of the MAFF for capital investments is limited and the availability of physical resources depends heavily on donor-funded projects.

I-7.b. Strengths:

- Physical facilities for the CA are mostly adequate.

I-7.c. Weaknesses:

- There are deficiencies in some items, especially vehicles to conduct official tasks.
- Overall MAFF budget is limited and main capital investments are the result of projects financed by donors.

I-7.d. Recommendations:

- Consider joint efforts with other ministries to upgrade existing facilities and ensure these are used effectively. Ensure sufficient number of vehicles is available to improve mobility and efficiency of official inspectors.
- Consider Public-Private Partnerships as alternative means for developing or accessing future infrastructure in the VS domain e.g. slaughter units, AH laboratory capacity.

I-7.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 5, 31, 36

I-8. OPERATIONAL FUNDING

DEFINITION
The ability of the VS to access operational resources adequate for their planned and continued activities (e.g. salaries, contracts, fuel, vaccines, diagnostic reagents, personal protective equipment, per diem or allowances for field work).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. Operational funding for the VS is neither stable nor clearly defined and depends on irregular allocation of resources.
2. Operational funding for the VS is clearly defined and regular, but is inadequate for their required baseline operations (e.g. basic disease *surveillance*, disease control and/or veterinary public health).
3. Operational funding for the VS is clearly defined and regular, and is adequate for their baseline operations, but there is no provision for new or expanded operations.
4. Operational funding for new or expanded operations is on a case-by-case basis, and not always based on *risk analysis* and/or benefit-cost analysis.
5. Operational funding for all aspects of VS activities is generally adequate; all funding, including for new or expanded operations, is provided via a transparent process that allows for technical independence, based on *risk analysis* and/or cost-benefit analysis.

I-8.a. Findings:

Operational funding is regular and clearly defined by the central government budget. In the case of the Livestock Division, approximately 52% of its annual budget is allocated for operational activities and the rest is destined to salaries. This is reported to be adequate to cover baseline activities and related KPIs under the annual corporate plan.

The QQMD reported up to 80% of its annual budget spent on salaries, while 67% spent on salaries was reported by the Food Division. Both the QQMD and Food Divisions informed that their operational funding is not sufficient to cover all expenses and tasks, and therefore some inspections are not conducted.

The different MAFF Divisions generate revenue (licencing, export fees, clinical services, sales of eggs and pigs, etc) but it is not retained by the Divisions as it goes back to the central government administration.

I-8.b. Strengths:

- Operational funding is regular and clearly defined by the central government.

I-8.c. Weaknesses:

- Certain areas reported insufficient operational funding for their activities to be performed effectively. Budget allocation normally only sufficient for baseline animal health activities.

I-8.d. Recommendations:

- Plan and prioritise activities of the VS and develop costed operational plans to advocate for improved funding.
- Conduct risk benefit and/or cost-benefit analyses for future new or expanded operations.

I-8.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 36

I-9. EMERGENCY FUNDING

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to access extraordinary financial resources in order to respond to emergency situations or newly emerging issues, as measured by the ease with which contingency and related funding (i.e. arrangements for compensation of producers in emergency situations) can be made rapidly available when required.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 3
1. No emergency funding arrangements exist.
2. Emergency funding arrangements with limited resources have been established, but these are inadequate for likely emergency situations (including newly emerging issues).
3. Emergency funding arrangements with limited resources have been established; additional resources may be approved but approval is through a political process.
4. Emergency funding arrangements with adequate resources have been established; their provision must be agreed through a non-political process on a case-by-case basis.
5. Emergency funding arrangements with adequate resources have been established and their rules of operation documented and agreed with interested parties.

I-9.a. Findings:

There is no pre-established emergency funding for livestock in particular, but these funds could be requested by the National Disaster Risk Management Committee to support an emergency response. However, it is unclear what would exactly be covered in the case of an emergency animal disease and the extent of the funding.

Emergency response procedures are regulated by the Disaster Risk Management Act (2021) and coordinated by the MEIDECC. The procedures include 11 “clusters” where all ministries are involved (Clusters are groups of public agencies and ministries responsible for emergency response plans in different areas i.e. the *food security and livelihoods* cluster, and the *health and nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene* cluster - See CC II-5).

In that scenario, the MEIDECC has a coordination role through the establishment of a National Disaster Risk Management Committee. Operational aspects of emergencies are managed by “clusters”, with the MAFF being responsible for the *food security and livelihoods* cluster, and the MOH for the *health and nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene* cluster. Clusters would be responsible for elaborating emergency response plans and, if needed, for requesting the release of emergency funding through the National Disaster Risk Management Committee and the Prime Minister.

The Animal Diseases Act (2020) establishes the principles for declaring an animal disease emergency and also compensation for animals slaughtered due to the presence of a list of diseases taken from the old “List A and List B” classification of notifiable diseases to the WOAH (“first schedule” and “second schedule” diseases).

I-9.b. Strengths:

- The Disaster Risk Management Act includes procedures for requesting emergency funding.
- A National Disaster Risk Management Committee with participation of all relevant Ministries.

I-9.c. Weaknesses:

- There is no pre-established emergency funding arrangement for AH related situations. It is therefore unclear what would be covered in case of an emerging issue.

I-9.d. Recommendations:

- Define AH priorities and establish contingency plans and SOPs including emergency financial arrangements and administrative procedures to access funds.

I-9.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 18

III.2 Fundamental component II: Technical authority and capability

This component of the evaluation concerns the authority and capability of the VS to develop and apply sanitary measures and science-based procedures supporting those measures. It comprises eighteen Critical Competencies.

For all sections of this chapter, the Critical Competency includes collaboration with relevant authorities, including other ministries and Competent Authorities, national agencies and decentralised institutions that share authority or have mutual interest in relevant areas.

Critical Competencies:

Section II-1	**Veterinary laboratory diagnosis**
	A. Access to veterinary laboratory diagnosis
	B. Suitability of the national laboratory system
	C. Laboratory quality management systems (QMS)
Section II-2	**Risk analysis and epidemiology**
Section II-3	**Quarantine and border security**
Section II-4	**Surveillance and early detection**
	A. Passive surveillance, early detection and epidemiological outbreak investigation
	B. Active surveillance and monitoring
Section II-5	**Emergency preparedness and response**
Section II-6	**Disease prevention, control and eradication**
Section II-7	**Animal production food safety**
	A. Regulation, inspection (including audits), authorisation and supervision of establishments for production and processing of food of animal origin
	B. Ante- and post-mortem inspection at slaughter facilities and associated premises
Section II-8	**Veterinary medicines and biologicals**
Section II-9	**Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Antimicrobial Use (AMU)**
Section II-10	**Residue testing, monitoring and management**
Section II-11	**Animal feed safety**
Section II-12	**Identification, traceability and movement control**
	A. Premises, herd, batch and animal identification, tracing and movement control
	B. Identification, traceability and control of products of animal origin
Section II-13	**Animal welfare**

Terrestrial Code References:
Chapter 1.4. on Animal health surveillance.
Chapter 1.5. on Surveillance for arthropod vectors of animal diseases.
Chapter 2.1. on Import risk analysis.
Chapter 6.11. on Risk analysis for antimicrobial resistance arising from the use of antimicrobial agents in animals
Points 6, 7 and 9 of Article 3.1.2. on Fundamental principles of quality: Veterinary legislation/General Organisation/Procedures and standards.
Point 1 of Article 3.2.4. on Evaluation criteria for quality systems.
Point 3 of Article 3.2.6. on Evaluation criteria for material resources: Technical.
Points 1 and 2 of Article 3.2.7. on Legislation and functional capabilities: Animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health/Export/import inspection.
Points 1-3 of Article 3.2.8. on Animal health controls: Animal health status/Animal health control/National animal disease reporting systems.
Points 1-5 of Article 3.2.9. on Veterinary public health controls: Food hygiene/Zoonoses/Chemical residue testing programmes/Veterinary medicines/Integration between animal health controls and veterinary public health.
Sub-point f) of Point 4 of Article 3.2.10. on Veterinary Services administration: Formal linkages with sources of independent scientific expertise.

Points 2, 5, 7 and 8 of Article 3.2.14. on National information on human resources/Laboratories engaged in diagnosis/Veterinary legislation, regulations and functional capabilities/Animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health controls.
Article 3.4.12. on Human food production chain.
Chapter 4.1. on General principles on identification and traceability of live animals.
Chapter 4.2. on Design and implementation of identification systems to achieve animal traceability.
Chapter 4.12. on Disposal of dead animals.
Chapter 6.3. on Control of biological hazards of animal health and public health importance through ante- and post-mortem meat inspection.
Chapter 6.4. on Control of hazards of animal health and public health importance in animal feed.
Chapters 6.7. to 6.11. on Antimicrobial resistance.
Chapter 7.1. on Introduction to the recommendations for animal welfare.
Chapter 7.2. on Transport of animals by sea.
Chapter 7.3. on Transport of animals by land.
Chapter 7.4. on Transport of animals by air.
Chapter 7.5. on Slaughter of animals.
Chapter 7.6. on Killing of animals for disease control purposes.
References to Codex Alimentarius Commission standards:
Code of Hygienic practice for meat (CAC/RCP 58-2005).
Code of Hygienic practice for milk and milk products (CAC/RCP/ 57-2004).
General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969; amended 1999. Revisions 1997 and 2003).
Guidelines for Risk Analysis of Foodborne Antimicrobial Resistance (CAC/GL 77-2011).
Code of Practice to Minimize and Contain Antimicrobial Resistance (CAC/RCP 61-2005).

II-1. VETERINARY LABORATORY DIAGNOSIS

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to effectively and efficiently use accurate *laboratory* diagnosis to support their animal health and veterinary public activities.
A . Access to veterinary laboratory diagnosis
The authority and capability of the VS to access *laboratory* diagnosis in order to identify and report pathogenic and other hazardous agents that can adversely affect *animals* and animal products, including those relevant to public health.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. Disease diagnosis is almost always conducted by clinical means only, with no access to or little use of a *laboratory* to obtain a correct diagnosis.
2. For major animal diseases and zoonoses of national importance, and for the food safety of animal products, the VS have access to and use a l*aboratory* to obtain a correct diagnosis.
3. For animal *diseases* and z*oonoses* present in the country, and for animal *feed* safety and veterinary AMR surveillance, the VS have access to and use a laboratory to obtain a correct diagnosis.
4. For animal *diseases* of zoonotic or economic importance not present in the country, but that exist in the region and/or that could enter the country, the VS have access to and use a *laboratory* to obtain a correct diagnosis.
5. In the case of new and *emerging diseases* in the region or worldwide, the VS have access to and use a network of national or international reference *laboratories* (e.g. an WOAH or FAO Reference *Laboratory*) to obtain a correct diagnosis.

II-1.A.a. Findings:

There is no laboratory diagnosis capacity in Tonga. Diagnosis of animal diseases is conducted by Livestock Officers by clinical means only.

In case of urgent need, the VS would rely on potential access to laboratory capacity in Australia and New Zealand via cooperation agreements. However, this is not specifically formalised for laboratories, and is limited by strict requirements and restrictions on the import of biological samples in those countries.

An example of these cooperation agreements is the “initiation of baseline survey” that was conducted in 2023 in collaboration with the NZ-MPI at its Animal Health Laboratory, as part of the *Pacific Partnership Programme for Animal Health and Biosecurity.* The objective of the survey was to develop a list of disease agents that may be used for future baseline surveillance in the country, and the VS expects to continue with this collaboration scheme for follow-up and further access to diagnostic services.

In terms of food safety, there has been limited collaboration between the MAFF Food Division and the MOH for microbiological diagnosis of samples at the MOH laboratory. However, this collaboration is done on an informal and non-permanent basis.

There is no testing conducted for antimicrobials or other residues in food or feed. A Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-funded project provided High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) equipment a number of years ago for pesticides residues analyses. However, no further training on its use or funding for maintenance/use of the equipment was provided.

II-1.A.b. Strengths:

- Recent support from NZ-MPI for sampling and analysis of samples for animal diseases surveillance.

II-1.A.c. Weaknesses:

- No capacity for permanent access to veterinary laboratory diagnosis.
- Animal health surveys externally driven, funded and delivered, with limited local competencies beyond sampling.
- No access to food safety laboratory capacity.

II-1.A.d. Recommendations:

- Consider coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities (MAFF, MOF, MOH) for joint provision of laboratory services in animal health and food safety.
- Review and explore regional opportunities (SPC, NZ-MPI, etc.) related to access to laboratory diagnostic and capacity building activities.
- According to defined priorities, explore possibilities for procurement of rapid tests for basic primary diagnosis of diseases that can be performed at field level and train staff on its use.

II-1.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 33, 34, 36,

II-1. VETERINARY LABORATORY DIAGNOSIS

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to effectively and efficiently use accurate *laboratory* diagnosis to support their animal health and veterinary public activities.
B. Suitability of the national laboratory system
The sustainability, effectiveness, safety and efficiency of the national (public and private) *laboratory* system (or network), including infrastructure, equipment, maintenance, consumables, personnel and sample throughput, to service the needs of the VS.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – N/A
1. The national *laboratory* system does not meet the needs of the VS.
2. The national *laboratory* system partially meets the needs of the VS, but it is not sustainable, as the management and maintenance of resources and infrastructure is ineffective and/or inefficient. *Laboratory* biosafety and *biosecurity* measures do not exist or are very limited.
3. The national *laboratory* system generally meets the needs of the VS. Resources and organisation are managed effectively and efficiently, but funding is insufficient for a sustainable system, and limits throughput. Some *laboratory* biosafety and *biosecurity* measures are in place.
4. The national *laboratory* system generally meets the needs of the VS, including for *laboratory* biosafety and *biosecurity*. There is sufficient sample throughput across the range of *laboratory* testing requirements. Occasionally, it is limited by delayed investment in certain aspects (e.g. personnel, maintenance or consumables).
5. The national *laboratory* system meets all the needs of the VS, has appropriate levels of *laboratory* biosafety and *biosecurity*, and is efficient and sustainable with a good throughput of samples. The *laboratory* system is regularly reviewed, audited and updated as necessary.

II-1.B.a. Findings:

A level of advancement was not assigned for this CC. The VS do not have a functional laboratory system or laboratory facilities.

There was evidence of laboratory equipment funded by international partners and donors that was not taken advantage of due to lack of training for staff and funding for its proper use (see CC II-1.A).

II-1.B.b. Strengths:

- N/A

II-1.B.c. Weaknesses:

- The VS do not have a functional laboratory system or laboratory facilities.

II-1.B.d. Recommendations:

- See CC II-1.A

II-1.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5):

II-1. VETERINARY LABORATORY DIAGNOSIS

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to effectively and efficiently use accurate *laboratory* diagnosis to support their animal health and veterinary public activities.
C. Laboratory quality management systems (QMS)
The quality and reliability of veterinary laboratory testing servicing the public sector VS as assessed by the use of formal QMS e.g. having a dedicated quality manager and a quality manual. This includes, but is not limited to, attainment of ISO 17025 accreditation and participation in proficiency testing programmes.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT- N/A
1. No *laboratories* servicing the public sector VS are using formal QMS.
2. One or more *laboratories* servicing the public sector VS, including the major national animal health reference *laboratory*, are using formal QMS.
3. Most major *laboratories* servicing the public sector VS are using formal QMS. There is occasional use of multi-laboratory proficiency testing programmes.
4. Most of the *laboratories* servicing the public sector VS are using formal QMS, with regular use of multi-laboratory proficiency testing programmes.
5. All the *laboratories* servicing the public sector VS are using formal QMS which are regularly assessed via national, regional or international proficiency testing programmes.

II-1.C.a. Findings:

A level of advancement was not assigned for this CC. The VS do not have functional laboratory facilities.

II-1.C.b. Strengths:

- N/A

II-1.C.c. Weaknesses:

- N/A

II-1.C.d. Recommendations:

- N/A

II-1.C.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5):

II-2. RISK ANALYSIS AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to base its *risk management* and *risk communication* measures on *risk assessment*, incorporating sound epidemiological principles.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. *Risk management* and *risk communication* measures are not usually supported by risk assessment.
2. The VS compile and maintain data but do not have the capability to carry out *risk analysis*. Some *risk management* and *risk communication* measures are based on *risk assessment* and some epidemiological principles.
3. The VS compile and maintain data and have the policy and capability to carry out *risk analysis,* incorporating epidemiological principles. The majority of *risk management* and *risk communication* measures are based on *risk assessment*.
4. The VS conduct *risk analysis* in compliance with relevant WOAH standards and sound epidemiological principles, and base their *risk management* and *risk communication* measures on the outcomes of *risk assessment*. There is a legislative basis that supports the use of *risk analysis*.
5. The VS are consistent and transparent in basing animal health and *sanitary measures* on *risk assessment* and best practice epidemiology, and in communicating and/or publishing their scientific procedures and outcomes internationally.

II-2.a. Findings:

There are no animal health surveillance programmes and therefore very limited data on which to base any potential risk analysis. The compilation and storage of data is mainly paper-based.

Risk assessments for animals and animal products are done on a case-by-case basis when an application for an import permit is received. The MAFF Livestock Division (mainly the Head of Division) undertakes risk management for the imports of live animals and in the case of animal products, the risk assessment is conducted in coordination with the Quarantine and Quality Management Division. Generic health certifications are required for imports of live animals and animal products.

