

**26th Conference of the WOA Regional Commission for Africa
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 4 to 7 February 2025**

Recommendation No. 2

**Veterinary Services and food safety: challenges and perspectives for policy
development in the context of market unification on a continental scale**

Final

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. Livestock farming plays a key economic and social role in Africa, where it accounts for a substantial proportion of agricultural GDP, especially in the poorest countries. However, the sector remains vulnerable to diseases that can have a significant economic and sanitary impact;
2. Despite having considerable economic potential, intra-African trade remains weak (16-17% of all trade), due in part to non-tariff barriers, differences in sanitary policies and the lack of traceability systems meeting international standards;
3. Zoonoses and infectious diseases continue to limit the sustainability of animal production sectors. The informal sector, which dominates agricultural trade, presents serious sanitary risks;
4. The unification of African markets, driven by initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), offers a unique opportunity to strengthen food safety and the Veterinary Services, which are essential not only in promoting sustainable, fair trade but also in improving animal and human health;
5. The consumption of meat and milk in Africa is likely to double by 2050, driven by an equivalent demographic increase. This growth presents an opportunity for economic integration through the AfCFTA;
6. The regional economic communities (REC) and the AfCFTA provide opportunities for harmonising sanitary policies and stimulating trade in products of animal origin;
7. The Veterinary Services play a key role in fully exploiting the opportunities that the AfCFTA offers. However, they face significant challenges, including the lack of human and financial resources, technical disparities between countries, the absence of harmonisation of sanitary standards and the growing threats posed by zoonoses and food contamination;
8. The implementation of coordinated, well-funded programmes at national, regional and continental levels is essential to strengthen the food safety systems in Africa;
9. Initiatives such as the Maputo Declaration, the Malabo Declaration, the Kampala Declaration and programmes such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the LiDeSA strategy seek to strengthen the Veterinary Services and harmonise regulatory frameworks at continental level;
10. The WOA PVS Pathway promotes continuous improvement and alignment with WOA standards through its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) cycle, while providing evidence-based data through its Information System that support decision making and sustainable investments adapted to the specific needs and priorities of each Member.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

RECOMMENDS THAT

MEMBERS:

1. Continue active engagement in the PVS Pathway and advocate for strategic planning and increased resources for the Veterinary Services, backed up by data and analyses present in the PVS Information System;
2. Provide the Veterinary Services with needs-based competencies, infrastructure and resources to better manage the challenges linked to sanitary threats;
3. Align and harmonise regulatory frameworks covering animal production, processing, veterinary public health and animal production food safety regulatory frameworks with international standards, including zoning and compartmentalisation, in order to promote smooth, safe continental trade;
4. Integrate actors in the informal animal food sector into formal market chains through training and economic incentive measures and by reducing regulatory and fiscal burdens;
5. Strengthen participation in the standard-setting process of WOA and in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
6. Pursue efforts to strengthen the food safety systems' capacities of the Veterinary Services, including through multisectoral collaborations;
7. Improve their transparency obligations in diseases notification and reporting through the *World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS)*;
8. Assure their veterinary workforce access to competency-based training to strengthen and maintain the necessary capacity to implement WOA standards.
9. Urge AU-IBAR to prepare a note to Heads of States stressing the need of adequate staffing of Veterinary Services to enable them to fulfil their role in ensuring safe trade and effective surveillance systems, making reference to PVS Reports, where relevant, in particular recommendations on human resources and access to markets.

WOA:

1. Continue to give priority to work that enables the voice of the animal health sector and the Veterinary Services to be heard in all relevant political fora and their key role in animal production food safety and safe trade to be recognised;
2. Continue to support Members through the PVS Pathway to strengthen their capacities, including Public Private Partnerships to facilitate advocacy and support sustainable investments;
3. Continue developing competency-based training for the Veterinary Services' workforce, based on learning need assessments focused on the capacities needed to assure safe trade, control of transmittable diseases including zoonoses, food safety;
4. Further develop and promote the data housed in the PVS Information System (PVS IS) to support performance monitoring of the Veterinary Services and the development of methodologies, data and tools to facilitate the analysis of the economic impact of animal diseases and demonstrate the essential role of animal health in public health and trade.