



ONE REGION, ONE HEALTH CONFERENCE



The animal health sector has been the focal point of the state authorities in Armenia as well as in Georgia during the recent years, as a result of which different projects are being implemented financed both by the state budget as well as with the support of such donor organizations as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC).



In May, 2014, the CARD Foundation, in cooperation with the Heifer International Georgia, hosted the **“One Region, One Health”** regional conference at the Tsaghkadzor Marriott Hotel, in the Kotayk region, under the auspices of the “Animal Health Management in Cross-Border Areas of Armenia and Georgia” project financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC).



For the first time since Armenia’s independence, the event brought together the animal health specialists from both countries to discuss issues on the Control and Prevention of Brucellosis and Anthrax, Animal Identification and Registration and Improvement of Animal Infection Diseases Diagnostic System.

A total of 80 participants from the Armenian and Georgian state, private and NGO sectors, as well as experts from the US, Austria and the Netherlands attended the conference.

Among the honorary guests present were: the RA Minister of Agriculture Mr. Sergo Karapetyan, the RA deputy Ministers Mr. Robert Makaryan and Mr. Armen Harutyunyan, the deputy Minister of Georgia Mr. Illa Kvitaishvili, Chief Veterinary Officer, deputy Head of National Food Agency-Mr. Mikhail Sokhadze, Head of ADA Office for the South Caucasus Dr. Gunther Zimmer, International Aid/Cooperation officer Mr. John Barker, USDA AH project coordinator Lindsay Malecha and USDA technical adviser Debby Reynolds.



The keynote speakers of the conference were: the USDA consultant Valerie E. Ragan DVM, Dr. Rudolf Moser from AgrarMarkt, Austria and Dr. Marcel Mirck DVM PhD from the PUM Netherlands Senior Experts.



In his opening speech, CARD director Mr. Gagik Sardaryan mentioned, “We have gathered not to sum up only the ADC-funded project outcomes, which have been successfully implemented by CARD and Heifer International Georgia with the support of the Ministries of Agriculture of Armenia and Georgia. Today’s event is aimed at tackling problems still encountered in animal health sector and identical in both countries and finding ways for early disease detection and awareness, clarifying approaches for animal registration and prevention

of disease outbreak and transmission. It is hoped that along with policy makers, NGO specialists and scientists, it will be possible to develop a united platform for future cooperation and create prerequisites to make the animal disease early detection and awareness mechanism more open, transparent and predictable in Armenia and Georgia by increasing the investments at state and regional level, as well as improving the current legislation”.



The RA Minister Mr. Sergo Karapetyan highly welcomed the launch of the “One Region, One Health” regional conference. “The animal health is the most important sector for the Ministry of Agriculture which has a dynamic development in our country, but we have a lot of problems to solve in regard with animal identification and registration procedures. One Region, One Health is targeted to exchange regional and international experience and to address such issues which have been long ago solved in the European countries. In this regard, I highly welcome this significant event which will contribute to problem solving in the sector”, said the RA Minister Mr. Karapetyan.



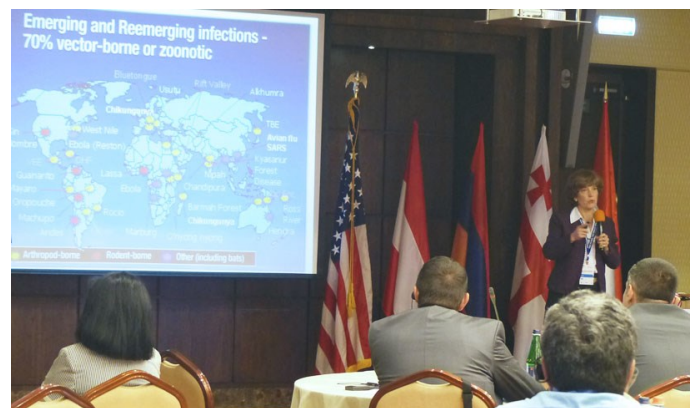
To have a united, healthy region, healthy animals and healthy population, cooperation between the local veterinary specialists and between the ministries, NGOs and private sector is a must. **One Region, One Health** was targeted to establish links between the Ministries of Agriculture of Armenia and Georgia to enhance the animal disease control services and the efficiency of animal health practices through the exchange of information and coordination of joint activities.

