Regional Seminar for OIE National Focal Points for Animal Production Food Safety

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 14–16 January 2014

A Regional Seminar for OIE National Focal Points for Animal Production Food Safety for countries in the Middle East was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 14 to 16 January 2014. The seminar was funded by the OIE and the Abu Dhabi Food Control Agency.

Seven countries attended the seminar: Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE. A delegation from the UAE, mostly from a supporting institution, the Abu Dhabi Food Control Agency, also attended the meeting.

World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS).

While this seminar’s extended format was targeted primarily at newly appointed Delegates, it was also opened up, on a voluntary and self-funded basis, to all OIE Delegates in Europe wishing to update their knowledge. A total of 16 countries participated in the seminar (see Box). OIE Deputy Director General, Dr Monique Eloit, also attended.

The participants’ final evaluation underlined the usefulness of the seminar, in terms of both knowledge acquisition and networking between Delegates in the region, an aspect which was praised by both the newly appointed and more experienced Delegates. The latter suggested that seminars for newly appointed Delegates should be opened up to all Delegates in the region as a matter of course, or else that annual refresher training sessions should be held for serving Delegates. These proposals will be explored in the light of the funding available.

The OIE wishes to extend its thanks to Belgium’s Federal Agency for Food Safety (AFSCA) for helping to finance the seminar and facilitating its excellent organisation.

All seminar documents (the agenda, list of participants and PowerPoint presentations) are available on the OIE regional website for Europe: www.rr-europe.oie.int.
The seminar aimed at providing participants with knowledge on the rights, commitments and responsibilities of National Focal Points for Animal Production Food Safety in the standard-setting process and in compliance with the OIE international standards. It also included sessions focusing on the specific tasks of National Focal Points for Animal Production Food Safety.

During the seminar, several case studies related to the management of zoonotic food safety issues in the region were presented and discussed. These studies included verotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*, *Mycobacterium bovis*, brucellosis and toxoplasmosis, as well as salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis in poultry.

The work of WHO and the Codex Alimentarius in food safety, as well as their areas of collaboration with the OIE, were also presented. During a working-group session, participants discussed ways in which they are carrying out their responsibilities as Focal Points and also how they are cooperating with the Codex in their respective countries.

The seminar offered the opportunity to share experiences and begin discussions with representatives from other countries in the region. The participants seemed to very much appreciate the various topics presented and undertook to keep working for their countries to become more involved in the development and implementation of the OIE standards on animal production food safety.