

Resolution by the Southern African Development Community
(SADC) Calling for Adoption of Commodity-Based Trade and
Other Non-Geographic Approaches for Foot and Mouth Disease
Management as Additional Regional Standards for Trade in
Animal Products

The Phakalane Declaration
On Adoption of Non-Geographic Approaches for Management of
Foot and Mouth Disease

Preamble

Across much of Africa, both wildlife and livestock represent economic growth opportunities in an increasingly globalised world. However, costs associated with current geographic zonation-based approaches to managing international trade-associated animal disease risks often preclude access to international markets. In addition, many attempts to meet international standards related to freedom from disease under historically prevailing policies have had significant negative repercussions for free-ranging wildlife, largely related to veterinary cordon fencing. Given the importance of both sectors to many countries across Africa, it is time to reevaluate how best to manage risks from diseases like foot and mouth in ways that help Africa's pastoralists and farmers, do not threaten free-ranging wildlife, and also provide confidence to beef importing countries that the products they are buying pose minimal threats to their own agricultural sector. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) thus believes that any sound foot and mouth disease (FMD) management initiatives must be genuinely multi-sectoral in nature.

Experience over time has shown that other activities, such as wildlife conservation, that are undertaken on the same land base as livestock rearing, are perhaps just as likely to be impacted, positively or negatively, by policies designed for the livestock sector. Recommendations from the international community for progressive control of a disease like FMD, with its inherent epidemiological complexity (different from rinderpest in many important respects), should be accompanied by cross-sectoral economic impact analysis for those countries in SADC for which livestock *and* wildlife are *both* vital contributors to GDP. In short, especially where wildlife and associated industries play an increasingly prominent role in national and regional economies, an emphasis on zonal freedom from disease not only appears to be increasingly fragile as an FMD management strategy (as evidenced by recent outbreak trends), but also potentially limits countries from seriously considering other, more holistic approaches to managing FMD and the concomitant potential for more diversified land-use options likely to enhance resilience in an uncertain world. It is recognised that, under a range of conditions, fencing remains a useful multi-purpose tool for managing conflicts at the wildlife / livestock / human interface. The critical resource allocation and land-use decisions currently faced by SADC countries must prove themselves to be socially, ecologically and economically sustainable for generations to come.

Understanding both positive and negative impacts of FMD control methods is essential if we hope to optimise the potential for the rural poor to benefit from trade in products derived from livestock as well as from tourism, trophy hunting and other activities derived from wildlife conservation. We suggest that, in order to minimise unintended but nevertheless unfortunate cross-sectoral impacts, it is necessary to more fully articulate and recognise a wider range of management options for FMD so that practical progress can be achieved under the unique circumstances related to the wildlife / livestock interface in many SADC as well as other countries.

Findings

Whereas, the prevailing approach to managing FMD has, in some countries, been designed on a geographic basis, i.e., the creation of areas (disease-free countries or zones) with the objective of progressive FMD management and control;

Whereas, this approach is supported by the assumption that imports of livestock commodities and products can be safely sourced from such disease-free areas, regardless of circumstances;

Whereas, while this is true in some rural settings, in others, especially where large numbers of free-living cloven-hoofed wildlife (some of which maintain the infection) are dispersed over vast geographic areas, achieving freedom from FMD is often not feasible in practical terms;

Whereas, geographically-based attempts at FMD control have resulted in the use of extensive fencing systems (sometimes accompanied by lethal wildlife removal exercises) to try to separate animal populations of differing FMD status so that zones free from FMD can be established;

Whereas, the past half century has illustrated the damaging effects of such barriers on wildlife and their movement needs, effects that have been profound and increasingly obvious;

Whereas, livestock-based and wildlife-based activities are undertaken separately as well as jointly as primary modes of sustenance, economic betterment and support of rural livelihoods, with the sustainability thereof inextricably linked to ecologically appropriate land-use choices;

Whereas, the increasing frequency of FMD outbreaks across the southern African region in the last 10 years demonstrates that the current zonation-based strategy has limitations in some areas;

Whereas, those major bilateral and multilateral donors that have invested in such geographically-based approaches owe their developing country clients a more thorough approach to environmental and social impact assessments than has historically been the case;

Whereas, the poorest of the poor tend to live closest to wildlife, and thus simply cannot access broader markets for their livestock products under the prevailing disease control paradigm;

Whereas, the rural poor expect tangible benefits from wildlife as a result of the creation of TFCAs;

Whereas, commodity-based trade*, an alternative to zonation-based freedom from disease in terms of the prevention of the spread of transboundary animal diseases of trade concern such as foot and mouth and other diseases, requires process standards that are generically similar to those on which the HACCP (Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points) management system is based, HACCP being universally adopted for the management of human food safety;