“The involvement of the state authorities at a legislative level is required for the management of issues in the veterinary sphere. In this regard, it is very important for the government to take measures to ensure the implementation of the animal identification process at proper level”, said Georgi Murvanidze, Head of the Heifer International Georgia.



According to Dr. Rudolf Moser, the Animal Identification and Registration System (AIRS) is a basic instrument for tracing animals, for veterinary issues, for breeding, statistical and payment purposes and the laboratory use.

“The reason why there should be a close cooperation between the countries and the region is because these countries are small, data should be exchangeable, and so the system to be developed should work not only in both countries, it should work in other countries as well. My recommendation would be to closely line with European system probably because the system has proved itself”, mentioned Dr. Moser.



Dr. Valerie Ragan stated that, “**One Health**” is a combination of human health, animal health and environmental health. It is an approach much of the world is taking on addressing diseases collectively, especially diseases that affect man and animals. The reality is that if there is an issue that affects humans and animals, it is best approached collectively and addressing both components at the same time to eliminate the disease and the transmission. I congratulate CARD for bringing these groups together. We have people from Armenia, from Georgia and from a variety of disciplines: the human health component, the animal health component and the Universities. This conference has been a really great way of bringing people together to start the conversation and learning how to potentially start working together to approach these issues together”.



The PUM expert Dr. Marcel Mirck emphasized issues on the Improvement of Animal Infection Diseases Diagnostic System. Based on the group discussions he had with the representatives from both countries on the improvement of animal health diseases diagnostic system, he separated three areas that need improvement: the lack of knowledge of the different levels of diagnostic organizations, reliability of results and the sample delivery.

“I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference; this was a very important meeting for both parties. Favorable conditions were provided for communication, experience and information sharing. Apart from our everyday cooperation, such meetings further strengthen relations and provide new opportunities to solve issues,” said Mikhail Sokhadze, the Chief veterinary officer, Deputy Head of the National Food Agency, Republic of Georgia.



One Region, One Health served as the best platform for Armenia and Georgia to exchange experience and jointly address issues regarding the Animal Identification and Registration; Strategy for Control and Prevention of Brucellosis and Anthrax as well as the Improvement of Animal Infection Diseases Diagnostic System.



NEW APPROACH FOR THE CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF BRUCELLOSIS

With the aim of discussing and sharing ideas on the control and elimination of brucellosis and the development of Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) for the implementation of animal health programs, CARD, in the framework of the USDA-funded Animal Health project, organized four-day workshops in mid May.



The brucellosis workshop was attended by 30 participants and the SOP workshop by 20 people from the State Food Safety Service (SFSS) and veterinary sanitary, food safety and phyto-sanitary SNCO (State non-commercial Organization).

The workshops were conducted by the USDA consultant Dr. Valerie Ragan. She has been working in Armenia since 2006; formerly she worked as the national brucellosis epidemiologist for USDA overseeing the brucellosis eradication program in the United States.

The deputy Director of the “Vet/Sanitary, Phyto-Sanitary and Food Safety Service Center” SNCO Mr. Tatul Stepanyan gave a speech and delivered a presentation regarding the brucellosis situation in Armenia. In his speech he stated that, “Brucellosis is the priority disease for Armenia. In my opinion, we should start from the policy level, should adjust the brucellosis decree and make it more practical for the implementers”.

Upon the completion of the workshops, the USDA Animal Health program manager Lindsay Malecha wrote a letter to the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Sergio Karapetyan, where her particular note was: “In order to increase the effectiveness of implementation of the Armenian brucellosis program, we suggest the creation of a working group (WG), led by the Ministry, and comprised of a balance of SFSS and SNCO staff. We suggest to have this group set up as soon as possible, and charged with identifying policy issues needing resolution and ensuring the clear, practical SOPs are developed that can facilitate the effective implementation of a program to eliminate brucellosis in Armenia. ”.

