Expenditure in the veterinary field. Codification

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In accordance with Article 41 of Council Decision 2009/470/EC on expenditure in the veterinary field, the Commission presented a report on the outcome of the EU co-financed programmes for the eradication, control and monitoring of animal diseases and zoonosis over the period of 2005-2011.

The present report focuses on the **outcome of the implementation of the EU co-financed programmes for the eradication, control and monitoring of animal diseases and zoonosis**, as required by Article 41 of Council Decision 2009/470/EC on expenditure in the veterinary field.

The co-funding for the animal diseases eradication, control and monitoring programmes represents by far the largest amount of expenditure under the EU food safety budget. Over the period under evaluation, more than **EUR 1.17 billion** were spent by the EU -for co-funding the implementation of programmes targeting thirteen diseases.

In spite of some areas of concern, the **veterinary programmes continue to play a crucial role in the effective management of the targeted animal diseases**, by ensuring disease surveillance and eradication, better targeting of the control of trans-boundary diseases of high EU relevance as well as prevention and rapid reaction to emerging and re-emerging animal diseases.

Veterinary programmes offer clear net **economic benefits** to the relevant sectors of the EU economy and to the smooth functioning of the single market, as well as the protection of consumers and public health (in the case of zoonosis), which represent key public goods for EU society.

Notable achievements: the report notes that in most cases, the targeted diseases have been effectively contained and incidence or presence has been brought under control (BSE, scrapie, bluetongue, rabies, salmonella, avian flu). Many of them have been progressively eradicated from large areas of the EU. This is evidenced by a significant **expansion of "disease free zones" in the EU** during this period (e.g. bovine tuberculosis, bovine brucellosis, and classical swine fever).

Areas of concern include: ovine and caprine Brucellosis in Greece and southern Italy and bovine tuberculosis in UK and African swine fever in Italy (Sardinia).

Conclusions and perspectives: the main strengths which contributed to the success of EU co-financed veterinary programmes were:

- Bottom up approach in identifying and addressing Animal Health-issues, being programmes designed at Member States level and top-down approach ensuring respect of EU rules and criteria, being programmes approved by the Commission.

- Flexibility in allocating available resources thanks to annual adjustments (according to epidemiological situation and disease prioritisation) and to the possibility to apply different financial rates.

- Capacity of the EU system to react to exceptionally serious health situations (e.g. BSE crises, bluetongue epidemics) using limited financial resources in relation to the overall high economic value of the animal sectors.

- EU sustainability of financial contribution allowing medium-long term planning for veterinary programmes in Member States.

- Regional cooperation approach providing valuable assistance to candidate countries and to third countries bordering the EU, which prevented the introduction of diseases in the EU.

- Sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices among Member States also in the context of the Task Forces for monitoring disease eradication.

A certain number of weaknesses have been highlighted. Some of them have already been partially addressed by the Commission. Others still need to be so in the near future:

Lack of a systematic approach, based on a clear set of objectives and indicators, that would help to evaluate the performance of programmes implemented.

Significant differences in Member States veterinary systems and livestock structures which leads to variability in programme implementation.

Submission of multi-annual programmes by the Member States is still not sufficient.

Over the period to 2020, the EU will also face a number of specific challenges, possibly compromising the effectiveness of Member States programmes. These mostly relate to:

The potential re-emergence of current priority diseases: (i) trans-boundary movement of susceptible wildlife animals (particularly classical swine fever (CSF) and rabies in Eastern and Baltic Member States); (ii) illegal meat imports from non-EU third countries (particularly CSF and African swine fever along the Eastern border of the EU); (iii) detection of sporadic cases of BSE, and uncertainties with regards to 'atypical BSE' (all Member States).

The potential introduction of emerging diseases: (i) risk for incursion in border EU regions of hazards present in neighbouring third countries; (ii) risk related to the possible introduction of emerging diseases and reintroduction of known pathogens into the EU from neighbouring third countries.

Main changing risk factors: (i) increasing complexity of international supply chains; (ii) increasing risk of vector borne diseases and the possible effects of climate change; (iii) potential relaxation of surveillance measures when the disease situation has achieved the primary objective; (iv) efforts to increase the sustainability of public finances both at Member States and at EU level, may lead to a budget reduction that can be detrimental on programme sustainability.

On 29 June 2011, the Commission has proposed a new regulation covering the whole area of food safety expenditure. The proposal, whose aim is to optimise the existing financial framework, will be formally adopted by the co-legislators in the first half of 2014.