Imports of live animals and semen are authorised from Australia and New Zealand. In the case of animal products, imports are authorised from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Brazil, Canada, the EU and the US.

There is one staff within the MAFF QQMD responsible for the import risk analysis of animal and plant products. The officer received IPPC[1] training in plant pest risk analysis, but there are no staff with adequate competencies in epidemiology to support risk analysis for live animals or animal products.

In the case of food safety, the MAFF Food Division classifies food establishments according to risk (red-orange-green) and plans inspections accordingly, with establishments designated as orange and red being inspected more frequently.

II-2.b. Strengths:

- Case-by-case risk assessments are conducted by MAFF Livestock and Quarantine Divisions for the imports of live animals and animal products.

[1] International Plant Protection Convention

- The Animal Diseases Act contains provisions that allow restrictions of imports based on risks.
- MAFF Food Division uses risk assessment principles to classify food producing establishments and conduct inspections accordingly.

II-2.c. Weaknesses:

- No epidemiology competencies in the VS to support animal and public health policies and risk analysis.
- Limited capacity for import risk assessments relevant to animal health. Dedicated staff was trained on plant pest risk assessment principles.
- Import requirements are not based on formal risk analyses aligned with WOAH international standards.
- Very limited – paper based- data on which to base animal health assessments and/or programmes.

II-2.d. Recommendations:

- Develop competencies to undertake simple risk assessments and progressively develop risk analysis skills. Consider engagement with external partners such as WOAH, SPC, JICA, etc for specific training on risk analysis.
- Explore the development of data capture, storage and digitalisation/systematization capacity that allows the future analysis of information and serves as foundation for risk-based decision-making.
- Update current risk assessments according to emerging animal disease information as it becomes available.
- Consider discussing the potential benefits of a joint regional approach for import risk assessments. For example, at Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Production Services (PHOVAPS) level.
- Develop capacity and tools for risk communication measures following risk assessments results.

II-2.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 27, 31, 33, 34, 36, 40, 41, 57

II-3. QUARANTINE AND BORDER SECURITY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to operate to prevent the entry of *diseases* and other *hazards* of *animals* and *animal* and veterinary products into their country.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. The VS cannot apply any type of quarantine or border security procedures for the entry of *animals*, animal products and veterinary products with their neighbouring countries or trading partners.
2. The VS can establish and apply minimal quarantine and border security procedures, or the VS only apply quarantine and border security procedures effectively at some official entry points via *border posts*.
3. The VS can establish and apply quarantine and border security procedures based on import protocols and international standards at all official entry points via *border posts*, but the procedures do not systematically address illegal activities relating to the import of *animals*, animal products and veterinary products.
4. The VS can establish and apply effective quarantine and border security procedures which systematically address legal pathways and illegal activities (e.g. through effective partnerships with national customs and border police).
5. The VS can establish, apply and audit quarantine and border security procedures which systematically address all risks identified, including through collaboration with their neighbouring countries and trading partners.

II-3.a. Findings:

Quarantine and border security is under the responsibility of the MAFF Quarantine and Quality Management Division.

The legislative framework for the control of live animals and animal products includes both the Quarantine Act and the Animal Diseases Act. Following provisions established in the Food Act, the inspection of imported food products is conducted in collaboration with the Border Control Section of the MAFF Food Division. However, given the policy of delegating the enforcement of food safety legislation in aquatic animals' products, the majority of these types of imports are currently not subject to control by MAFF Officers.

The QQMD is made up of 3 sections (Import, Export and Support Services) and currently has 36 staff members (5 holding a university degree), including 5 staff stationed in Vava'u. Inspectors working in Tongatapu are rotated on a 6 monthly basis between Headquarters, Queen Salote Wharf, Customs Offices, 13 Licensed Cargo Outlets and Fua'amotu International Airport.

Tonga has 6 main ports of entry, which are Fua'amotu International Airport, Queen Salote Wharf, Vuna Wharf and Faua wharf in Tongatapu, Halaevalu Wharf and Lupepau'u airport in Vava'u.

The QQMD has developed an operations manual and SOPs that are routinely followed by its inspectors. Most non-compliances reported during fiscal year 2023/2024 corresponded to plant products without import permits and/or phytosanitary certificates at Fua'amotu International Airport and Queen Salote Wharf. No rejections were reported for live animals and animal products.

The border control IT system in Tonga is managed by the Customs Service, and it is not connected with the QQMD (data is shared by Customs upon request). This means that the

imports/exports documentation system for permits and sanitary certification of animals and animal products is paper-based and there is no dedicated database.

The PVS Team was informed that Tonga is currently seeking funding from international partners to develop and implement a Customs management system that covers most foreign trade procedures (ASYCUDA).[2]

The QQMD has only 2 cars available in Tongatapu; 1 at headquarters and the other at the airport office.

A new incinerator for Fua'amotu International Airport has recently arrived in the country and is expected to be operational soon. On the other hand, even though the QQMD had requested the purchase of X-ray machines to assist with clearance of imported goods in Tongatapu and Vava'u, pre-approved funding for 2024 was re-appropriated by the central government administration.

Imports of live animals and animal products require a permit which is issued based on generic import conditions. A health certificate issued by the exporting CA of authorised countries is required for animal products and live animals (see CC II-2).

A total of 11,410 import permits for live animals and animal products were issued during the financial year 2023/2024. The majority were for animal products destined for human consumption, and more than 90% issued at Fua'amotu International Airport. In terms of live animals for the same period, import permits were issued only for day-old chicks and dogs. The total amounts of imports are shown in the tables below:

Animal Products	NZ	Australia	USA	Fiji	Others	TOTAL (Kg)
Beef	686,735.9	79,668.2	2,862.5	1,060.2	12,042.0	**782,368.8**
Goat	432.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**432.5**
Mutton	53,056.5	1,464,788.6	0.0	1,779.6	0.0	**1,519,624.8**
Pork	79,595.8	272.0	56,244.9	625.0	136,737.7	
Chicken	549,507.2	205,026.5	4,644,095.4	23,613.1	3,317,317.2	**8,739,559.4**
Horse Meat	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**40.0**
Hot dogs and Sausages	191,150.7	13,895.0	144.0	553.0	666,206.5	**871,949.2**
TOTAL Kg	**1,560,518.6**	**1,763,650.3**	**4,703,346.8**	**27,631.0**	**3,995,565.7**	**12,050,712.5**

Animal Products	NZ	Australia	USA	Fiji	Others	TOTAL
Eggs (Dozens)	65,296.0	76,809.0	845,070.0	1,248,250.0	0.0	**2,235,425.0**

Live Animals	NZ	Australia	USA	Others	TOTAL
Day old chicks	26,510	0	0	0	**26,510**
Live dogs	6	2	1	1	**10**

II-3.b. Strengths:

- Basic legal framework to manage the risk of introducing terrestrial animal diseases.
- Border control procedures – mainly documental - are in place and functional at the designated international points of entry.

[2] https://tonga.asycuda.org

- Case by case risk assessments conducted for potentially high-risk imports of live animals and animal products.

II-3.c. Weaknesses:

- Paper-based records system for permits and sanitary certification of animals and animal products.
- No evidence of specific training for QQMD or other MAFF staff in risks associated with imports of animals and animal products.
- Lack of adequate facilities at the airport QQMD office and lack of quarantine facilities for live animals. Lack of vehicles for QQMD staff, particularly for inspection of vessels.
- Lack of implementing regulations for the Food Act and MOU with the MOF leaves areas with no clear delimitation of responsibilities between CAs - including imports.

II-3.d. Recommendations:

- Develop an IT database system for the QQMD. Ensure that systems are interoperable with other existing ones such as Customs.
- Train MAFF staff specifically on risks associated to animal and animals' products and ensure access to periodical refresher trainings.
- Provide sufficient number of vehicles for QQMD to improve mobility for performing quarantine and border security.
- Review legislative framework to address the overall risk of introduction of animal diseases, including aquatic animals and animal feed.
- Ensure to address the risk of illegal and unsupervised activities that may be an important pathway for disease introduction in the country. This could include airline passenger luggage, cruising yachts with dogs or animal products coming ashore, or large ocean liner cruise ships. Increase operational capacity and cooperation with other competent authorities, such as Customs and the police, to manage these threats.
- See also recommendations for CC II-2.

II-3.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 14, 27, 28, 31, 36, 57

II-4. SURVEILLANCE AND EARLY DETECTION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to determine, verify and report on the sanitary status of their animal populations, including *wildlife*, in a timely manner.
A. Passive surveillance, early detection and epidemiological outbreak investigation
A *surveillance* system based on a field animal health network capable of reliably detecting (by clinical or post mortem signs), diagnosing, reporting and investigating legally *notifiable diseases* (and relevant *emerging diseases*) in a timely manner.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT- 1
1. The VS have very limited passive *surveillance* capacity, with no formal disease list, little training/ awareness and/or inadequate national coverage. Disease *outbreaks* are not reported or reporting is delayed.
2. The VS have basic passive *surveillance* authority and capacity. There is a formal disease list with some training/awareness and some national coverage. The speed of detection and level of investigation is variable. Disease *outbreak* reports are available for some species and diseases.
3. The VS have some passive *surveillance* capacity with some sample collection and *laboratory* testing. There is a list of *notifiable diseases* with trained field staff covering most areas. The speed of reporting and investigation is timely in most production systems. Disease *outbreak* investigation reports are available for most species and *diseases.*
4. The VS have effective passive *surveillance* with routine *laboratory* confirmation and epidemiological disease investigation (including tracing and pathogen characterisation) in most animal sectors, and covering producers, markets and slaughterhouses. There are high levels of awareness and compliance with the need for prompt reporting from all animal owners/handlers and the field VS.
5. The VS have comprehensive passive *surveillance* nationwide providing high confidence in the *notifiable disease* status in real time. The VS routinely report *surveillance* information to producers, industry and other stakeholders. Full epidemiological disease investigations are undertaken in all relevant cases with tracing and active follow up of at-risk establishments.

II-4.A.a. Findings:

Even though the Animal Diseases Act contains provisions for disease control and a list of notifiable diseases (taken from the old "*List A and List B*" classification of notifiable diseases to the WOAH) - in practice - there is no enforcement of said regulation, with no knowledge of the current animal disease status of the country, and very limited passive surveillance training capacity for early detection of outbreaks or emerging diseases.

The clinical services provided by MAFF Livestock Officers are focused on companion animals and production/management of farm animals. There is little/no focus or awareness on relevant disease detection or reporting, and there are no records/evidence of investigation or exclusion of exotic diseases occurrence.

There is limited training for Livestock Officers on animal disease surveillance, which currently relies exclusively on the recent NZ-MPI Pacific Partnership Programme.

Animals are slaughtered on-site in farms or household backyards throughout the country without pre- or post-mortem inspection, with no data capture or guidelines available for farmers on diseases suspicion/detection.

II-4.A.b. Strengths:

- Clinical services provided by MAFF Livestock Officers could be the foundation for a future passive surveillance and data capturing scheme, as well as for raising farmers' awarenesses on notifying animal diseases.
- NZ MPI survey and training.

II-4.A.c. Weaknesses:

- No updated list of notifiable animal diseases of concern.
- No laboratory confirmed knowledge of the current disease status of the country.
- No awareness of the importance of notifying suspect animal diseases.
- No permanent or in house laboratory diagnostic capacity for potential disease suspicion/confirmation.
- No veterinary/epidemiology support for paraprofessionals.
- Animals are slaughtered without ante or post-mortem inspection.

II-4.A.d. Recommendations:

- Review current legislation and ministerial policies to modify the Animal Diseases Act establishing an updated list of diseases and the obligation to notify. Consider developing criteria for listing animal diseases of national concern.
- Promote public awareness of the need/importance of reporting suspected diseases and animal mortality.
- Use collaboration with regional partners to address lack of professionals specialised in veterinary epidemiology.
- Seek opportunities to ensure training of Livestock Officers on disease recognition and sampling.
- Following the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit, develop and implement a plan to establish ante and post-mortem inspection and data collection. Use collaboration with the Livestock Farmers Council to promote awareness among members.
- Continue collaboration with the NZ-MPI to establish a surveillance baseline that can be used, alongside import risk analyses, for decision-making and defining priorities for listing animal diseases.
- Consider coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities to improve access to laboratory diagnostic capacity (See CC II-1.A).

II-4.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 26, 35, 55

II-4. SURVEILLANCE AND EARLY DETECTION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to determine, verify and report on the sanitary status of their animal populations, including *wildlife*, in a timely manner.
B. Active surveillance and monitoring
Surveillance targeting a specific *disease, infection* or *hazard* to determine its prevalence, measure progress in disease control or support the demonstration of disease freedom (with passive *surveillance*), most often in the form of pre-planned surveys with structured sampling and *laboratory* testing.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS have no active *surveillance* programme.
2. The VS conduct active *surveillance* for one or a few *diseases, infections* or *hazard*s (of economic or zoonotic importance), but the *surveillance* is not representative of the population and the *surveillance* methodology is not revised regularly. The results are reported with limited analysis.
3. The VS conduct active *surveillance* using scientific principles and WOAH standards for some *diseases, infections* or *hazard*s, but it is not representative of the susceptible populations and/or is not updated regularly. The results are analysed and reported to stakeholders.
4. The VS conduct active *surveillance* in compliance with scientific principles and WOAH standards for some *diseases, infections* or *hazard*s which is representative of all susceptible populations and is updated regularly. Results are routinely analysed, reported and used to guide further *surveillance* activities, disease control priorities, etc.
5. The VS conduct ongoing active *surveillance* for most significant *diseases, infections and hazards* and apply it to all susceptible populations. The results are routinely analysed and used to guide disease control and other activities. The active *surveillance* programmes are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they meet country needs and WOAH reporting obligations.

II-4.B.a. Findings:

There is no official active surveillance programme conducted by the competent authority, as the MAFF does not have the resources or technical capacity to design and implement it.

The only precedent is a survey carried out between 1992 and 1994 by the SPC in collaboration with the Tonga Government. The conclusions of the survey indicated that Tonga appears to be free of all major exotic diseases of livestock according to the old WOAH “List A” of notifiable diseases as there was no evidence to suggest that any of such diseases are present.

The survey also concluded that some diseases of public health concern and economic importance were present in the country and recommended further surveillance to eventually derive on the adoption of control measures. Leptospirosis and porcine brucellosis were considered to be of particular concern for public health. Economically, the presence of Aujeszky's disease was deemed likely to cause losses among pigs.

Other WOAH listed diseases such as bovine brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis and enzootic bovine leukosis were deemed to be either absent or suspicious to be present at a very low level. Further surveillance and investigation were recommended at the time, but this was not followed-up.

More recently, an “initiation of baseline survey” was started in 2023 as part of the *Pacific Partnership Programme for Animal Health and Biosecurity* under the lead and initiative of the NZ-MPI. The overarching objective of the programme is to work with Pacific Island countries to mitigate the risk of transboundary animal diseases.

One of the specific objectives of the project is to (ideally) develop a list of disease agents to be used for a baseline on which to further implement surveillance in the country. Preliminary results (from a total of 69 samples - still subject to confirmation of initial serology and further testing to rule out possible false positives) of the first sampling round were presented by the NZ-MPI in May 2024. These preliminary results indicate that Tonga is still free of major exotic notifiable diseases such as FMD, HPAI, ASF, or rabies. However, there is suspicion of the potential presence of other WOAH listed diseases: leptospirosis, porcine brucellosis, Aujeszky's disease (all previously detected in 1992-1994), infection with Coxiella burnetii (Q fever) in sheep and cattle, infection with bovine pestivirus (Bovine viral diarrhoea), and infectious bursal disease (Gumboro disease).

The MAFF expects to continue with this collaboration programme in the future. At the time of the PVS Evaluation mission however, funding for follow-up investigations and a new round(s) of sampling and analyses had not been secured or confirmed by NZ-MPI authorities. The project also considers capacity building, including training on sample collection, handling and packaging.

The NZ-MPI analyses were focused on diseases considered by the Tongan CA to be the priority for testing. The factors to prioritise disease selection were determined during a workshop with the participation of MAFF staff as:

1. Zoonotic diseases and risk to public health.

2. Biosecurity - risk of spreading between islands.

3. Production and food security impacts.

4. Trade and economics – exotic diseases and significant diseases already present.

The species determined to be of most importance were: Pigs > Poultry > Cattle > Sheep/Goats.

Even though lower priority was given to exotic diseases of importance for international trade (given MAFF focus on food security and lack of exports of animal products), high impact WOAH-listed diseases were still considered important given the risk of transmission and impact on production and food security.

