SUMMARY

Note: the summary below covers discussions after and beyond the presentations which are already available embedded into the online agenda:

Morning session 10:00-13:00

Introduction, opening: A. Laddomada Head of Unit G2 - DG SANCO

1. FP7 EU Research on Precision Livestock Farming, Heiner Lehr and Daniel Berckmans, research coordinators of Bright Animal and EU-PLF

In responding to a comment that is important to detect diseases in the early stage, like for example swine fever the presenters clarified that PLF allows monitoring and detecting abnormal animal behaviour in terms of eating and drinking. Animal variables as well can be monitored (body temperature, blood variables, etc. by using sensors). Today a strategic basic research projects runs in Belgium to develop a sensor that can pick up the first sign of infection from body fluids. In explaining how far is the development of this technology, they explained that today the first commercial products are in the market, like Eyenamic and the Pig Cough Monitor. Within the Biobusiness project prototypes are tested in commercial farms of following systems: a fully automated lameness monitor for milking cows, a monitor for pig aggression and a monitor to for chicken embryo development in incubators. In EU-PLF and ALL-Smart-Pigs (start date: Nov 1st, 2012) we will demonstrate commercially available technologies on farm and derive recommendations in the form of a “blueprint” for European PLF. As regards the important field of aquaculture, they added that in the PLF Event in Leuven September 2013 will be a special session on PLF in aquaculture. Several systems have been developed and several groups in the world are active in this field such as in South-Africa, UK, Israel and Belgium. Finally they mentioned a few upcoming events where interested parties can join in, such as in December 12th 2012 is the kick-off meeting of the EU-PLF project together with the kick-off meeting of the All Smart Pigs project in Barcelona and in September 11th – 13th 2013 an important PLF Event is organised in Leuven Belgium. This event is combining the 6th European Conference for Precision Livestock Farming with the Final Conference of the EU-Biobusiness project, the First International Workshop of the EU-PLF project and the first International Workshop of the All Smart Pigs Project.

VIER PFOTEN however stated that it seems to be a professional project of which several elements of this technology could be used for animal welfare purposes. But in general there is a strong concern that this project is strengthening intensive farming what is the opposite of what the majority of EU citizens wants. At the same time it takes away the responsibility of
the EU citizens for higher appreciation of food of animal origin by paying higher prices for higher animal welfare standards. VIER PFOTEN stated its surprise as animal welfare was stated in the beginning of the presentation, but doubted if there was an appropriate consideration of this principle and asked for the way of having involved animal welfare organisations or the umbrella organisation Eurogroup for Animals in the project – but looking on the reality means the near end of the project that it is not possible any more. The speakers clarified that GAIA, a Belgian Animal Welfare organization was invited to the kick off meeting to the University of Leuven.

2. EU support for the control and eradication of rabies and classical swine fever in the Western Balkans, SANCO G5

The Commission explained that this multinational project is financed by DG Enlargement (IPA Instrument for Pre-accession Funds) and managed by DG SANCO, unit G5 “Veterinary Programmes.” It comes to reinforce the already existing IPA national projects by enhancing regional and cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans. The project focus mainly on rabies and Classical swine fever, due to their trans-boundary nature and the interest of the Commission is to help the western Balkan countries to ensure that the control and eradication of animal diseases is harmonised in the region and coordinated, reducing then the risk of spreading of these diseases into the EU. The objectives of the project are to improve the performance and the cross border cooperation between veterinary services as regards the implementation of animal health programmes and the harmonisation and coordination of eradication and control activities at a regional level. Therefore it will complementary benefit to disease control and eradication systems in general. The contract was signed on 1 July 2011 and it will run for 2 years.

Main activities include: expert visits to each beneficiary country, report on regional disease status, regional workshops, country meetings with relevant stakeholders, training on cross-border epidemiology, guidelines on outbreak preparedness, classical swine fever simulation exercises in 2012 (one regional and two local), improvement of laboratory networking: report and workshop to be organised and training on wildlife surveillance.

3. Schmallenberg disease,

– Relevant EFSA reports, EFSA
– Information from the Commission on the state of play, SANCO G2

EFSA presented their latest report on the Analysis of the Epidemiological Data and Assessment of Impact as part of the technical assistance provided to the Commission on Schmallenberg virus (SBV). The full report is available on-line.1 The Commission briefly presented the initiatives taken with Member States since the appearance of the SBV. Besides the reports provided by EFSA and ECDC, two major recent developments were highlighted: the outcomes of the OIE General Session and the statement made by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) in Denmark2. Both of these events confirm the line taken by the EU in recent months, they represent a clear message to third countries that the measures on commodities (meat, milk, semen and embryos) are unjustified and that the measures for live animals are not scientifically based, nor proportionate and do not respect the non-discrimination principle of SPS. The Commission informed that the issue of unjustified trade restrictions on EU exports of live animals and their products would be raised as a specific trade concern at the next SPS Committee meeting in Geneva.

There was support by the participants on the report made by EFSA and on the activities of the Commission. Specific requests related to the need for surveillance, enquiry on the origin of the virus, the availability of data to be presented by the farmer associations in order to complete the assessment of the impact, the need to take into account milk production and overwintering of the virus. It was clarified that the virus might have already have overwintered, but that due to the mild transient clinical signs, it could go unnoticed for now. Surveillance for SBV was not foreseen for the time being given that this is not an EU listed disease and therefore no financial support would be justified. Further information was sought on the trade aspect related to SBV; the Commission clarified that this is being now discussed with third countries and that further support in this matter would come from the OIE report on the General Session, once published.

