



Regional Strategic Framework for Veterinary Epidemiology Capacity Development and Networking in ASEAN

I. Background

Veterinary epidemiology is by definition a discipline for which it describes occurrences of diseases, productivity, and welfare in animal populations. Applications of veterinary epidemiology are valued in many areas deemed critical for veterinary services to effectively and efficiently deliver their functions; for instance survey and surveillance, disease investigation, risk analysis, economic analysis, and disease modeling.

The Southeast Asian region has experienced animal health crises due to emergence and re-emergence of high impact animal diseases during the past decades, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). Many believe that these diseases could spread so rapidly in the region partly because of limited capacities of the countries to detect and respond to outbreaks in a timely and effective manner. Time and again, such crises signify the importance of veterinary epidemiology, which contributes positively to the prevention, early detection, rapid response and control of animal diseases. In response to this need, there have been several undertakings to strengthen epidemiology capacity in the animal health sector, as evident in having more than one hundred epidemiology trainings provisioned between 2006 and 2009.

While veterinary epidemiology has been capacitated to some extent, disease transmission continues to occur across political boundaries, and continues to hamper progress towards achieving safe and sustainable development for ASEAN community. ASEAN may require a strategic approach to veterinary epidemiology capacity development that will provide a comprehensive and a regionally harmonized and cohesive direction to veterinary epidemiology capacity development; yet that will be flexible enough to address specific needs of each of the ASEAN Member States (AMS).

II. Vision

“ASEAN has sustainable veterinary epidemiology capacity meeting international standards and the networks required to manage animal, human and environmental health challenges”

III. Purpose

The Regional Strategic Framework for Epidemiology Capacity Development and Networking (hereinafter referred to as “the Framework”) is proposed to harmonize initiatives, activities, and policies of veterinary epidemiology at national levels and to promote sustainable development of institutional and human capacities, development of enabling systems, and sharing of information and expertise among the ASEAN Member States.

IV. Scope and Linkages

The Framework aims to promote the efficient and sustainable development of veterinary epidemiology to support national veterinary services of the Member States. The Framework put focus on the development of individual and institutional veterinary epidemiology capacities to effectively prevent, detect, and respond to animal health problems, promote scientifically sounded policy, and enhance coordination and collaboration among AMS and their partners. It is also intended to streamline regional and global initiatives to ensure compliances with relevant international standards.

The Framework supports the prevailing, ongoing ASEAN's initiative in a broader context to establish a functional mechanism to coordinate undertakings on animal health and zoonosis, namely ASEAN Coordination Centre for Animal Health and Zoonoses (ACCAHZ). The functional structure of ACCAHZ envisages a strategic approach to converge efforts to strengthen capacities and coordinate veterinary epidemiology undertakings of ASEAN.

The Framework is complementary with the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity to enhance integration and cooperation of ASEAN, global competitiveness of ASEAN through stronger production networks, and the well-being and livelihood of ASEAN peoples. The Strategic Goals set forth therein are also aligned with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint that ratifies deepened and broadened economic integration by 2015. Through multi-sectoral dimension of the Framework, and its contribution to safeguard animal and human health, the Framework is also cohesive with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint that is aspired to lift the quality of life of its peoples by building a strong foundation for greater understanding, good neighbourliness, and a shared sense of responsibility.

V. Strategic Goals

- Goal 1: Development of regionally-coherent, national organizational structures and systems to support functions of veterinary epidemiology
- Goal 2: Enhancement and promotion of linkages, partnerships, networks, coordination, and collaboration among AMS, development partners, and stakeholders to maximize efficient and sustainable uses of available resources
- Goal 3: Strengthening of human resource capacity and management to ensure effective use of trained veterinary epidemiologists and to effectively deliver national animal health programs in compliance with international standards
- Goal 4: Enhancement and promotion of awareness and understanding of veterinary epidemiology to provide policy support, to ensure science base decision-makings, and to efficiently mobilize resources based on needs

Goal 1: Development of regionally-coherent, national organizational structures and systems to support functions of veterinary epidemiology

- Objective 1: To develop and support the implementation of relevant national epidemiological systems, guidelines, and operating procedures
- Objective 2: To ensure enabling organizational structure and institutional mechanisms
- Objective 3: To develop and support the implementation of regional and national strategies and related activities
- Objective 4: To align veterinary epidemiological policies, standards, and strategies at national level with that of regional level

Goal 2: Enhancement and promotion of linkages, partnerships, networks, coordination, and collaboration among AMS, development partners, and stakeholders to maximize efficient and sustainable uses of available resources

- Objective 1: To strengthen regional mechanisms to coordinate epidemiology policies and activities
- Objective 2: To share epidemiological information among AMS networks and other stakeholders at national, regional and global level
- Objective 3: To promote sharing of epidemiological expertise, resources, and training among ASEAN Member States

Goal 3: Strengthening of human resource capacity and management to ensure effective use of trained veterinary epidemiologists and to effectively deliver national animal health programs in compliance with international standards

- Objective 1: To assess needs and gaps for regional and national human capacity development
- Objective 2: To strengthen human capacities of AMS based on results from the need assessment
- Objective 3: To develop minimum standards of training curricula that meet required core competencies and skills, and to benchmark existing training programs
- Objective 4: To develop a regional inventory of epidemiology resource persons and training materials
- Objective 5: To support development of national human resource plans to promote rationale use of trained epidemiologists

Goal 4: Enhancement and promotion of awareness and understanding of veterinary epidemiology to provide policy support, to ensure science base decision-makings, and to efficiently mobilize resources based on needs

- Objective 1: To advocate for and support development of conducive policies and legislations
- Objective 2: To assess resource needs and gaps
- Objective 3: To promote engagement of scientifically-sounded and practical epidemiology in decision-making processes
- Objective 4: To promote proper recognition of veterinary epidemiology in the contribution to and support for improved delivery of animal health programs

VI. Cross-cutting Strategy

The successful commission of the Framework require multi-agency and multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration. Multi-sectoral collaboration is expected to be further supported by the growing acceptance of One Health approach, which allows for increased opportunities for interdisciplinary integration. Potential multi-sectoral collaborative activities include development and implementation of surveillance and response protocols; sharing of information and training resources; exchange of epidemiological expertise; and collaborative research and development. Through this collaboration, benefit from activities related to the veterinary epidemiology development and networking can be shared among the One Health partners in a technically and financially efficient manner.

VII. Implementation Arrangements

The proposed activities within the framework can be facilitated through several mechanisms at national, regional, or international levels. In a short-term, the implementation of the Framework will be coordinated by the ASEAN Secretariat, with assistance from the ASEAN Regional Support Unit, in close consultation with Regional Epidemiology Consortium. There are existing dialogue partners including WHO, FAO, OIE, and reference/collaborating centers which can provide technical guidance, and inputs, and financial contributions along the implementation process, with financial inputs currently available from several regional and national projects and programs, such as EU-HPED and USAID program.

In a mid- and long-term, the Member States which implement national epidemiology capacity development programs will assume responsibilities in ensuring successful execution of the Framework.