According to the above, priorities 1 and 2 were set for the following diseases:

Species	Test
Chickens	Infectious Bursal Disease (IBD) Influenza A Newcastle Disease
Cattle	Foot-and-mouth disease Bluetongue virus *Mycobacterium bovis* *Brucella* sp.
Goats	*Brucella* sp. *Coxiella burnetti* (Q Fever) Foot-and-mouth disease

Pigs	African swine fever *Brucella* sp. Classical swine fever Foot-and-mouth disease Porcine reproductive respiratory syndrome (PRRS) *Trichinella spiralis*

The following were classified as priorities 3 and 4:

Species	Test
Cattle	Bovine Herpes Virus *Mycoplasma bovis* Parainfluenza virus Bovine viral diarrhoea
Goats	Hydatids
Cattle and goats	*Coxiella burnetti* (Q Fever) Akabane virus *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*
All species	Leptospirosis: *pomona, copenhagenii, hardjo*

II-4.B.b. Strengths:

- NZ-MPI project underway to establish some initial laboratory knowledge on disease presence.
- Capacity building for MAFF staff included in the project.

II-4.B.c. Weaknesses:

- No current technical capacity or resources within the CA to design and implement an active surveillance programme.
- No knowledge of the current disease status of the country.
- No laboratory diagnostic capacity.

II-4.B.d. Recommendations:

- Continue efforts and collaboration with the NZ-MPI to establish a surveillance baseline. Consider an accompanying questionnaire for livestock officers and farmers to explore clinical signs historically to see if any clinical suspicions over time.
- Continue to develop technical capacity of MAFF staff on sampling collection for surveillance programmes.
- Seek international opportunities and partners to develop technical capacity on basic principles of epidemiology to design and implement disease surveillance.
- Consider coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities to ensure access to laboratory diagnostic capacity (See CC II-1.A).

- Once access to laboratory capacity and technical capacity have been achieved, consider adding disease surveillance to the MAFF Livestock Division's permanent programmes, with associated budget, KPIs, etc. For zoonotic diseases consider collaboration with the MOH under a One Health approach.

II-4.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 26, 33, 34, 35, 55

II-5. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to be prepared and respond rapidly to a sanitary emergency threat (such as a significant disease *outbreak* or food safety emergency).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. The VS have no field network or established procedure to determine whether a sanitary emergency threat exists or the authority to declare such an emergency and respond appropriately.
2. The VS have a field network and an established procedure to determine whether a sanitary emergency threat exists, but lack the legal and financial support to respond effectively. The VS may have basic emergency management planning, but this usually targets one or a few diseases and may not reflect national capacity to respond.
3. The VS have the legal framework and financial support to respond rapidly to sanitary emergency threats, but the response is not well coordinated through an effective chain of command. They have national emergency management plans for some exotic *diseases*, but they are not updated/tested.
4. The VS have the legal framework and financial support to respond rapidly to sanitary emergencies through an effective chain of command (e.g. establishment of a *containment zone*). The VS have national emergency management plans for major exotic *diseases,* linked to broader national disaster management arrangements, and these are regularly updated/tested such as through simulation exercises.
5. The VS have national emergency management plans for all diseases of concern (and possible emerging infectious diseases), incorporating coordination with national disaster agencies, relevant *Competent Authorities*, producers and other non-government stakeholders. Emergency management planning and response capacity is regularly tested, audited and updated, such as through simulation exercises that test response at all levels. Following emergency events, the VS have a formal 'After Action Review' process as part of continuous improvement.

II-5.a. Findings:

The Animal Diseases Act (2020) contains provisions for the CA to declare animal disease emergencies and adopt measures such as quarantine areas, restriction of movements and forced slaughter of animals in the case of detection of a list of diseases taken from the old "List A and List B" classification of notifiable diseases to the WOAH (described in the Act as "first schedule" and "second schedule" diseases). An implementing regulation would still be needed in order to make the provisions of the Act fully operational (i.e. how is surveillance conducted, how restrictions of movements are implemented, how quarantine areas are be defined, etc.) Most importantly, a simpler administrative procedure would be necessary to modify the (outdated) list of diseases without need for a legislative change of the Act. That would allow the CA to keep the list of diseases updated according to national needs, scientific developments and international obligations of the country.

Under the Disaster Risk Management Act (2021), the MEIDECC has the power to declare a state of emergency due to a natural hazard or public health reasons. In that scenario, the MEIDECC has a coordination role through the establishment of a National Disaster Risk Management Committee. Operational aspects of emergencies are managed by "clusters", with the MAFF being responsible for the *food security and livelihoods* cluster, and the MOH for the *health and nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene* cluster. Clusters would be responsible for elaborating emergency response plans and, if needed, for requesting the release of emergency funding through the National Disaster Risk Management Committee and the Prime Minister.

The VS do not currently have an emergency response plan, guidelines or SOPs for animal diseases outbreaks.

In 2023, a generic African Swine Fever (ASF) emergency preparedness and response template for Pacific islands countries and territories was prepared based on FAO and SPC animal health and emergency response manuals. It was designed to assist countries in developing an emergency ASF response plan to suit their national needs and to be adapted to the local situation. This template was mentioned by the VS as the only contingency plan available so far, however, there was no evidence of local considerations being introduced to the template, or a formal procedure of adoption or approval to make the plan operational. No training, simulation exercises or awareness campaigns have been conducted in Tonga. Training for SPC countries on ASF emergency response including a simulation exercise was conducted in Fiji in 2023 attended by Tongan staff.

II-5.b. Strengths:

- Legal provisions in place to declare animal disease emergencies and adopt measures.
- MEIDECC provides a central government platform, structure and coordination system for national emergencies response.
- A generic South Pacific ASF emergency response planning template has been developed led by FAO and SPC.

II-5.c. Weaknesses:

- No national emergency response plan, guidelines or SOPs for animal disease outbreaks.
- No technical capacity within the VS to identify, declare and manage animal disease outbreaks.

II-5.d. Recommendations:

- Develop implementing regulations that make provisions in the Animal Diseases Act (2020) operational. Consider regional partners for support to develop guidelines and SOPs for the declaration and management of animal health/veterinary public health emergencies.
- Adapt the ASF emergency response plan template to Tonga specific conditions and seek formal MAFF approval of the plan. Consider adapting similar templates for other transboundary animal diseases of importance.
- Consider testing the ASF emergency response plan with a national simulation exercise. Repeat the exercise with future plans for other transboundary diseases.
- Develop technical capacity and capabilities of the VS staff in emergency management and response.
- Work with regional partners in developing and implementing regional networks for emergency response (i.e. PHOVAPS).

II-5.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 18, 26

II-6. DISEASE PREVENTION, CONTROL AND ERADICATION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to control or eradicate nationally important diseases present in the country, such as through a combination of vaccination, domestic movement control, establishing *containment zones*, *biosecurity* measures (including farm *biosecurity*), isolation and/or culling/stamping out.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. The VS have no capability to implement animal disease prevention, control or eradication programmes.
2. The VS implement prevention, control or eradication programmes for some diseases and/or in some areas or populations, but with little or no epidemiological, risk-based planning or evaluation of their efficacy and efficiency.
3. The VS implement prevention, control or eradication programmes for some priority *diseases* in some areas or populations. There is variable epidemiological, risk-based planning and evaluation of efficacy and efficiency, with limited progress towards programme goals.
4. The VS implement national prevention, control or eradication programmes for priority *diseases* with a high level of epidemiological, risk-based planning, and continual evaluation of efficacy and efficiency. They have or are progressing towards WOAH official recognition of disease control programmes for relevant diseases. They can demonstrate some progress towards programme goals in reducing or eradicating disease.
5. The VS implement national prevention, control or eradication programmes for all priority *diseases* with scientific evaluation of their efficacy and efficiency consistent with relevant WOAH international standards. They can demonstrate clear progress towards programme goals in reducing or eradicating disease, including achieving or progressing towards official recognition of freedom from relevant diseases.

II-6.a. Findings:

There is no knowledge of the current animal disease status of the country (even though Tonga is still free of major exotic diseases such as FMD, HPAI, ASF or rabies), no technical resources, and no laboratory diagnostic capacity that would allow Tonga to develop and implement specific measures to prevent, control or eradicate animal diseases in the country (see CC II-4.A, II-4.B, II-5).

The MAFF Livestock Division's strategic objectives and associated programmes are aimed at livestock production, reduction of food imports and food security (main areas of action being a pig and sheep selling programme, animal owners capacity building, a chicken distribution programme, an artificial insemination programme, as well as bee-keeping and animal feed development projects).

The *animal health services* programme is focused on providing basic clinical services to animal owners, mainly regarding common companion and farm animals diagnosis and treatment of injuries, parasitic infestations, and livestock production management, nutrition and good practices.

II-6.b. Strengths:

- NZ-MPI project underway to establish some initial knowledge on disease presence in the country.

II-6.c. Weaknesses:

- No experience or technical capacity in designing or implementing disease control programmes.

- No knowledge of current animal disease status on which to develop prevention, control or eradication programmes.

II-6.d. Recommendations:

- Once surveillance surveys are completed and if there is evidence of the presence of WOAH notifiable diseases (especially those affecting public health), specific control programmes could be developed. Consideration should be given to working with international/regional partners for its development.
- Continue engagement with farmers and develop awareness/communication strategies to control the most common sanitary issues in livestock/companion animals, such as parasitic infestations affecting public health (i.e. hookworms) and animal production.

II-6.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 18, 26, 33, 34, 35, 55

II-7. ANIMAL PRODUCTION FOOD SAFETY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to assure the safety of food of animal origin for domestic and export markets.
A . Regulation, inspection (including audits), authorisation and supervision of establishments for production and processing of food of animal origin .
The authority and capability of the VS to establish and enforce sanitary and food hygiene standards for establishments that produce and process food of animal origin, including slaughter, rendering, dairy, egg, honey and other animal product processing establishments. Includes the regulation, initial authorisation of establishments, and the ongoing inspection of establishments and processes, including the identification of and response to non-compliance, based on HACCP principles. It includes external coordination between *Competent Authorities* as may be required.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. Regulation, authorisation, and inspection of relevant establishments and processes are generally not undertaken in conformity with international standards.
2. Regulation, authorisation and inspection of relevant establishments and processes are undertaken in conformity with international standards in some selected premises (e.g. export premises).
3. Regulation, authorisation and inspection of relevant establishments and processes are undertaken in conformity with international standards in large premises supplying major cities and/or the national market.
4. Regulation, authorisation and inspection of relevant establishments and processes are undertaken in conformity with international standards for premises supplying the national and local markets. There are some reports of dealing with non-compliance.
5. Regulation, authorisation, inspection and audit of relevant establishments and processes are undertaken in conformity with international standards at all premises. There are documented cases of the identification and effective response to non-compliance.

II-7.A.a. Findings:

The Food Act 2020 is the main legislative Act regulating food safety in Tonga. The MAFF is responsible, through its Food Division, for the practical implementation of the Food Act and for managing and co-ordinating all necessary activities to ensure that food that is imported, manufactured, exported, or sold commercially is fit for human consumption and meets the required standards of food safety.

The Food Act implementing regulation is not yet in place although it has been discussed since 2014. The lack of implementing regulations leads to enforcement difficulties. For example, the MOH is formally no longer responsible for food safety of products of animal origin, but it is still enforcing certain aspects of the old Food Safety Act such as food processing workers health certification. The new Regulation is in the last stage of drafting, and consultation and awareness activities with the public are being conducted.

In establishing standards for food premises, the Food Act dictates that *Codex* standards will be introduced at a pace which is affordable, practical and appropriate for the country, and that priority will be given to establishments presenting a greater risk to consumers.

Food safety responsibilities for products of aquatic origin are being delegated by MAFF to the MOF by means of a MOU, although not yet officially which causes a lack of enforcement in this

type of processing establishments and products. Nevertheless, certificates for exports are being issued by the MOF.

All food processing establishments must be registered and can only operate when licenced. Licences are renewed annually by the Ministry of Trade with a permit issued by the MAFF Food Division and medical certificates for staff issued by the MOH. There are currently 26 licensed food processing establishments, including butcheries, water bottling facilities, noodle factories, sausage processors, oil processors, ice factories and bakeries. In addition, there are approximately 80 Restaurants and 220 food shops/vendors in the country.

The MAFF Food Division is responsible for the official control and monitoring of all licensed establishments, but staffing (6 for the food inspection section) is not sufficient and there is only one car to conduct inspections. In Vava'u there is only 1 food inspector.

The schedule of inspections is defined yearly and frequency of inspections depends on the associated risk categories; food establishments are coded "red" (very poor - 8%), "orange" (needs improvement - 33%) or "green" (very satisfactory - 59%), with establishments designated as orange and red being inspected more frequently (more than twice/year). The Food Division undertook 589 inspections in Tongatapu during fiscal year 2022/2023.

There was no evidence of records of offences or penalties, with expired products being the most commonly reported finding.

The Public Health (Meat) Regulations (2020) establish that animals shall be slaughtered in "an approved slaughtering place". However, there are no approved facilities in the country and animals are slaughtered on site within farms, households or villages without pre- or post-mortem inspection or any other type of official control. A mobile slaughter unit is scheduled to be operational in 2025 as part of a public-private initiative between the MAFF and the National Livestock Farmers Council (see CC II-7.B).

The team visited a commercial pig farm where animals were slaughtered, cut, and meat was chilled/frozen on site for further distribution and sale, without it being considered a food producing establishment subject to licensing and inspection. In addition, there was no evidence of formal food safety assurance plans or traceability in butcher shops and similar establishments.

There is no laboratory capacity to conduct any type of official sampling and testing for food safety control purposes.

II-7.A.b. Strengths:

- Legal framework in place to establish and enforce sanitary and food hygiene standards for establishments that produce food of animal origin.
- Mobile slaughter unit scheduled to be operational in 2025.

II-7.A.c. Weaknesses:

- Food Act implementing regulations not yet in place which causes the MOH to still enforce certain aspects of the old Food Safety Act.
- Public Health (Meat) Regulations (2020) not implemented. Animals are slaughtered on-site within farms and households for human consumption including for commercial purposes. No approved slaughter facilities.
- Training on food safety and hygiene standards is insufficient. Lack of specific training for inspection of food of animal origin (i.e. slaughter).
- Lack of awareness and enforcement of the importance of a formal traceability system for animal products.

- No evidence of formal food safety assurance plans in butcher shops and other establishments producing food of animal origin.
- Communication and coordination between CA not well established and mostly on an informal basis. Absence of MOU on food safety and certification of fishery products create areas with no enforcement/duplicated responsibility.

II-7.A.d. Recommendations:

- Formally delegate food safety activities related to aquatic animal products from MAFF to MOF by means of a MOU.
- Ensure the prompt approval of the Food Regulations. Periodically revise existing regulations and draft new food safety standards in line with *Codex Alimentarius* and applicable WOAH standards for products of animal origin.
- Provide adequate training on food safety and hygiene standards for relevant staff, particularly for officers involved in meat inspection and registration and approval of establishments.
- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit considers adequate sanitary and food hygiene and inspection standards in line with the Public Health (Meat) Regulations. The plan should consider coordinated efforts between the MAFF Food and Livestock Divisions.
- Consider coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities (MAFF, MOF, MOH) for joint provision of laboratory services in food safety. Review and explore regional opportunities (SPC, NZ-MPI, etc.) related to access to laboratory capacity for food safety control purposes.

II-7.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 12, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41

II-7. ANIMAL PRODUCTION FOOD SAFETY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to assure the safety of food of animal origin for domestic and export markets.
B. Ante- and post-mortem inspection at slaughter facilities and associated premises.
The authority and capability of the VS to implement and manage the *ante-mortem* inspection of *animals* destined for slaughter and the post-mortem inspection of carcasses and *meat* products at slaughter facilities and associated premises, including to ensure meat hygiene and safety, and for the collection of information relevant to livestock diseases and *zoonoses.* This includes standards relating to *veterinary* and *veterinary para-professional* supervision and inspection, and protocols applied for ante- and post-mortem inspection findings, based on HACCP principles. It includes external coordination between *Competent Authorities* as may be required.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. Ante- and post-mortem inspection is generally not undertaken in conformity with international standards.
2. Ante- and post-mortem inspection with collection of disease information is undertaken in conformity with international standards only in selected premises (e.g. export premises).
3. Ante- and post-mortem inspection with collection of disease information is undertaken in conformity with international standards for export premises and the major abattoirs in the larger cities and/or producing *meat* for distribution throughout the national market.
4. Ante- and post-mortem inspection with collection of disease information is undertaken in conformity with international standards for all slaughter facilities producing *meat* for export, national and local markets.
5. Ante- and post-mortem inspection with collection of disease information is undertaken in conformity with international standards at all premises (including municipal, community, and on-farm slaughtering and distribution) and are subject to periodic audits.

II-7.B.a. Findings:

There is currently no ante-mortem or post-mortem inspection of animals destined for slaughter and/or carcasses and meat products. There are therefore no controls on meat hygiene and safety, and no collection of information relevant to livestock diseases and zoonoses.

The Public Health (Meat) Regulations (2020) establish that animals shall be slaughtered in "*an approved slaughtering place*" and also that animals shall not be slaughtered for human consumption "*unless a meat Inspector has first examined and passed the animal for slaughtering*". However, there are no approved facilities in the country and animals are slaughtered on-site within farms and household backyards, including for commercial purposes, without any type of official control or guidelines available for farmers on diseases suspicion/detection.

As part of a joint initiative between the MAFF and the National Livestock Farmers Council, the acquisition of a mobile slaughter unit was approved. It is scheduled to arrive in the country during 2024 and be operational in 2025. The slaughter unit will be owned and operated by the Council, in coordination with the Livestock Division. The initial phase will consider slaughter of bovines with the objective of improving sanitary and food hygiene conditions as well as providing the basis for implementing Public Health (Meat) Regulations.