Whereas, HACCP satisfies the requirements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and 'Equivalence' (i.e., the accepted application of alternative measures to achieve the same result) is a founding principle of the SPS Agreement and provides considerable latitude for application of regionally appropriate trade standards that simultaneously accommodate the diversity of imperatives associated with rural development and land-use planning, including the safety of traded commodities and products as well as the conservation of wildlife;

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* *Commodity-based trade represents an array of alternatives that can be used to ensure the production and processing of a particular commodity or product are managed so that identified food safety and animal health hazards are reduced to appropriate risk levels. OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code guidelines (Article 8.5.25) now recognize a disease management scenario under which commodity-based trade could be effectively implemented.*

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Whereas, the management of animal disease hazards as they affect international trade also falls under the umbrella of the SPS Agreement, although standards for food safety and those for animal diseases have separate international standard-setting bodies (i.e., the Codex Alimentarius Commission and World Organisation for Animal Health [OIE], respectively);

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Recognizing the fact that alternative animal disease management and sanitary trade standards are already available, if not yet widely applied, that could potentially increase the effectiveness of current FMD control, promote more effective access to markets, and lessen the unfortunate environmental consequences that accompany the present geographic approach;

Recognizing that the adoption of such standards would also facilitate more balanced rural development portfolios, vital for alleviation of pervasive rural poverty and environmental degradation- both widespread in sub-Saharan Africa;

Recognizing that additional capacity will be needed by many Member States to implement non-geographical approaches;

Recognizing that there is growing acceptance that the management of biological hazards associated with food safety and hazards associated with animal disease spread would be most effectively implemented as an integrated continuum across production (value) chains- from animals in the field to the consumer;

Recognizing that attempts to ensure biological safety of livestock-derived products based simply on the presumed geographic distribution of infectious agents that cause dangerous infections of people and animals can lead to potential security gaps along the production continuum;

Recognizing that for countries aspiring to improve their rural economies in order to uplift large impoverished communities through trade in agricultural products, streamlining and integration of hazard management processes could be transformational from an economic development perspective;

Recognizing that the OIE's Terrestrial Animal Health Code already provides guidance in terms of the acceptability of commodity-based trade of beef from FMD-infected countries or zones in Article 8.5.25;

Recognizing that commodity-based trade, involving safe and stringent processing of animal-derived products, increases biological safety and options for value addition, while alleviating the need for some of the fencing that has been required to separate livestock from wildlife, often with significant negative environmental impacts;

Recognizing that, especially where wildlife and associated industries play an increasingly prominent role in national and regional economies as is the case for much of SADC, an emphasis on zonal freedom from disease is not only proving to be increasingly fragile in some countries as a foot and mouth disease management strategy, but it also limits some countries from employing other, more holistic and efficient approaches for managing diseases of trade concern and diseases related to food safety;

Recognizing that, whether countries in SADC rely on geographic or non-geographic approaches to FMD management over time, there is a clear need to enhance the efficacy, availability, deployment and monitoring of FMD vaccines;

Recognizing that current climate models point to a general drying trend and unpredictable climatic events for much of the SADC region, emphasising the importance of land-use diversification in the face of uncertainty;

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Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Southern African Development Community hereby:

Recommends the adoption of commodity-based trade and other non-geographic approaches such as compartmentalization for foot and mouth disease control as additional regional standards for the livestock and wildlife sectors, where applicable;

Recommends to Member States that they utilize commodity-based trade and other non-geographic approaches as needed to bolster trade, first and foremost, within the region itself, and with other African partners;

Recommends that Member States identify and address their needs to implement non-geographic approaches in terms of institutional, infrastructural, and human capacity;

Recommends that SADC work together with the OIE, FAO and other international organisations to formalize the implementation guidance needed for certification, auditing and thus wider international acceptance of appropriately prepared livestock-derived commodities by potential importing countries within the SADC region and around the world. This needs to be done in partnership with the private sector and with national veterinary services, the latter having both official responsibility and expertise critical for safe and successful deployment of any animal disease control strategies;

Recommends that SADC Member States and their appropriate government agencies responsible for livestock agriculture, veterinary services, and wildlife conservation and production work together and in partnership with the private sector and civil society organisations to promulgate context-appropriate approaches to transboundary animal disease management and wildlife utilisation policies that mitigate conflicts at the wildlife / livestock interface.

Recommends that Member States seize upon the socioeconomic as well as conservation opportunities offered by SADC's collective vision for transfrontier conservation areas as facilitated by strategic alignment and realignment of selected veterinary cordon fences, while simultaneously expanding access to regional and international markets for animals and animal-derived products via adoption of the above-described enlightened and practical disease control policies and practices.

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