No evidence was provided regarding formal planning for the functioning of the slaughter unit in terms of official controls on meat hygiene and safety, pre- and post-mortem inspection (in

line with the Public Health (Meat) Regulations), and/or collection of information relevant to livestock diseases and zoonoses.

The team visited a commercial pig farm where animals were slaughtered, cut, and meat was chilled/frozen on site for further distribution and sale without inspection (see CC II-7.A).

II-7.B.b. Strengths:

- Legal framework provides basis for official controls on meat hygiene including pre- and post-mortem inspection, as well as appointment procedures and powers for "meat inspectors".

II-7.B.c. Weaknesses:

- No ante-mortem or post-mortem inspection of animals destined for slaughter and/or carcasses and meat products, with no collection of information relevant to livestock diseases and zoonoses.
- Animals are slaughtered on-site throughout the country for human consumption. No approved slaughter facilities and little awareness of the need to undertake ante and post-mortem inspection.
- No CA staff specifically trained in meat hygiene and meat inspection.
- No evidence of coordination between MAFF Food and Livestock Divisions for enforcement of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations.

II-7.B.d. Recommendations:

- Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit considers adequate sanitary and food hygiene standards in line with the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, as well as proper ante- and post-mortem inspection with formal data collection relevant to livestock diseases.
- Coordinate efforts between the MAFF Food and Livestock Divisions for meat hygiene controls and consider a programme to licence/approve and regularly inspect slaughter facilities/sites known to be functioning regularly i.e. pig farms), prioritising initially the largest operators.
- Develop a plan to provide adequate specialised training for meat inspectors. Consider including Livestock Officers in meat inspection activities.
- Promote awareness of the need for ante and post-mortem inspection in collaboration with the Livestock Farmers Council.
- Evaluate the need for additional mobile slaughter units after an assessment of the functioning and implementation of the first one.

II-7.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 12, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41

II-8. VETERINARY MEDICINES AND BIOLOGICALS

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to regulate veterinary medicines, and biologicals, in order to ensure their quality and safety, as well as their responsible and prudent use, including as medicated *feed.* This includes the marketing authorisation/registration, import, manufacture, quality control, export, labelling, advertising, distribution, sale (includes dispensing) and use (includes prescribing) of these products.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT- 2
1. The VS cannot regulate veterinary medicines and biologicals.
2. The VS have some capability to exercise regulatory and administrative control over the import, manufacture and market authorisation (registration) of veterinary medicines and biologicals to ensure their safety and quality, but cannot ensure their responsible and prudent use in the field.
3. The VS exercise effective regulatory and administrative control for the market authorisation of veterinary medicines and biologicals and have some capacity to regulate to ensure their responsible and prudent use in the field, including reducing the risk from illegal imports.
4. The VS exercise comprehensive and effective regulatory and administrative control of all aspects of veterinary medicines and biologicals, including market authorisation, responsible and prudent use in the field, and reducing the risks of illegal distribution and use.
5. The control systems for veterinary medicines and biologicals are regularly audited, tested and updated when necessary, including via an effective pharmacovigilance programme.

II-8.a. Findings:

There are no specialist manufacturers or importers of veterinary medicines and biologicals in Tonga. The Therapeutic Goods Act establishes that import licences for all medicinal drugs can be granted to a pharmacist, veterinary practitioner, wholesaler or retailer.

Veterinary medicines are normally imported into the country by foreign NGO veterinarians who are granted licenses when organising visits to provide clinical services. These veterinarians also assist the MAFF Livestock Division with ordering veterinary supplies from New Zealand that require a veterinary prescription and offer advice to MAFF Livestock Officers during the year using telemedicine services (see CC III-7).

The Therapeutic Goods Act establishes that a prescription is required for veterinary medicines but there is no implementing regulation or enforcement. In practice, any medicines which are registered in the EU, USA, AU and NZ can be imported directly and the VS cannot ensure their responsible and prudent use in the field.

MAFF Livestock Division officers provide services to the population that include supply and administration of antiparasitic drugs and antimicrobials. Given the lack of veterinarians there is no direct veterinary supervision.

II-8.b. Strengths:

- The Therapeutic Goods Act provides a basic legal framework for the use of veterinary drugs.

II-8.c. Weaknesses:

- No veterinarians in the country.

- There is no enforcement of the regulatory requirements on the use of veterinary medicines, such as use of prescriptions.
- No registry of veterinary medicine imports is available.
- Livestock Officers using antimicrobials without much training and no direct veterinary supervision.

II-8.d. Recommendations:

- Train Livestock Officers on the limits to clinical services provided and the need for responsible and prudent use of veterinary medicines such as provision of prescriptions, labelling on dosage and timing, observing withholding periods for food producing animals, providing only correct quantities and keeping accurate records.
- Develop implementing regulations for the Therapeutic Goods Act that allow its practical application and proper marketing and use of veterinary medicines and biologicals. Include the use of veterinary medicines in the National Medicines Policy currently under review.
- Consider training and awareness campaigns to discourage the inappropriate use of antimicrobials by livestock farmers.

II-8.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 10, 42, 53, 55

II-9. ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) AND ANTIMICROBIAL USE (AMU)

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to manage AMR and AMU, and to undertake surveillance and control of the development and spread of AMR pathogens in animal production and animal origin food products, via a One Health approach.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS cannot regulate or control AMR and AMU, and have not developed or contributed to an AMR action plan covering the veterinary domain.
2. The VS are contributing or have contributed to a national AMR action plan. The action plan has initiated some activities to collect AMU/AMR data or control AMR e.g. awareness campaigns targeting *veterinarians* or farmers on the prudent use of *antimicrobial agents (*antimicrobials*).* The use of antimicrobials for growth promotion is discouraged.
3. The VS have defined a national AMR action plan in coordination with the Public Health authorities and other stakeholders, and are implementing some AMU/AMR surveillance and regulations. The use of antimicrobials for growth promotion is prohibited.
4. The VS are implementing a comprehensive AMR action plan based on risk, including AMR surveillance of the most important pathogens for animal health or food-borne diseases, the *monitoring* of AMU, and the prudent use of antimicrobials in *animals* (especially the use of critically important antimicrobials). The use of antimicrobials for growth promotion does not occur.
5. An effective national AMR action plan covering the veterinary domain is regularly audited, reviewed and updated by the VS with the Public Health authorities and other stakeholders, using the results of AMU/AMR surveillance. The scale and type of antimicrobial usage in *animals* poses minimal risk of AMR and alternative solutions for the control of diseases in *animals* are being implemented.

II-9.a. Findings:

A Tonga AMR multi-sectorial plan 2017-2022 was drafted with stakeholders from the MOH, MAFF, Environment, Education, private sectors and civil society and the support of the WHO. The plan was never formally adopted by MOH and MAFF, and is currently being revised coordinated by the MOH.

Tonga does not have a national AMR surveillance programme and no dedicated AMR unit to coordinate AMR surveillance for both human and animal health. The MOH has a functional clinical laboratory with a limited number of staff and limited funding. Initial surveys on hospital samples indicated the rate of Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in Tonga was high (42% of staphylococcal cultures) in 2016 compared to New Zealand (10%), the Cook Islands (12%) and Australia (26%) but low compared to Samoa (48% in 2016) and the USA (50-60%).

The draft new national AMR plan includes a series of actions on AMR governance, surveillance, diagnostic capacity, research, awareness, reducing incidence of AMR through effective infection prevention and control measures, food safety and hygiene, and optimisation of the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health.

After the division of the MAFF and subsequent creation of the MOF, the MOF has not been part of the committee revising the AMR plan.

There is no system in place to effectively control the use of antimicrobials in animals (aquatic and terrestrial).

II-9.b. Strengths:

- A draft national multi-sectorial AMR plan was prepared in 2016 and is currently being revised.
- A small clinical laboratory exists at the central hospital to support surveillance of AMR.

II-9.c. Weaknesses:

- No practical implementation of the AMR control plan and other related activities.
- Limited awareness about AMR, with no veterinary prescription and non-supervised use of antimicrobials.

II-9.d. Recommendations:

- Update and approve the national AMR plan including all relevant stakeholders under the One Health approach.
- Include AH and the One Health approach in the National Medicines Policy currently under review.
- Develop implementation activities for the AMR plan focusing on surveillance and awareness. Start with training and awareness of livestock officers or relevant pharmacies or shops selling veterinary drugs of the prudent use of antimicrobials.

II-9.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 10, 42, 53, 55

II-10. RESIDUE TESTING, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to undertake residue testing and *monitoring* programmes for veterinary medicines (e.g. antimicrobials and hormones), chemicals, pesticides, radionuclides, heavy metals, etc. and respond appropriately to adverse findings.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. No residue testing for animal products is being undertaken.
2. Some residue testing is being undertaken, such as for research or pilot purposes and/or it is conducted only on specific animal products for export.
3. A comprehensive residue *monitoring* programme is conducted for all animal products for export and some for domestic consumption based on limited *risk analysis*. Documented protocols exist for preventing residue risks (e.g. withholding periods for veterinary drugs) and for responding to breaches of Maximum Residue Limits.
4. A comprehensive residue *monitoring* programme is conducted for all animal products for export and domestic consumption based on *risk analysis*. Effective protocols both reduce residue risks and respond to breaches of Maximum Residue Limits, including traceback and follow up.
5. The residue *monitoring* and *risk management* programme is subject to routine quality assurance and regular evaluation/audit.

II-10.a. Findings:

No residue testing for animal products is currently being undertaken for exports or the local market.

A JICA-funded project provided HPLC equipment a number of years ago intended for pesticides residues analyses. However, no further training on its use or funding for maintenance/use of the equipment was provided.

II-10.b. Strengths:

- N/A

II-10.c. Weaknesses:

- No residues testing conducted in food of animal origin or animal feed, domestic or imported.
- No current access to laboratory capacity.
- HPLC equipment unused due to lack of training and funding for operations and maintenance.

II-10.d. Recommendations:

- Develop a plan and determine priority products for residue testing, based on the assessment of public health risks. Consider coordination and collaborative efforts between competent authorities (MAFF, MOF, MOH) for joint provision of public health laboratory services.
- Review and explore regional opportunities (SPC, NZ-MPI, etc.) for access to laboratory capacity and training.

II-10.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 42

II-11. ANIMAL FEED SAFETY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to regulate animal *feed* safety e.g. processing, handling, storage, distribution and use of both commercial and on-farm produced animal *feed* and *feed* ingredients. This includes *feed* safety risks such as swill feeding, feeding by-products, ruminant *feed* bans, the use of antimicrobials in *feed*, as well as managing risks of microbial, physical and toxin contamination of *feed*.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. The VS cannot regulate animal *feed* safety.
2. The VS have some capability to exercise regulatory and administrative control over animal *feed* safety.
3. The VS exercise regulatory and administrative control for most aspects of animal *feed* safety.
4. The VS exercise comprehensive and effective regulatory and administrative control of animal *feed* safety.
5. The control systems are regularly audited, tested and updated when necessary.

II-11.a. Findings:

Animal feed is not specifically covered by legislation and there is no management or regulation on its manufacture, import and/or use. Currently there are no domestic manufacturers and imported feed is available through major wholesale suppliers and retail shops. It is mostly imported from Australia, New Zealand and the US and there is no procedure in place to evaluate risks of imports from other countries. The PVS team did not see any evidence of records of import certificates or any official controls.

The Animal Diseases Act grants the MAFF with specific powers to develop regulations for prohibiting or controlling swill feeding of pigs and poultry. However, there is no implementing regulation and no controls were seen, even though pigs are commonly reared in traditional free-range systems given the cost of commercial feed.

II-11.b. Strengths:

- N/A

II-11.c. Weaknesses:

- There is no regulatory and administrative control over animal feed safety. Only imported feeds are available, and importation is done without risk assessment, health certification, or any residue and feed safety testing.
- High risk of swill feeding of free-range pigs.

II-11.d. Recommendations:

- Develop risk-based regulatory requirements to control the import and use of animal feed.
- Implement an official programme to monitor/enforce swill feeding ban and/or its risk management.

II-11.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 5, 8, 9, 11, 17, 60

II-12. IDENTIFICATION, TRACEABILITY AND MOVEMENT CONTROL

DEFINITION
A. Premises, herd, batch and animal identification, tracing and movement control
The authority and capability of the VS, in coordination with producers and other stakeholders, to regulate the identification of *animal*s, to trace their history and location(s), and to control domestic movements for the purpose of animal disease control, food safety, trade or other legal requirements under the VS mandate.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 1
1. The VS do not have the authority or the capability to regulate the identification of *animals*, either individually, by batch, or by premises, or to trace and control their movements.
2. The VS can identify some *animals* by premises or location and control some movements, using traditional methods, and can demonstrate the ability to deal with a specific problem (e.g. to trace sampled or vaccinated *animals* for follow up, or to prevent theft).
3. The VS implement a system for *animal identification, traceability* and movement control for specific animal sub-populations (e.g. for export, at borders, specified *zones* or markets) as required for traceability and/or disease control, in accordance with international standards.
4. The VS implement appropriate and effective *animal identification, traceability* and movement control procedures for some animal species at national level, in accordance with international standards.
5. The VS carry out periodic audits of the effectiveness of their identification, traceability and movement control systems. They have been demonstrated as effective in dealing with a problem (e.g. tracing a disease *outbreak*, residue or other food safety incident).

II-12.A.a. Findings:

The VS currently do not regulate the identification of animals, either individually or by premises, nor trace and/or control their movements.

II-12.A.b. Strengths:

- N/A

II-12.A.c. Weaknesses:

- No animal identification system or programme exists. Not being able to trace animals limits the ability to develop disease prevention, control or eradication programmes and to respond promptly and effectively to animal health and veterinary public health issues.
- Little perceived need for animal identification and traceability.

II-12.A.d. Recommendations:

- Consider international technical assistance for feasibility or cost-benefit study of animal identification and traceability.
- Depending on the feasibility, work on the progressive and gradual implementation of livestock identification and traceability. Risk assessment should be used to prioritise the species for the early/pilot adoption of animal identification and traceability. Simpler, cost-effective, identification methods such as branding or ear tagging could be explored initially.

II-12.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 12, 20

II-12. IDENTIFICATION, TRACEABILITY AND MOVEMENT CONTROL

DEFINITION
B. Identification, traceability and control of products of animal origin
The capability of the *Veterinary Authority*, in coordination with *Competent Authorities* (such as food safety authorities) and other stakeholders as appropriate, to achieve whole-of-chain traceability, including the identification, tracing and control of products of animal origin for the purpose of food safety, animal health or trade.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS do not have the capability or access to information to identify or trace products of animal origin.
2. The VS can identify and trace some products of animal origin, by coordination between *Competent Authorities*, to deal with a specific problem (e.g. high risk products traced back to premises of origin).
3. The VS have implemented procedures to identify and trace some products of animal origin, in coordination with *Competent Authorities*, for food safety, animal health and trade purposes, in accordance with international standards.
4. The VS have implemented national programmes enabling them to identify and trace all products of animal origin, and respond to threats, in coordination with *Competent Authorities*, in accordance with international standards.
5. The VS periodically audit the effectiveness of their identification and traceability procedures, in coordination with *Competent Authorities*. The procedures have been demonstrated as being effective for traceback and response to a relevant food safety incident (e.g. foodborne zoonoses or residue incident).

II-12.B.a. Findings:

The Food Act (2020) considers traceability requirements for all foods and establishes that food businesses are responsible for implementing a system that enables the CA to track and trace any supplier or receiver of a food item, including food producing animals.

In practice, the team could observe that the MAFF Food Division is mostly able to trace imported products and to enforce eventual recalls based on imports data and documentation.

In terms of local production, there was no evidence of any formal traceability system. The fact that animals are slaughtered on-site within farms and households throughout the country - without inspection or data capture – limits the possibility of products being traced back to the premises of origin. The system mostly relies on the low number of establishments such as butchers and sausage manufacturers, which are normally associated with a single or known suppliers.

II-12.B.b. Strengths:

- Basic legal framework in place.
- Food processing establishments (post slaughter) registered and inspected according to risk.

II-12.B.c. Weaknesses:

- Lack of awareness of the importance of formal traceability of animal products.
- No evidence of formal food safety assurance plans on butcher shops and similar establishments.

II-12.B.d. Recommendations:

- Develop a strategy to implement a system to identify and trace products of animal origin, prioritising according to risk assessment. If necessary, consider provisions in the implementing regulations of the Food Act.
- Consider awareness campaigns for food producing establishments on the importance of traceability and control of the food chain. Assist meat shops and similar processing establishments to develop food safety assurance plans.
- Following the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit, develop a plan to implement a formal traceability system coupled to ante- and post-mortem inspection and data collection. Use collaboration with the Livestock Farmers Council to promote awareness among members.
- As an initial pilot, stamping of carcases or meat that has been hygienically produced and inspected appropriately (such as from the mobile slaughter unit) or other registered slaughter establishments could be trialled as a very basic form of product traceability.

II-12.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 12, 19, 20, 21, 22

II-13. ANIMAL WELFARE

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to legislate and implement the *animal welfare* standards of WOAH as published in the *Terrestrial Code.* This requires consultation and coordination with *Competent Authorities*, non- governmental organisations and other stakeholders, as appropriate.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - x
1. There is no national legislation or regulations on *animal welfare*.
2. There is limited national legislation or regulations on *animal welfare* covering some of the WOAH standards, with limited stakeholder or public awareness.
3. The national *veterinary legislation* (including laws and regulations) on *animal welfare* cover most WOAH standards, with some awareness programmes and implementation, but are in conformity with international standards in only some sectors (e.g. for the export sector).
4. *Animal welfare* programmes, supported by suitable *veterinary legislation*, are being implemented in conformity with relevant international standards and are applied to most sectors and species with stakeholders and public awareness. Documented compliance programmes, including consequences of non-compliance are available.
5. *Animal welfare* programmes, supported by suitable *veterinary legislation*, are being implemented in conformity with relevant international standards. Comprehensive national programmes are applied to all sectors and species with the active involvement of stakeholders. The *animal* welfare programmes, including non-compliance issues, are subject to regular audit and review, with documented cases of responding effectively to non-compliance.

II-13.a. Findings:

There is no single animal welfare regulation in Tonga, but several legal provisions are in place and contained in legislation such as the Animal Diseases Act (1988), Criminal Offences Act, Districts (Animal Enclosure) Regulations, Forests Act, Pounds and Animals Act (2016), and the Whale Watching and Swimming Regulations (2014), Public Health (Meat) Regulations (2020) under the Public Health Act.

These legal provisions include matters such as: *intentional and unlawful killing or maiming of cattle; intentional and unlawful killing or maiming of other domesticated animals; All animals must be kept in a secure and clean enclosure and must be given food and water; animal cruelty is punishable by imprisonment up to 6 months or a $20 fine and in default, imprisonment up to 3 months; owners of domestic animals or birds must not ill-treat their own animals; injured animals – to be dealt with humanely; slaughter of animals should be done as skilfully, humanely and expeditiously as possible.*

Nevertheless, implementation is not enforced by the CA and public awareness is limited.

The Tonga Animal Welfare Society[3] (TAWS) is active in trying to promote awareness amongst the population and engaging with the authorities to contribute to the development of modern legislation and a public policy on animal welfare in the country. They are currently working on a project with the National Police to develop changes to the legislation and a national dog management plan. They also partner with the MAFF Livestock Division in the practical organisation of regular field clinics staffed by voluntary veterinary professionals, students and paraprofessionals from New Zealand. During these visits up to 800 sterilisations are conducted per year, which helps to control the significant number of stray dogs (see CC III-7).

[3] https://www.tawstonga.org/

II-13.b. Strengths:

- Current legislation provides some basic regulatory framework.
- Proactive NGO contributing to promote awareness and development of a public policy on animal welfare.

II-13.c. Weaknesses:

- Legal framework is fragmented, outdated and partial.
- No official animal welfare policy or enforcement of current regulations by the authorities.

II-13.d. Recommendations:

- Consider developing a single piece of modern animal welfare legislation, based on the WOAH Animal Health Code covering areas such as i.e. slaughter, land and sea transport, on-farm welfare, stray animal control. etc.
- Develop a national animal welfare policy with the involvement of different stakeholders and ensure enforcement of current regulations in place, including training of VS staff, public awareness campaigns, and a public complaints, investigations and prosecutions system.
- Develop guidelines on animal welfare during slaughter based on Section 7 of the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code to be used following the deployment of a mobile slaughtering unit. Promote awareness among livestock farmers and consider assigning animal welfare enforcement duties to a MAFF Livestock Officer.
- Continue promoting and supporting NGO initiatives that provide access to veterinary clinical services and sterilisation of companion animals to help control stray population.

II-13.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 13, 20, 37, 58

III.3 Fundamental component III: Interaction with stakeholders

This component of the evaluation concerns the capability of the VS to collaborate with and involve non-government stakeholders including the private sector, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (including consumer organisations) in the implementation of programmes and activities. This also includes relevant state-owned enterprises, research institutions, universities and other training establishments.

Critical Competencies:

Section III-1	**Communication**
Section III-2	**Consultation with stakeholders**
Section III-3	**Official representation and international collaboration**
Section III-4	**Accreditation/ authorisation/ delegation**
Section III-5	**Regulation of the profession by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB)**
Section III-6	**Participation of producers and other stakeholders in joint programmes**
Section III-7	**Veterinary clinical services**

Terrestrial Code References:

Points 6, 7, 9 and 13 of Article 3.1.2. on Fundamental principles of quality: Veterinary legislation/General organisation/Procedures and standards/Communication.

Point 9 of Article 3.2.1. on General considerations.

Points 2 and 7 of Article 3.2.3. on Evaluation criteria for the organisational structure of the Veterinary Services.

Sub-point b) of Point 2 of Article 3.2.6. on Administrative resources: Communications.

Article 3.2.11. on Participation on WOAH activities.

Article 3.2.12. on Evaluation of the veterinary statutory body.

Points 4, 8 and Sub-point g) of Point 10 of Article 3.2.14. on Administration details/Animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health controls/Sources of independent scientific expertise.

Chapter 3.3. on Communication.

Point 4 of Article 3.4.3. on General principles: Consultation.

Article 3.4.5. on Competent Authorities.

Article 3.4.6. on Veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals.

III-1. COMMUNICATION

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to keep non- government stakeholders aware and informed, in a transparent, effective and timely manner, of VS activities and programmes, and of developments in animal health, *animal welfare* and veterinary public health. This competency includes communication with all non-government stakeholders, including industry groups/associations (such as livestock farmer, meat sector, dairy sector and trading groups), as well as relevant NGOs and the general public, such as via communication campaigns and the media, including social media.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. The VS do not inform stakeholders of VS activities and programmes.
2. The VS have informal communication mechanisms with some stakeholders (e.g. with the larger commercial livestock or related companies).
3. The VS maintain a dedicated and specialist communications function which communicates with stakeholders occasionally, but it is not always up-to-date or pro-active in providing information.
4. The VS contact point or unit for communication provides up-to-date information to most relevant stakeholders. This information is aligned with a well-developed communications plan, and accessible via the Internet and other appropriate channels targeted to the audience, and covers relevant events, activities and programmes, including during crises.
5. The VS have a well-developed communications plan, and regularly circulate information to all relevant stakeholders, well targeted to the audience via the full range of communications media, including social media. The VS regularly evaluate and revise their communications plan.

III-1.a. Findings:

The MAFF Livestock and Food Divisions maintain mostly informal communication with the private sector. There is no officer or a formal communications programme dedicated to animal or public health topics.

The MAFF main website[4] was not functional at the time of the PVS mission. Later access shows that it is difficult to open, contains little information, and it is not updated. The Ministry also has a weekly radio programme where different Divisions can contribute with content, as well as a TV space when needed. Most of the regular communications content in these channels is provided by the MAFF Extension Division and content on animal or public health issues is not considered on a regular basis.

The Food Division has a Facebook page managed by the Division's technical staff which they try to keep as active as possible. It has dedicated content promoting food safety awareness and announcements for the general public. Some printed communication materials were available for promoting food safety awareness.

The Tongan government maintains a Trade Portal[5] with information on general regulations and procedures for imports and exports of different commodities. This portal has information on exports of live and frozen fish, but no information on other type of live animals or animal products.

[4] www.maff.gov.to
[5] https://tonga.tradeportal.org/?l=en

III-1.b. Strengths:

- MAFF access to radio and TV programmes that provide ample coverage if needed, especially to smaller islands.
- Active informal communication with main stakeholders on a permanent basis.
- Food Division efforts to communicate on food safety issues.

III-1.c. Weaknesses:

- MAFF website not fully functional or updated.
- Little use of social media for communications.
- No proactive communication on animal health issues.

III-1.d. Recommendations:

- Consider developing an animal and veterinary public health communications strategy in liaison with the Extension Division. Make use of the available coverage provided by radio and TV programmes for relevant content on animal and public health.
- Review and update communication materials on a regular basis.

III-1.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 36

III-2. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to consult effectively with non-government stakeholders on VS policies and programmes, and on developments in animal health and food safety. This competency includes consultation with all non-government stakeholders, including industry groups/associations (such as livestock farmer, meat sector, dairy sector and trading groups), as well as interested NGOs and members of the public. Unlike communication (CCIII-1), consultation is two way and should involve mechanisms that not only inform, but actively seek views of consulted parties, for consideration and response.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. The VS have no mechanisms for consultation with non-government stakeholders.
2. The VS maintain informal channels of consultation with some non-government stakeholders (e.g. only the larger commercial livestock or related companies).
3. The VS hold formal consultations with non-government stakeholders, usually represented by industry groups or associations.
4. The VS regularly hold workshops and meetings with non-government stakeholders, who are organised to have broad representation, such as through elected, self-financed industry groups or associations. Consultation outcomes are documented and the views of stakeholders considered and occasionally incorporated.
5. The VS actively consult with all non-government stakeholders, including representatives of smaller producers, regarding current and proposed policies and programmes, developments in animal health and food safety, and proposed interventions at the OIE, Codex Alimentarius Commission, WTO SPS Committee, etc. The consultation results in improved, better adapted activities and greater stakeholder support.

III-2.a. Findings:

Informal contact between the VS and larger groups such as the Livestock Farmers Council is fluid and on a permanent basis. This group is also a member of the Agricultural Sector Growth Committee at ministerial level.

Other stakeholders such as animal welfare NGOs also maintain permanently open informal communication channels with the VS.

There was no evidence of formal consultation procedures between the CA and non-government stakeholders that could lead to documented outcomes.

III-2.b. Strengths:

- VS maintain active informal communication channels with different stakeholders' groups.

III-2.c. Weaknesses:

- No formal consultation procedures between the VS and private stakeholders.

III-2.d. Recommendations:

- Schedule regular meetings with stakeholders and keep documented records of agenda/agreements.
- Include as many private sector stakeholders as possible in formal consultation procedures.

III-2.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31

III-3. OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to regularly and actively participate, coordinate and provide follow-up on relevant meetings and activities of regional and international organisations including WOAH, Codex Alimentarius Commission, WTO SPS Committee, WHO, FAO and Regional Economic Communities.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. The VS do not participate in or follow up on relevant meetings or activities of regional or international organisations.
2. The VS sporadically participate in relevant meetings or activities and/or make a limited contribution.
3. The VS actively participate in the majority of relevant meetings and activities, and provide some feedback to national colleagues.
4. The VS consult with non-government stakeholders and take into consideration their opinions in developing papers and making interventions in relevant meetings and in following up on meeting outcomes at national or regional level.
5. The VS consult with non-government stakeholders to provide leadership, to ensure that strategic issues are identified, and to ensure coordination among national delegations as part of their participation in relevant meetings, and follow up on meeting outcomes at national and/or regional levels. The VS collaborate internationally by sharing information and assisting to build capacity where appropriate.

III-3.a. Findings:

Tonga CA staff regularly participate in international and regional meetings and reporting back to colleagues is normally conducted. No formal reports are being provided.

Staff from the Food Division regularly participate in regional *Codex Alimentarius* conferences and workshops. They also form part of electronic working groups to discuss specific technical draft norms at regional level.

The MAFF CEO attends relevant FAO meetings. The country is also a member of WTO, WHO and the SPC, where staff from different ministries regularly participate.

The VS are represented in the PHOVAPS Network.

Tonga is not currently a member of WOAH, however, they have been invited and participated in regional workshops destined to Pacific Islands, such as the PVS Pathway Orientation Training Workshop held in Fiji in 2023.

III-3.b. Strengths:

- Regular participation in relevant regional and international meetings.
- Participation in regional instances provide opportunities for networking and exploring support initiatives for access to training, laboratory capacity, joint programmes, etc.

III-3.c. Weaknesses:

- No formal, structured reporting or follow-up after relevant meetings.
- No formal coordination between CAs attending different meetings for sharing of information.

III-3.d. Recommendations:

- Consider formal procedures for reporting back to colleagues after international meetings.

- Evaluate convenience of potential WOAH membership.

III-3.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31, 54

III-4. ACCREDITATION/AUTHORISATION/DELEGATION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the public sector of the VS to accredit/authorise/delegate to private sector or NGO expertise (e.g. private *veterinarians* and *laboratories*, *animal welfare* NGOs), to carry out official tasks on their behalf, usually via a formal agreement (i.e. public-private partnership).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 1
1. The public sector of the VS has neither the authority nor the capability to accredit/authorise/delegate to the private sector or NGOs official tasks.
2. The public sector of the VS has the authority or capability to accredit/authorise/delegate official tasks to the private sector or NGOs, but there are currently no accreditation/authorisation/delegation activities.
3. The public sector of the VS develops accreditation/authorisation/delegation programmes for certain tasks using formal agreements, but these activities are not routinely reviewed.
4. The public sector of the VS develops and implements accreditation/authorisation/delegation programmes using formal agreements, and these activities are routinely reviewed to maintain standards and manage performance.
5. The public sector of the VS carries out audits of its accreditation/authorisation/delegation programmes, in order to maintain the trust of their trading partners and other stakeholders.

III-4.a. Findings:

The VS/AAHS have no clear legal authority or capability to accredit/authorise/delegate official tasks to the private sector.

III-4.b. Strengths:

- N/A

III-4.c. Weaknesses:

- No clear legal mandate to accredit/authorise/delegate official tasks to the private sector.

III-4.d. Recommendations:

- Consider granting 'official status' to potential private sector veterinarians that arrive in the country to undertake official tasks and programmes.

III-4.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 12, 15, 18

III-5. REGULATION OF THE PROFESSION BY THE VETERINARY STATUTORY BODY (VSB)

DEFINITION
The authority and capacity of the *VSB* to effectively and independently maintain educational and professional standards for *veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals.* Regulation includes licensing or registration of those *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* that meet educational standards, and the ongoing oversight of their professional competence and conduct.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 1
1. There is no *VSB*.
2. The *VSB* regulates *veterinarians* only within certain sectors of the veterinary profession and/or does not systematically apply educational standards or disciplinary measures.
3. The *VSB* regulates *veterinarians* in all sectors of the veterinary profession setting educational standards and applying disciplinary measures.
4. The *VSB* regulates *veterinarians* in all sectors and some *veterinary paraprofessionals* in a transparent manner. It has defined one or more specific categories of *veterinary paraprofessional* and their qualifications for initial and ongoing registration.
5. The *VSB* regulates and applies disciplinary measures to *veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* in all sectors throughout the country. *Veterinarians* and *veterinary paraprofessionals* are required to undertake continuing education to maintain their professional registration.

III-5.a. Findings:

There are no veterinarians currently in Tonga. There is no VSB, or any regulation of veterinarians or veterinary paraprofessionals.

III-5.b. Strengths:

- N/A

III-5.c. Weaknesses:

- N/A

III-5.d. Recommendations:

- Consider the possibility of working on a regional approach to develop regulations for the veterinary profession and veterinary paraprofessionals.

III-5.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1

III-6. PARTICIPATION OF PRODUCERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN JOINT PROGRAMMES

DEFINITION
The capability of the VS to develop joint programmes (public-private partnerships) with producers and non-government stakeholders to deliver animal health, veterinary public health, food safety and/or *animal welfare* outcomes.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. Producers and other non-government stakeholders do not participate in joint programmes.
2. Producers and other non-government stakeholders are informed of programmes by the VS and informally assist the VS in programme delivery in the field (e.g. industry groups helping to communicate the programme with their membership).
3. Producers and other non-government stakeholders formally participate with the VS in the delivery of joint programmes and advise of needed changes and improvements.
4. Representatives of producers and other non-government stakeholders actively partner with the VS to plan, manage and implement joint programmes.
5. Producers and other non-government stakeholders contribute resources and may lead the development and delivery of effective joint programmes with the VS. They also actively participate in their regular review, audit and revision.

III-6.a. Findings:

The MAFF has established successful joint programmes with stakeholders – in particular with the Tonga Livestock Farmers Council.

One of these joint initiatives is the acquisition of a mobile slaughter unit that is scheduled to arrive in the country during 2024 and be operational in 2025. The project was developed and presented by the Council with the support of the MAFF Livestock Division. The slaughter unit is funded by the government and will be owned and operated by the Council, in coordination with the Livestock Division.

Another initiative is the import of chicken feed by the Council, which is subsidized by the MAFF. The feed is then distributed at a reduced price by the Council to members who benefit from a government chicken distribution programme. The success of this chicken distribution programme would be hampered without this scheme, as the price of imported feed is too high for the average farmer.

The provision of clinical services to the population via collaboration with 2 animal welfare NGOs can also be considered a successful example of Public Private-Partnership (See CC III-7).

III-6.b. Strengths:

- Successful examples of instances where stakeholders formally participate with the VS in the delivery of joint programmes.

III-6.c. Weaknesses:

- Resources for these types of initiatives are limited and not always available.

III-6.d. Recommendations:

- In anticipation of the deployment of the slaughter mobile unit in 2025, make sure to develop and implement a coordinated plan between the Livestock Farmers Council and the MAFF Livestock Division to establish meat hygiene and ante and post-mortem inspection and data collection.

- Use these collaboration instances to promote animal health awareness among farmers (i.e., reporting diseases, contingency plans for emergencies, etc.).
- Continue working on similar initiatives and expand them to other stakeholders/groups.

III-6.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31

III-7. VETERINARY CLINICAL SERVICES

DEFINITION
The availability and quality of veterinary clinical services to meet the needs of animal owners, including their access to animal disease or injury diagnosis and treatment.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 2
1. There are no/few clinical services provided from either the public or private sector.
2. Clinical services are available to animal owners in some areas but the quality and coverage (i.e. access to qualified *veterinarians* and/or *veterinary paraprofessionals)* is highly variable.
3. Clinical services are available to most animal owners via the public and/or private sector. In rural areas this is delivered mostly by *veterinary paraprofessionals* with some formal training and some veterinary supervision – but providing only basic clinical diagnosis and treatment.
4. Clinical services are available to all animal owners via an efficient network of veterinary clinics, including in rural areas, serviced by qualified *veterinarians* assisted by *veterinary paraprofessionals.* Diagnoses are generally made prior to treatment, including with supporting *laboratory* tests where appropriate and professional standards are maintained by a well-functioning VSB.
5. Clinical services are available to all animal owners through qualified *veterinarians*, with appropriate facilities, diagnostic equipment and treatments, and the opportunity for specialist referral if required.

III-7.a. Findings:

Clinical services are generally available to animal owners on the main island of Tongatapu, but the quality and coverage is variable. The outer islands are poorly serviced. Basic clinical services are provided by MAFF Livestock Officers as part of the "*Animal Health Services Programme*" for a small charge, especially when treatments are involved (only basic consultation and advice is free of charge). There is a small clinic facility within the Livestock Division offices where services are mainly provided. They include procedures such as administration of antiparasitic drugs (internal and external), treatment of injuries and general management advice, but also administration of antimicrobials and sometimes surgical interventions with no direct veterinary supervision.

During the fiscal year 2023/2024 a total of 10,075 animals were treated through this programme, including both livestock and companion animals.

In addition to the regular clinical services provided by the MAFF, the New Zealand-based South Pacific Animal Welfare Society[6] (SPAW) organises regular field clinics staffed by voluntary veterinary professionals, students and paraprofessionals (vet nurses) with the objective of providing people in Tonga with veterinary care services for companion and farm animals. The Tonga Animal Welfare Society[7] and the MAFF Livestock Division partner in the practical organisation of each SPAW visit.

SPAW normally aims to provide 4 visits to Tonga per calendar year (1 week per visit), including Tongatapu (using the Livestock Division facilities) and Vava'u. Besides general clinical services, they also perform sterilisation surgeries for dogs and cats. Up to 500 animals are treated during each visit, including about 200 sterilisations[8] that have helped to control the significant stray dog population.

[6] https://www.spaw.org.nz/

[7] https://www.tawstonga.org/

[8] According to the National Agricultural Census of 2015, the number of dogs in Tonga was estimated at 29,963 and the number of cats at 7,831.

This NGO also donates veterinary medicines and surplus supplies to the Livestock Division for their regular clinical services. The veterinarian in charge of these visits also offers clinical advice to MAFF Livestock Officers during the year using telemedicine services. These may include instructions on use and dosage of antimicrobials and other veterinary medicines. The SPAW veterinarian also regularly assists the MAFF Livestock Division with ordering veterinary supplies from New Zealand that require a veterinary prescription.

The PVS team was advised that the SPAW veterinarians do not encourage nor approve surgical interventions being performed by Livestock Officers.

III-7.b. Strengths:

- MAFF Livestock Officers provide basic clinical services to the population.
- NGO-led effort to provide periodical clinical services of qualified veterinarians.

III-7.c. Weaknesses:

- Access to qualified veterinarians subject to voluntary work and fully funded by external NGOs.
- Limited veterinary supervision of Livestock Officers' providing clinical services – telemedicine advice.
- Livestock Officers performing surgical interventions and prescription of antimicrobials.

III-7.d. Recommendations:

- Continue to liaise with SPAW/TAWS to provide clinical services by qualified veterinary professionals and further train Livestock Officers on basic clinical skills.
- Include training on the limits to clinical services provided solely by paraprofessionals (i.e. surgeries), and the need for proper veterinary supervision of their activities. Continue taking advantage of telemedicine services and supervision provided by SPAW.
- Continue efforts to try to recruit a veterinarian in Tonga.

III-7.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 32, 37

III.4 Fundamental component IV: Access to markets

This component of the evaluation concerns the authority and capability of the VS to provide support by demonstrating the overall integrity of its animal health and veterinary public health system in order to access, expand and retain regional and international markets for animals and animal products.

Critical Competencies:

Section IV-1	**Veterinary legislation**
	A. Legal quality and coverage
	B. Implementation and compliance
Section IV-2	**International harmonisation**
Section IV-3	**International certification**
Section IV-4	**Equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements**
Section IV-5	**Transparency**
Section IV-6	**Zoning**
Section IV-7	**Compartmentalisation**

Terrestrial Code References:
Points 6, 7 and 9 of Article 3.1.2. on Fundamental principles of quality: Veterinary legislation/General organisation/Procedures and standards.
Points 1 and 2 of Article 3.2.7. on Legislation and functional capabilities: Animal health, animal welfare and veterinary public health/Export/import inspection.
Points 1 and 3 of Article 3.2.8. on Animal health controls: Animal health status/National animal disease reporting systems.
Sub-point g) of Point 4 of Article 3.2.10. on Veterinary Services administration: Trade performance history.
Article 3.2.11. on Participation in WOAH activities.
Points 7 and 11 of Article 3.2.14. on Veterinary legislation, regulations and functional capabilities/Membership of the WOAH.
Chapter 3.4. on Veterinary legislation.
Chapter 4.3. on Zoning and compartmentalisation.
Chapter 4.4. on Application of compartmentalisation.
Chapter 5.1. on General obligations related to certification.
Chapter 5.2. on Certification procedures.
Chapter 5.3. on WOAH procedures relevant to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures of the World Trade Organization.
Chapters 5.10. to 5.13. on Model international veterinary certificates.

IV-1. VETERINARY LEGISLATION

DEFINITION
The effectiveness of *veterinary legislation* (including laws and regulations).
A. Legal quality and coverage
The authority and capability of the VS to develop and update *veterinary legislation*, to ensure its quality and coverage of the veterinary domain. This competency covers the quality of legislation considering the principles of legal drafting, its impact, and suitability for implementation. This competency includes formal collaboration with expert legal drafters and lawyers, other relevant ministries and *Competent Authorities*, national agencies and decentralised institutions that share authority or have mutual interest in relevant areas of the veterinary domain. It also includes consultation with stakeholders that may affect or be affected by the *veterinary legislation*.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. *Veterinary legislation* is lacking, out-dated or of poor quality. The VS do not have the authority or capability to develop and update *veterinary legislation.*
2. *Veterinary legislation* covers some fields of the veterinary domain. The VS, working occasionally with expert legal drafters and lawyers, have some authority and capability to develop and update *veterinary legislation.*
3. *Veterinary legislation* covers most fields of the veterinary domain, including those fields under other Competent Authorities. The VS, working in formal partnership with expert legal drafters and lawyers, have the authority and capability to develop and update national *veterinary legislation,* including via consultation with stakeholders, to ensure its legal quality and applicability.
4. *Veterinary legislation* covers the entire veterinary domain. The VS have the authority and the capability to develop and update *veterinary legislation* at national (and sub-national where relevant) level – using a formal methodology which considers international standards, consultation with stakeholders, legal quality and applicability, and regulatory impact.
5. *Veterinary legislation* comprehensively covers the entire veterinary domain. The VS regularly evaluate and update *veterinary legislation* at national (and sub-national where relevant) level, with reference to ongoing effectiveness and changing international standards and science.

IV-1.A.a. Findings:

The legislation covers most aspects of the veterinary domain. Key pieces of legislation include:

- Animal Diseases Act
- Public Health Act
- Food Act
- Therapeutic Goods Act
- Disaster Risk Management Act
- Pounds and Animals Act
- Public Service Act

Food safety is regulated by the Food Act, but the corresponding implementation regulation is not yet in place which causes the MOH to still enforce certain aspects of the old Food Safety Act (repealed in 2014). Lack of implementing regulations also hampers the applicability of the Animal Diseases Act.

The MAFF employs legal staff that work in collaboration with the government legal services.

Consultation of stakeholders such as farmers or food processors has been done recently but it is not mandatory.

IV-1.A.b. Strengths:

- Legislative framework covering most areas of the VS domain.

IV-1.A.c. Weaknesses:

- Lack of specific legislation covering diseases surveillance, prevention and control.
- Lack of implementing regulations and technical/financial capacity to enforce legislation.

IV-1.A.d. Recommendations:

- Review legislation and modify the Animal Diseases Act in light of the results of the project underway to establish a baseline on disease presence. Consider developing criteria for listing animal diseases of national concern and the obligation to notify (see CC II-4.A).
- Develop a complete suite of implementing regulations for relevant Acts.

IV-1.A.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 58

IV-1. VETERINARY LEGISLATION

DEFINITION
The effectiveness of *veterinary legislation* (including laws and regulations).
B. Implementation and compliance
The authority and capability of the VS to ensure implementation of and compliance with *veterinary legislation* across the veterinary domain through communication, compliance and inspection activities. This competency includes formal collaboration with other relevant ministries and *Competent Authorities*, national agencies and decentralised institutions that share responsibility for implementation or have mutual interest in relevant areas.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 2
1. *Veterinary legislation* is not implemented or poorly implemented, and it is not supported by communication, compliance and inspection activities.
2. *Veterinary legislation* is implemented through some activities of communication and awareness raising on stakeholder legal obligations, but few compliance and inspection activities are conducted.
3. *Veterinary legislation* is implemented through a programme of communication and awareness raising, and through formal, documented compliance and inspection activities. The VS undertake some legal action (e.g. administrative fines or prosecution) in instances of non-compliance in most relevant fields of activity.
4. *Veterinary legislation* is implemented across the entire veterinary domain and is consistently applied. The VS work to minimise instances of non-compliance through multiple means, including through targeted communications, incentives and appropriate legal processes. They have documented reports of responding to non-compliance.
5. *Veterinary legislation* compliance programmes are regularly subjected to audit and review by the VS or external agencies.

IV-1.B.a. Findings:

Legislation is implemented through some activities of communication and awareness raising on stakeholder legal obligations in the field of food safety. Inspections records were present for food processing establishments.

As there are no AH programmes related to prevention, control or eradication of diseases, there is no inspection, communication or specific awareness activity in this field.

There is also some awareness but no enforcement activities in the fields of veterinary medicines (imports, distribution and use), feed and animal welfare.

The relevant legislation is publicly available but there is still some confusion about responsibilities for food safety aspects of aquatic animal products and others related to the practical implementation of the Food Act 2020.

IV-1.B.b. Strengths:

- Food Safety legislation enforced by MAFF and MOH, including communications and awareness activities by the MAFF Food Division.

IV-1.B.c. Weaknesses:

- Food Act implementing regulations not yet in place which causes the MOH to still enforce certain aspects of the old Food Safety Act.

- AH legislation is unclear with no implementing regulations.

IV-1.B.d. Recommendations:

- Approve Food Act implementing regulations and promote compliance with stakeholder awareness programmes. Include clarification on inspection of aquatic animals/fisheries products between MAFF and MOF.

IV-1.B.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 36, 58

IV-2. INTERNATIONAL HARMONISATION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to be active in the harmonisation of national *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures* to ensure they take into account international standards, and/or related regional directives or guidelines.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 2
1. National *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures* under the mandate of the VS do not take into account international standards.
2. The VS are aware of gaps, inconsistencies or non-conformities in national *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures* as compared to international standards, but do not have the capability or authority to rectify the problems.
3. The VS monitor the establishment of new and revised international standards, and periodically review national *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures* in response.
4. The VS harmonise *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures*, and can demonstrate a level of alignment with changing international standards. The VS also review and comment on the draft standards of relevant intergovernmental organisations, and work through regional organisations, where available, to ensure better harmonisation with international standards.
5. The VS actively and regularly participate at the international level in the formulation, negotiation and adoption of international standards, and use the standards to regularly harmonise national *veterinary legislation* and *sanitary measures*.

IV-2.a. Findings:

Tonga is not a member of WOAH so there is no commitment to comply in terms of developing AH legislation in accordance to its international standards. Nevertheless, the country is an active member of SPC where there have been regional discussions on developing model, internationally compliant AH legislation for use by SPC members.

Food safety legislation was developed in line with international *Codex Alimentarius* standards.

IV-2.b. Strengths:

- Food safety legislation developed in line with international standards.

IV-2.c. Weaknesses:

- Gaps in AH legislation and sanitary measures as compared to international standards.

IV-2.d. Recommendations:

- In developing veterinary legislation and sanitary measures the VS should review international and regional standards and best practices.
- Consider more active involvement in any SPC, Australia and New Zealand SPS harmonisation initiatives, especially in the field of AH.
- Evaluate cost/benefit convenience of a potential WOAH membership.

IV-2.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 12 13, 14, 27

IV-3. INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to reliably certify *animals* and animal products, and related services and processes under their mandate, for export, in accordance with national *veterinary legislation*, international standards and importing country requirements. This refers to the country's veterinary export certification processes. Issues such as: the legislative basis, format and content of veterinary certificates; who signs certificates and the confidence they have in what they are certifying; and the outcome in terms of meeting international standards and/or importing country requirements to facilitate exportation should all be considered.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – 2
1. The VS have neither the authority nor the capability to certify *animals* and animal products for export.
2. The VS have the authority to certify certain *animals* and animal products for export, but are not always in compliance with national *veterinary legislation*, and international standards.
3. The VS develop and carry out certification for certain *animals*, animal products, services and processes for export under their mandate in compliance with international standards.
4. The VS develop and carry out all relevant certification programmes for all *animals*, animal products, services and processes for export under their mandate in compliance with international standards.
5. *The* VS carry out audits of their certification programmes, in order to maintain national and international confidence in their system.

IV-3.a. Findings:

The MAFF has the authority to issue international certificates using international standards. Through the Livestock Division they have agreed bilateral arrangements with Australia and New Zealand for the certification of live animals (sheep, goats, chicks, dogs, cats).

The Head of the Livestock Division issues health certificates when needed although they are currently mostly limited to cats and dogs. In any case, the certificates are not completed by a veterinarian with visibility of the current disease/health status of the source animals for the shipments.

The export of animal and fisheries products is authorised for personal consumption (in passengers' luggage) and a certificate guaranteeing the products sanitary conditions is issued either by MAFF or MOF officers following visual inspection at the airport. No analytical tests are made.

IV-3.b. Strengths:

- Model health certificates are issued according to agreed importing country conditions.

IV-3.c. Weaknesses:

- Non-veterinarians completing animal health certificates containing disease status requirements for international trade.
- No access to laboratories for resolving possible international disputes.

IV-3.d. Recommendations:

- Consider that only qualified, well-trained officers should be permitted to certify the health status of animals in compliance with international standards.

IV-3.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 17, 36, 58

IV-4. EQUIVALENCE AND OTHER TYPES OF SANITARY AGREEMENTS

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to apply flexibility in negotiating, implementing and maintaining equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners. As a reference, Article 4 of the WTO SPS Agreement states: Member Countries shall accept the sanitary or phytosanitary measures of other Member Countries as equivalent, even if these measures differ from their own or from those used by other Members trading in the same product, if the exporting Member Country objectively demonstrates to the importing Member Country that its measures achieve the importing Member Country's appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection. For this purpose, reasonable access shall be given, upon request, to the importing Member Country for inspection, testing and other relevant procedures.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - 3
1. The VS have neither the authority nor the capability to negotiate or approve equivalence or other types of sanitary agreements with other countries.
2. The VS have the authority to negotiate and approve equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners, but no such agreements have been implemented.
3. The VS have implemented equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners on selected *animals*, animal products and processes.
4. The VS actively pursue the development, implementation and maintenance of equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners on matters relevant to *animals*, animal products and processes under their mandate. They publish their existing sanitary agreements in the public domain.
5. The VS actively work with stakeholders and take into account developments in international standards, in pursuing equivalence and other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners.

IV-4.a. Findings:

The MAFF and MOF have established agreements with NZ and AU that allow the import and export of live animals (sheep, goats, chicks, dogs, cats), as well as meat and fish for personal consumption.

IV-4.b. Strengths:

- Capacity to negotiate and implement sanitary agreements.

IV-4.c. Weaknesses:

- Challenges negotiating animal disease conditions given lack of confirmed knowledge of the AH status in the country and technical capabilities to support exports.

IV-4.d. Recommendations:

- Consider joint collaboration between MAFF and MOF for international negotiation, and consideration of equivalence and/or other types of sanitary agreements with trading partners.

IV-4.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 9, 17, 36, 57, 58

IV-5. TRANSPARENCY

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to notify WOAH, WTO, trading partners and other relevant organisations of its disease status, regulations and *sanitary measures* and systems, in accordance with established procedures, as applicable to international trade.
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT – N/A
1. The VS do not notify.
2. The VS occasionally notify.
3. The VS notify in compliance with the procedures established by these organisations.
4. The VS regularly and actively inform stakeholders of changes in disease status, regulations and *sanitary measures* and systems, as applicable to international trade.
5. The VS, in cooperation with their stakeholders, carry out reviews or audits of their notification procedures.

IV-5.a. Findings:

Tonga is not a member of WOAH and has no notification obligation. Nevertheless, a staff member of the MOF acts as WOAH contact point and regularly provides updates on behalf of MAFF and MOF. No disease outbreaks or surveillance reports have been notified to WOAH.

Tonga is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), accessed the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in 2003, the Kyoto Protocol in 2008 and became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2007. Tonga is a Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 2016. It is a member of the WHO and an International Health Regulations (IHR) Joint External Evaluation (JEE) mission was undertaken in May 2024.

New food regulations were notified according to the WTO SPS Agreement obligations in 2022.

IV-5.b. Strengths:

- Membership in WTO, FAO and WHO.
- A WHO IHR JEE mission was very recently conducted.

IV-5.c. Weaknesses:

- No capacity for surveillance/early detection of diseases.

IV-5.d. Recommendations:

- Evaluate cost/benefit convenience of a potential WOAH membership.

IV-5.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1, 31

IV-6. ZONING

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to establish and maintain disease free *zones*, as necessary and in accordance with the criteria established by WOAH (and by the WTO SPS Agreement where applicable). Where a country has no need for or interest in developing disease free zones and has not initiated such a process, this critical competency should be assessed as 'Non-Applicable' (N/A).
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - x
1. The VS do not have the authority or capability to initiate the establishment of disease free *zones*.
2. The VS have identified a geographical animal sub-population or sub-populations as candidates to target a specific health status suitable for zoning.
3. The VS are implementing *biosecurity* and *sanitary measures* with the intention of establishing a disease free *zone* for selected *animals* and animal products.
4. The VS have established at least one disease free *zone* of selected *animals* and animal products with collaboration from producers and other stakeholders in alignment with WOAH standards.
5. The VS can demonstrate the scientific basis for any disease free *zone* and have gained recognition by WOAH and/or trading partners that they meet the criteria established by WOAH (and by the WTO SPS Agreement where applicable).

IV-6.a. Findings:

The VS do not currently have the authority or capability to establish disease free zones. Establishment of zones is not relevant to the country at this time.

IV-6.b. Strengths:

- N/A

IV-6.c. Weaknesses:

- N/A

IV-6.d. Recommendations:

- N/A

IV-6.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1

IV-7. COMPARTMENTALISATION

DEFINITION
The authority and capability of the VS to establish and maintain disease free compartments in accordance with the criteria established by WOAH. Where a country or its relevant animal industries have no need for or interest in developing disease free compartments and neither party has initiated or considered such a process or partnership, this critical competency should be assessed as 'Non-Applicable' (N/A)
LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT - x
1. The VS do not have the authority or capability to initiate the establishment of disease free *compartments*.
2. The VS can identify animal sub-populations as candidate establishments with a specific health status suitable for compartmentalisation, in partnership with interested stakeholders.
3. The VS, working in close partnership with interested stakeholders, ensure that planned *biosecurity* measures to be implemented will enable the establishment and maintenance of disease free *compartments* for selected *animal*s and animal products.
4. The VS collaborate with producers and other stakeholders to define responsibilities and undertake actions that enable the establishment and maintenance of disease free *compartments* for selected *animals* and animal products, including a national government certification and accreditation system.
5. The VS can demonstrate the scientific basis for disease free *compartments* and have gained recognition by other countries that they meet the criteria established by WOAH (and by the WTO SPS Agreement where applicable).

IV-7.a. Findings:

The VS do not currently have the authority or capability to establish disease free compartments.

IV-7.b. Strengths:

- N/A

IV-7.c. Weaknesses:

- N/A

IV-7.d. Recommendations:

- N/A

IV-7.e. Evidence (as listed in Appendix 5): 1

PART IV: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Country information (geography, administration, agriculture and livestock)[9]

The Kingdom of Tonga is an archipelago of 172 coral and volcanic islands - of which 36 are inhabited - spread over 360,000 square kilometres in the South Pacific Ocean. Most of the islands are very small in size, ranging from those of only a few hectares to Tongatapu, the largest island, with an area of 265 square kilometres.

The total land area of the kingdom is 747 square kilometres, made up of the four main island groups of Tongatapu and ‘Eua (370 Km^2), Ha’apai (119 Km^2), Vava’u (143 Km^2) and the two Niuas (71 Km^2).

Tonga has a semitropical climate except in the northernmost islands, where truly tropical conditions prevail. Temperatures range between 16 and 21°C in June and July and reach 27°C in December and January. The islands are mostly made up of coral and volcanic land, with the highest elevation being Mount Kao on the island of Kao at 1,033 meters. The country lies east of the Fiji Islands and is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity.

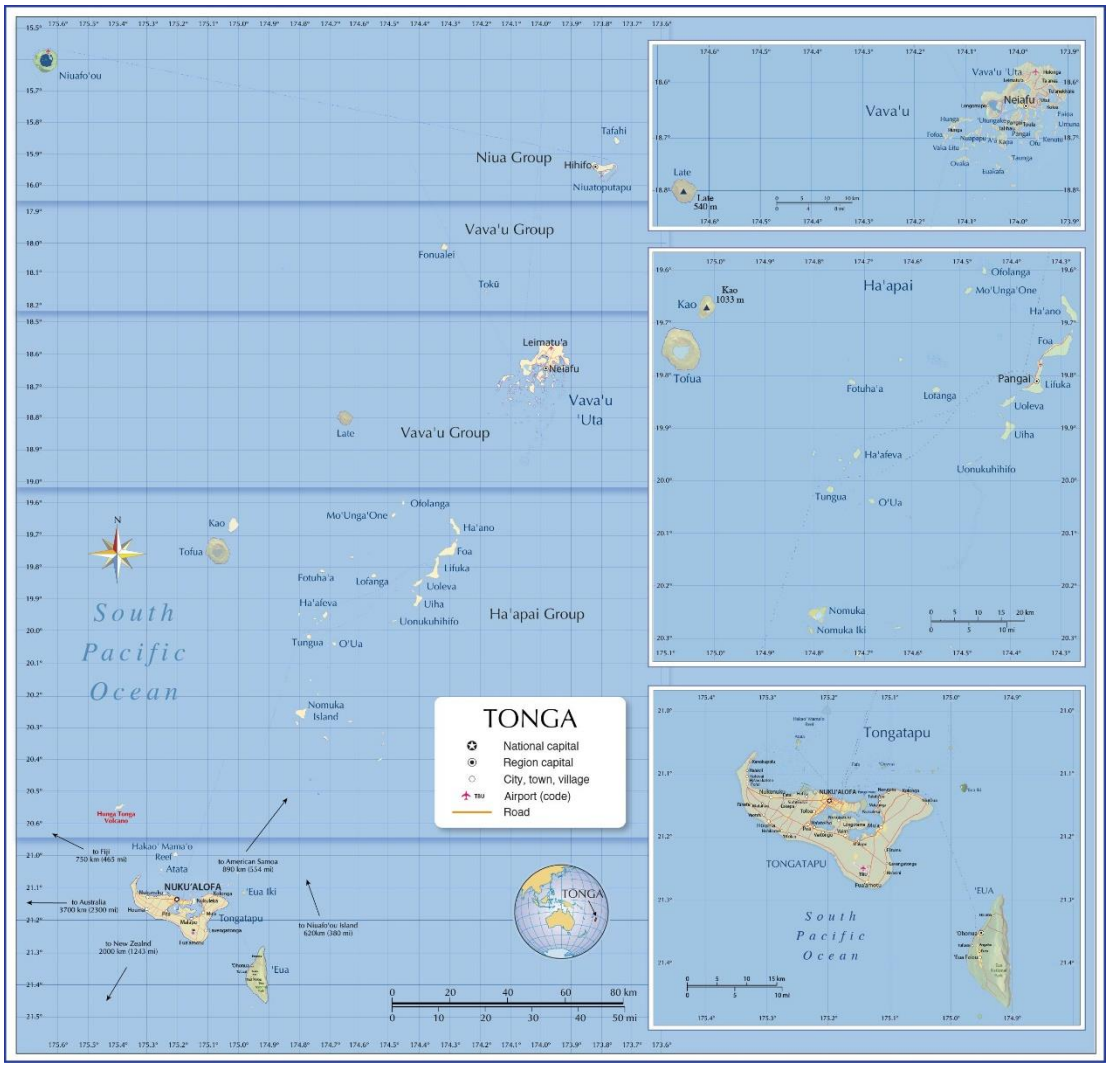
Tonga's population is about 106,000 people, with a predominantly Polynesian ethnic background. The official languages are Tongan and English, and Christianity is the predominant religion, with a majority of the population adhering to various Christian denominations.

All land is essentially owned by the Tongan monarchy, but large estates have been divided among the country’s nobles. Land is parcelled out to proprietors: traditionally, every male age 16 or over was entitled to an allotment of 3 hectares of land for cultivation; more recently, population growth has reduced the size of actual allotments in many places.

Regular international air service to New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, Samoa, American Samoa, Niue, and Hawaii is available from Fua‘amotu International Airport on Tongatapu. Domestic flights are serviced by airports on ‘Eua, Ha‘apai, Vava‘u, Niuafo‘ou, and Niuatoputapu. An undersea fibre-optic cable linking Tonga with a Fiji-based regional telecommunications network provides high-speed internet access.

[9] - SPC. (2022). Tonga. SPC Statistics for Development Division: https://sdd.spc.int/to
- Thornber, P. (2020). Technical support for project development to enhance livestock. Apia: FAO
- PVS-GFTAD Country Profile: TONGA
- Tonga National Agricultural Census conducted - 2015

Map of the Kingdom of Tonga



Administration

Tonga is a constitutional monarchy, currently led by King Tupou VI. The country has a parliamentary system, and while the monarch has some influence, the day-to-day affairs are handled by the elected prime minister and the cabinet. The unicameral parliament (Fale Alea) consists of nobles elected by their peers and representatives elected by the public. The elected members then designate the prime minister. The prime minister recommends members of the cabinet from among the elected members and has the power under the constitution to nominate up to four from outside the elected members. This mechanism has been used to ensure that there is a woman in the cabinet if no women have been elected to parliament.

Agriculture

The well-drained fertile soils of ‘Eua, Kao, Tofua, and Late islands and the slopes and hilltops of Vava‘u support original forests. ‘Eua has the greatest number and variety of trees, and the ridge on the eastern side is a forest reserve. The sandy, rocky, dry soils of the coasts and the direct exposure there to strong winds and salty spray create unfavourable conditions for coastal vegetation. Tidal sand and mudflats have swampy areas that support mangroves.

Agriculture is a pillar of the Tongan economy. Squash, coconuts, bananas, and vanilla beans constitute the main cash crops, and other important crops include yams, taro, cassava, corn, watermelons, pineapples, breadfruit, limes and tomatoes. Timber production, livestock raising, and fishing also contribute to Tonga’s economy.

Many of Tonga’s products are consumed domestically. However, imports mainly from New Zealand, Singapore, United States, Fiji and Australia form the bulk of the goods consumed in the country. Food and beverages account for the largest category of imports in terms of value. Exports include mainly agricultural crops and fish, with New Zealand, Japan, Australia, and the United States being the main destinations.

Tonga has no strategic or mineral resources, and relies on agriculture, fishing and money sent home by Tongans living abroad, many of them in New Zealand and Australia.

Livestock and Animal Production

Livestock, particularly chickens and pigs, plays a major role in the cultures and traditions of Pacific countries. As such, livestock farming is an important component of Tonga's agricultural sector contributing to food security and rural livelihoods. There are no big commercial farms in Tonga. The average size of farms is around 1.5 to 3.0 Ha, under leasing arrangements with the noble families who own the land.

Major livestock types include:

- Pigs

Pigs are the most common species in the country, feature prominently in all significant traditional and cultural events (roast suckling pigs for village feasts) and are commonly reared by the Tongan population. They are important for domestic consumption and are often raised in traditional free-range systems.

Fertility and litter numbers are reportedly high, up to 13 or more piglets in a litter, but up to 30% or more piglets' mortality has been reported due to poorly designed farrowing pens. The cost of commercial feed is high and there is a growing need for the formulation of rations using local products such as cassava, copra, brewery grains, noni, etc.

A project called "Integrated Land and Agroecosystem Management Systems (ILAMS) for Tonga"[10] aimed at promoting integrated land and agro-ecosystem management. The project incorporated smallholder pig housing and biogas production. This included biogas facilities to use the pig manure and pen liquid run off. However, the results were not completely satisfactory as the adoption of enclosed areas for raising pigs was a significant cultural challenge. People in Tonga have a preference for fencing crops and gardens in order to protect them from free-ranging animals (including pigs, but not only), while the project attempted to invert this approach. In addition, people who keep pigs enclosed and do not have sufficient feed on their homestead and must resort to purchasing industrial feed, which is not an economically viable option for animals raised for self-consumption.

- Poultry

Chickens are raised for both meat and eggs. Backyard poultry farming is widespread.

Fertile eggs are imported from New Zealand, hatched and raised by the MAFF for a week before distribution to households. There is no feed mill in Tonga to manufacture feed and rations. Therefore, it has been proposed to explore the introduction of poultry species such as geese, ducks and turkeys, that are easier to feed than commercial chickens.

There was also a perceived opportunity for raising ducks due to demand from the Chinese population in Tonga. A China/MAFF Agro-tech Cooperation Project (2010) aimed to develop intensive livestock production and horticulture, and supported the development of small piggeries with biogas facilities, distribution of day-old chickens and ducks, and various horticultural crops until the end of the funding.

- Cattle

Cattle farming is less prevalent but exists, primarily for beef production and draught purposes.

Beef cattle are raised in mainly small farm herds. However, there is a commercial farm that operates its own artificial insemination and natural breeding programmes. There has been a mix of breeds over the years from early British breeds that were subsequently crossed with

10 Joint effort between the Government of Tonga, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

imported Santa Gertrudis, Brahmans, Friesians, Herefords, Limousin, and Simmental / Brahman Crosses.

Dairy production is very small, with a herd at the teaching institutions of Tupou and Hango Agricultural Colleges. These are basically teaching facilities and expansion of the dairy industry does not seem feasible because of water shortage, a lack of pasture management and adequate facilities.

- Goats and Sheep

Goats and sheep are raised on a smaller scale, mainly for meat.

Sheep from Fiji (*Fiji Fantastic*) were introduced in 2006 with the importation of 10 rams and 40 ewes. Selected breeding ewes were inseminated with imported White Dorper semen under a FAO *Cattle and Sheep Integrated Production and Management Project* to improve genetics. Anglo Nubian goats were imported in 2018 to boost local numbers, also under a FAO project.

These projects involved training, veterinary medicines, and genetic improvement, but not pasture improvement or management techniques; as internal parasites are a recurring problem, poor pasture management and over grazing did not allow rotational grazing as a management strategy to reduce infestation.

- The Tongan honeybee sector is currently very small but with potential to grow.

Animal welfare is not a current consideration.

Most schemes over the years providing subsidies for animal production have ended when funds cease, and there has not been a cultural change in terms of farmers taking ownership and responsibility to continue more intensive or larger scale livestock farming.

Livestock Census Data

The latest data on number of livestock animals in Tonga corresponds to the *Tonga National Agricultural Census* conducted in 2015.

According to the results of the census, there is a total of 13,944 reported agriculture active households and organisations. Over 95% of the agriculture active households are engaged in subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture activities with only 5% engaged in commercial agriculture activities. This indicated that Tongan agriculture active households continue to place great priority on food security as well as meeting cultural and religious obligations.

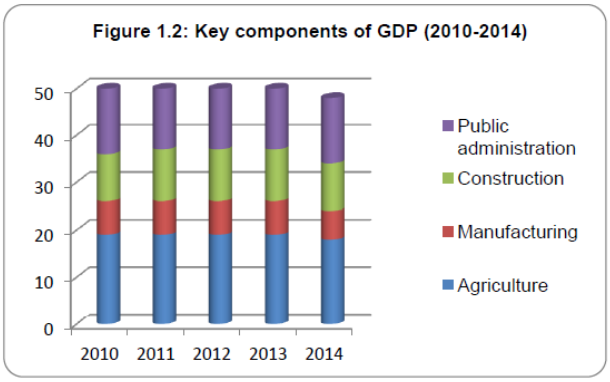
Agriculture land use has been dominated by annual and perennial crop cultivation followed by livestock activities.

The detailed number of agriculture active households/organizations (2015) by island is shown below:

Island divisions	Total households in Tonga	Total agriculture active households / organisations	Total agriculture active households	Total agriculture active organisations
TONGA	**16,122**	**13,944**	**13,936**	**8**
Tongatapu	11,914	9,963	9,958	5
Vava'u	2,360	2,191	2,190	1
Ha'apai	934	916	915	1
'Eua	644	620	619	1
Niuas	270	254	254	0

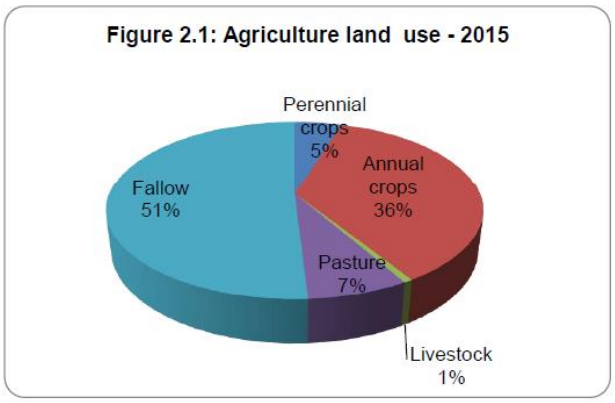
Contribution to Tonga's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Agriculture continues to be the predominant economic activity in Tonga. The sector's contribution to GDP declined from 26% in 2004/5 to about 19% in 2009/10; it then declined further to 18% in 2013/14. Public administration, construction and manufacturing are other key sectors contributing to Tonga's total GDP:



Agriculture land use

Fallow land took up 51% of the total agriculture land area in Tonga. Annual crops occupied 36%; pasture land occupied 7%; perennial crops occupied 5%; and livestock occupied just 1% of the total agriculture land area.

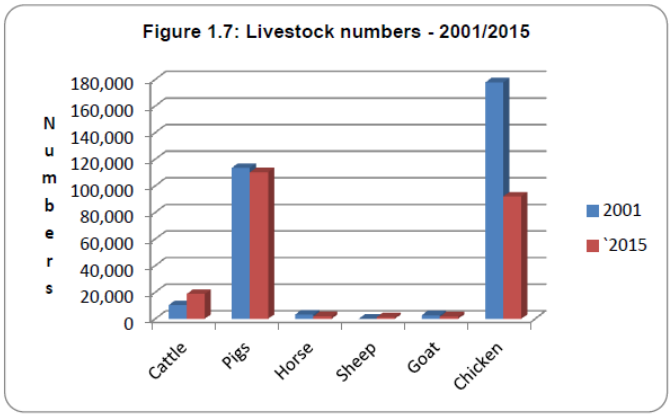


Livestock

A total of 12,859 households engaged in livestock farming during 2015. Pigs continued to be the largest number of animals raised. The total of 110,310 was similar to the level recorded in 2001. The number of cattle increased by 81% to a total of 18,762 in 2015 compared to 10,354 in 2001. Domestic demand for beef meat has increased not only for daily consumption but also for cultural events such funerals, birthdays and church or community functions.

A total of 1,240 sheep were being raised according to the 2015 Census. This is a major increase when compared to the 2001 Census, where no sheep were recorded. Horse numbers recorded in 2015 were 1,942 compared to 3,255 in 2001. Horses were a major source of transport to the bush allotments in rural and outer islands. With the availability of other forms of transport in these areas the use of horses for transport has become less important.

Chicken numbers showed a large decline of 48% from 177,829 in 2001 to only 92,071 in 2015. The decline in domestic production of chicken has coincided with a large increase in chicken imports which has more than doubled over the same period. See figures below:



Total number of livestock – 2001-2015

	2001	2015	% change
Cattle	10,354	18,762	81%
Pigs	113,580	110,310	-3%
Horses	3,255	1,942	-40%
Sheep	0	1,240	100%
Goats	2,741	1,744	-36%
Chickens	177,829	92,071	-48%
Ducks	1,119	2,705	142%

Average number of livestock kept per household – 2015

Type of livestock	Number of households	Number of livestock kept	Average number of livestock kept
Cattle	3,310	18,762	7
Pigs	10,038	110,310	11
Horses	865	1,942	2
Sheep	161	1,240	8
Goats	405	1,744	4
Chickens	4,797	92,071	19
Ducks	322	2,705	8

Number of households owning dogs and cats – 2015

Total number of households	Dogs			Cats (pusi)
	Male dog (kuli tangata)	Female dog (kuli fefine)	Dog	
13,936	8,919	6,837	10,245	4,859

Number of dogs and cats – 2015

Dogs			Cats (pusi)
Male dog (kuli tangata)	Female dog (kuli fefine)	Total Dogs	
16,984	13,019	29,963	7,831

Appendix 2: Timetable of the mission; sites/ facilities visited

Event Time & Location	Focus	Event Description & Organization
9/9/24 Mon/pm	*Joint*	*Meet with contact point for final agenda review*
10/9/24 Tue		Tongatapu group - Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Courtesy visit 9.00- 10.00 am *Location:* Hon. Minister Office	Joint	Courtesy visit to Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forest and Minister of Fishery – Hon. Lord Fohe *Topic: Purpose of the mission*
Opening meeting 10.00 - 13.00 am *Location:* Ancient Tonga	Joint	Opening meeting with Headquarters staff and representatives of all interested parties. • Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests • Ministry of Fisheries • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Health • Industry associations: o Livestock producers' association – *Livestock Council* o *Tonga Animal Welfare Society* o Aquatic producers' association • Regional partners: *FAO, SPC, JICA* *Topic: Purpose of the mission, objective and target outcomes and output*
Competent Authority 2:00 pm *Location:* MAFF Conference Room	Joint	Discussion about documents sent before the Mission: *Participants: PVS Mission & Stakeholders (Livestock Division, Food, Quarantine and Ministry of Fishery)*
Competent authority 3:00 pm Location: MAFF Conference Room	Joint	• Meet with Corporate Services *Participants: PVS Mission, MAFF & MOF Corporate Service* *Topic: Budgets, corporate policies for livestock and aquatic AH projects, activities*
Competent authority 3:30 pm Location: MAFF Conference Room	Terrestrial	Meet with Livestock Division & relevant parties • Mr Charles Kato and 4 other staff • Food Division • Quarantine Division *Topic: Closer discussion on the documents on livestock*
Competent authority 3:30pm Location: MOF Conference Room	Aquatic	Meet with Fisheries Department /Fisheries research
11/9/24 Wed		Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Regional Partners Meeting *9:00 am – 10:30am*		• Regional partners: *SPC, WHO, JICA*
Site Visit: Animal Health Physical Capacity 10:30 am – 12:30 pm	Joint	• *Location #1: Ministry of Agriculture Food Lab, Nuku'alofa* • *Location #2: Livestock Division Office*

(Location as in the Description box)		• *Location #3: Ministry of Fisheries*
Educational Institute 2:00 pm	Joint	Educational or professional training facilities • *Tonga National University – School of Agriculture*
Environment & Emergency Response 3:00 pm	Joint	Ministry for Lands and Natural Resources. *Shared activities such as authorization of farms or environmental impact monitoring* MEIDECC *National Emergency Management Office (NEMO)*
Biosecurity Border control 4:00 pm	Joint	• Airport & Seaport customs • Biosecurity (Quarantine & Livestock Division)
Feed	Joint	Animal Feed importer/retailer – Nishi Trading, Chinese shops, Poultry farm (Tisi Vete) Aquatics – only relevant for fisheries
12/9/24 Thu		Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Field visits 09:00am Location: Main Office in Sopu	Aquatic	Fish hatchery • Aquaculture Hatchery • Vast Ocean Hatchery (sea cucumber)
Field visits 10:00am Location: Sopu	Aquatic	Fish farm • Fisheries fish pond
Field visits 10:50am Location: Sopu/ Hofoa/ Patangata	Aquatic	Fish market • Roadside stall(s)
Field visits 11:30am Location: Faua Wharf/ Tuimatamoana	Aquatic	Fish landing site • Faua Wharf
Field visits 12:00-13:00pm Location: Tuimatamoana, Sopu	Aquatic	Fish processor- Export • Atlantis Fisheries (tuna export) • Sea weed export (Mozuku)
Field visits 14:00-15:30pm Location: Halaleva, Vaini	Aquatic	Ornamental fish exporter • Eco Reef Farm International Ltd. • JLE International
Field visits 9:00am Location: Livestock Division office or TAWS office	Terrestrial	• South Pacific Animal Welfare Society • Tonga Animal Welfare Society
Field visits 10:30am Location: Livestock Division Office	Terrestrial	• Tonga Livestock Council Incorporate • Other interested Farmers
Field visits	Terrestrial	Livestock farm

11:30am *Location:* Farms all over Tongatapu		• *Livestock stations of MAFF - Vaini* • *Poultry Farm, Piggery Farm, Sheep Farm & Cattle Farm* • *Toloa College Dairy Milk production*
Field visits 2:00pm *Location:* Butcher all over Tongatapu	Terrestrial	Informal Slaughterhouse/ Butcher • Beef Butcher Shop • Pork Butcher Shop • Poultry Farm – Tisi Vete
Field visits	Terrestrial	• *Possible pharmacy that may be selling animal drugs*
13/9/24 Fri		Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Human Health meeting 9:00am – 11:00am	Joint	Consultation Meeting with MOH and site visit to the facilities – Public Health, Laboratory, Environment Health, Pharmacy
Stakeholders	Terrestrial/Aquatic	• *To be confirmed based on gaps identified from the visits*
14/9/24 Sat		Vava'u group
Field visits	Aquatic	Main pearl oyster farm in Vava'u
		Return from Vava'u
15/9/24 Sun		PVS Mission team discussion day
16/9/24 Mon		Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Stakeholders	Terrestrial	*To be confirmed based on gaps identified from the visits*
Stakeholders	Aquatic	Fisherman association
Stakeholders	Joint	Other stakeholder organisations
PVS mission Team	Joint	Afternoon preparation for the closing meeting
17/9/24 Tues		PVS team Discussion (Public Holiday)
18/9/24 Wed		Tongatapu - Nuku'alofa
Closing meeting 9:00am – 11:00am *Location:* Ancient Tonga	Joint	Closing meeting with Headquarters staff and representatives of interested parties. • Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests • Ministry of Fisheries • Ministry of Health • Industry associations & Non-Government Organization: ○ Livestock producers' association – *Livestock Council* ○ *Tonga Animal Welfare Society* • Regional partners: *SPC, JICA*

Appendix 3: Air travel itinerary

Assessor	Date	From	To	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival
P. Belmar	07 Sept	Amsterdam	Doha	QR 274	16.15	23.30
	08 Sept	Doha	Auckland	QR 920	03.50	04.45
	09 Sept	Auckland	Nuku'alofa	NZ 970	07.25	11.20
	18 Sept	Nuku'alofa	Auckland	NZ 971	13.50	15.50
	18 Sept	Auckland	Dubai	EK 449	20.30	05.35
	19 Sept	Dubai	Amsterdam	EK 147	08.05	13.15
Ana Afonso	7/9/24	Lisbon	Madrid	IB8871	8:25	11:05
	7/9/24	Madrid	Doha	QR150	16:20	00:05
	8/9/24	Doha	Auckland	QR920	3:50	04:45
	9/9/24	Auckland	Tonga	NZ970	07:25	11:20
	18/9/24	Tonga	Auckland	NZ971	13:50	15:50
	21/9/24	Auckland	Dubai	EK449	20.30	5.35
	22/9/24	Dubai	Milan	EK2140	7.20	12.15

Appendix 4: Public-Private Partnerships in the Kingdom of Tonga

WOAH defines Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a joint approach in which the public and private sectors agree on responsibilities and share resources and risks to achieve common objectives. The establishment of PPPs contributes to a more efficient and effective use of both public and private sector resources and enables each sector to focus on activities most central to their respective responsibilities and capabilities.

There are multiple ways to establish effective PPPs. These collaborations can take several forms according to the type of private partners involved, the funding source, and the governance mechanisms. They can be classified under three main typologies; however, each new PPP can comprise elements from several typologies:

- *Transactional*: government procurement of specific animal health or sanitary services from private veterinary service providers.
- *Collaborative*: joint commitment between the public sector and end-beneficiaries to deliver mutually agreed policies or outcomes.
- *Transformative*: establishment of sustainable capabilities to deliver otherwise unattainable major programmes.

In Tonga, the MAFF has established successful joint programmes with private stakeholders, in particular with the Tonga Livestock Farmers Council.

One of the current initiatives is the acquisition of a mobile slaughter unit that is scheduled to arrive in the country during 2024 and be operational in 2025. The project was developed and presented by the Livestock Farmers Council, with the support of the MAFF Livestock Division. The slaughter unit was funded by the government and will be owned, maintained and operated by the Council, in coordination with the Livestock Division.

Currently, animals are slaughtered on-site in farms and households around the country without ante and post-mortem inspection. The implementation of this project should allow the VS to develop and implement sanitary and food hygiene standards in line with Public Health Regulations, as well as a proper ante and post-mortem inspection system that includes formal data collection relevant to livestock diseases and zoonoses.

Appendix 5: List of documents used in the PVS evaluation

Ref	PRE-MISSION DOCUMENTS	Related CCs
1	Baseline Documents provided by MAFF	All
2	Pacific Animal Health Production Framework (2021-2025) https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/6wjxh	I-1A
3	Pacific Animal Health and Production Capacity Building Plan 2022-2025 https://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/yghcg	II-4A, II-4B, II-6
4	SPC. (2022). Tonga. Statistics for Development Division https://sdd.spc.int/to	
5	Thornber, P. (2020). Technical support for project development to enhance livestock.	I-1A, I-7, II-4A, II-4B, II-6, II-11
6	Project: Integrated Land and Agroecosystem Management Systems https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e48709e4-3baa-4caf-b3c1-90a79e3eec8d/content	I-5
7	Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC): Policy Brief. https://pafpnet.spc.int/attachments/article/142/pafpnet_policybrief%20number%209%20web.pdf	I-5
Ref	**MISSION DOCUMENTS**	**Related CCs**
8	Animal Diseases Act 1988	I-9, II-2, II-3, II-4A, II-4B, II-5, II-6, II-11, II-12A, II-12B, II-13, IV-1A, IV-1B
9	Animal Diseases Act Revised 2020	I-6A, I-6B, I-9, II-2, II-3, II-4A, II-4B, II-5, II-6, II-7A, II-11, II-12A, II-12B, II-13, III-4, IV-1A, IV-1B, IV-2, IV-3, IV-4
10	Therapeutic Goods Act 2020	I-6A, I-6B, II-8, II-9, IV-1A, IV-1B
11	Biosafety Act 2009	II-11, IV-1A, IV-1B
12	Food Act 2020	I-6A, I-6B, II-7A, II-12A, II-12B, III-4, IV-1A, IV-1B, IV-2
13	Public Health Act 2020	I-6B, II-7A, II-7B II-13, IV-1A, IV-1B, IV-2
14	Quarantine Act 1988	I-6A, I-6B, II-3, IV-1A, IV-1B, IV-2
15	Public Service Act 2020	III-4, IV-1A,
16	Aquaculture Management Act 2020	IV-1A, IV-1B
17	Agricultural Commodities Exports Act 2002	II-11, IV-1A, IV-1B, IV-3, IV-4
18	Disaster Risk Management Act 2021	I-6B, I-9, II-5, II-6, III-4, IV-1A, IV-1B
19	Consumer Protection Act 2000	I-6B, II-12B, IV-1A, IV-1B
20	Public Health (Meat) Regulations 2020	I-6A, I-6B, II-7A, II-12A, II-12B, II-13, IV-1A, IV-1B
21	Public Health Restaurants and Food Stores Regulations 2016	II-7A, II-12B, IV-1A, IV-1B
22	Consumer Protection Products Safety Regulations 2006	II-12B, IV-1A, IV-1B
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47	Tonga National strategy on aquatic biosecurity	
48	Kingdom of Tonga National Aquaculture management and development plan 2024-2029	
49	Kingdom of Tonga National Aquaculture Management and Development Plan 2018–2022	
50	Corporate Plan Ministry of Fisheries_CP_FY2024-25	
51	Tonga National strategy on aquatic biosecurity	
52	Tonga - Pathway to Sustainable Oceans Project World bank https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/309511555812077778/tonga-pathway-to-sustainable-	
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Appendix 6: Organisation of the WOAH PVS Evaluation of Tonga

Assessors Team	
Team leader: Technical expert: Observer/Facilitator:	Dr Ana Afonso Dr Pablo Belmar Kretschmann Dr Kevin Ellard
Information of the mission	
Contact point in the country: Contact point in the country: Contact point in the country:	Mr Charles Kato - MAFF Ms Meletoli Fa'anunu - MOF
Dates:	10 - 18 September 2024
Language of report: Language of the mission:	English English
Subject of the evaluation	VS as defined in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code Joint evaluation including aquatic animals – Separate report Inclusive of other institutions / ministries responsible for activities of VS
Analysis	
References and Guidelines:	○ Terrestrial Animal Health Code (especially Chapters 3.1. & 3.2.) ○ WOAH PVS Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of VS → Human, physical and financial resources → Technical authority and capability → Interaction with stakeholders → Access to markets
Activities analysed:	All activities related to animal and veterinary public health ○ Field activities: ▪ animal health (early detection, disease control, etc) ▪ quarantine (country borders) ▪ veterinary public health (food safety, veterinary drugs etc) ▪ others ○ Data and communication ○ Diagnostic laboratories ○ Research ○ Initial and continuous training ○ Organisation and finance
Procedure:	○ Consultation of data and documents ○ Comprehensive field trips ○ Interviews and meetings with VS staff and stakeholders ○ Analyse of practical processes

End of Report