4. **Electronic certification**, SANCO G2

In its presentation the Commission emphasized that the annual running cost for business operators would be limited. The main investments is on the Commission and to some extent the Member States to establish and maintain the system. While the phasing out of the paper certificaties is a strong reality, it will be done gradually and operators would have the possibility to use the system only to the extent as it is to lessen their burden and costs.


The Commission very briefly explained the foreseen timetable for the proposal and reiterated its main objectives. No discussion took place subsequently.

**Afternoon session 14:30-18:00**

6. **Information from the Commission on the OIE General Session**

The Commission gave an overview of the results of the recent 80th OIE General Session, held last 20-25 May in Paris, that had been particularly successful for the EU.

There had been a comprehensive presentation by Prof. Thomas Mettenleiter from the FLI in Germany on the Schmallenberg virus situation, followed by a discussion and important consensual conclusions presented by the OIE Director General, i.e. that certain commodities like meat, milk, semen and embryos posed a negligible risk for international trade, that SBV was not any longer to be considered an emerging disease and that it did not meet the proposed revised OIE criteria for listing diseases.

In terms of Standard setting, the OIE World Assembly approved a number of new and revised OIE Terrestrial and Aquatic Code and Manual chapters, among which important new chapters on animal welfare of beef cattle and on veterinary legislation, as well as a revised chapter on African Horse Sickness, making this the first equine disease with official recognition of disease status by the OIE. For the Aquatic Code and Manual, the adoption of a definition of "Aquatic Animal Health Professional" was consensually postponed, as was the listing of Ostreoid Herpes virus infection and the revised Manual chapter on Infectious Salmon Anaemia. All common EU positions and comments were taken into account by the OIE before the adoption of chapters by the World Assembly or will be considered by the respective OIE Specialist Commissions at their next meeting in September 2012. This shows once more how valuable and successful the common EU approach is, with the European Commission coordinating the position of the EU Delegates for them to speak with one voice on behalf of the 27 EU Member States. Furthermore, several coordination meetings that were held with representatives of other regions and other countries prior to or in the margin of the
OIE General Session proved to be very important and contributed to achieving this excellent result.

2012 had also been an important election year, with elections taking place for the OIE President, the OIE Council, the five OIE Regional Commissions and the four Specialist Commissions. All EU candidates were elected or re-elected for a three year term in their respective positions as envisaged: the German CVO and OIE Delegate, Dr. Karin Schwabenbauer, was elected President of the World Assembly of Delegates; she is the first women to preside the OIE Council. Further EU candidates were elected or re-elected inter alia as President of the Regional Commission for Europe (Dr. Ago Pärtel, CVO of Estonia,), as Presidents of the Aquatic Animals Commission (Dr. Franck Berthe, France) and of the Biological Standards Commission (Dr. Vincenzo Caporale, Italy), as well as Vice-Presidents of the Scientific Commission (Dr. Kris De Clercq, Belgium) and of the Code Commission (Dr. Etienne Bonbon, France).

7. **Group housing of sows: state of play of implementation**, SANCO G3

No discussion on this point.

8. **FP7 EU Research: Animal Welfare Indicators (AWIN)** Adroaldo Zanella, research coordinator of AWIN + SANCO G3

After the presentation the speaker addressed a question on the species that AWIN works on and well as responded to a question on the use of antibiotics to treat foot-rot and how this is related to and can me measures by relevant indicator(s).

9. **Vet Week and communication activities in 2012**, SANCO 04

The Commission clarified a few questions but no substantial discussion took place.


The Commission explained that the disease situation is quiet and bluetongue is now only circulating in the Mediterranean area. After more than two years of circulation of the bluetongue virus serotype 8, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg lifted their restricted zones as of 15 February 2012. The Commission also summarised recent changes to the EU rules on bluetongue:

- Vaccination outside the restricted zones is allowed since 22 March, the day after the publication of Directive 2012/5/EU amending the bluetongue Directive (2000/75/EC).
- The Regulation (EU) No 456/2012 introduced a number of changes to the bluetongue Regulation ((EC) 1266/2007/EC), such as:
  - Criteria for the "vector protected establishment". Keeping animals in these establishments for a specific period of time is a requirement for certain exemptions from the exit ban. The criteria for the vector protected establishment are based on the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the (OIE). For a proper implementation of these new criteria, a guidance document is being developed. This document will be published on the SANCO website.
  - For parts of a restricted zone that have been free from bluetongue for at least one year, Member States can demarcate a " provisionally free area" to provide for a safe transition towards freedom from disease.
According to the Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Animal Health and Welfare of the EFSA on bluetongue serotype 8\(^3\), transplacental transmission of other serotypes of the bluetongue virus than BTV8 has not been shown. In the light of this, the precautionary measure as regards the movement of pregnant animals now only applies for zones which are restricted for bluetongue virus serotype 8.

FESASS asked about the draft Implementing Regulation on bluetongue that was discussed in the Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health of June. The Commission representative explained that this draft addresses a possible animal health risk in relation to semen, ova and embryos of bluetongue susceptible species that occurs after a bluetongue restricted zone is lifted by a Member State. The Regulation introduces a clearer reference to the health guarantees as regards bluetongue on the health certificates for these products.

11. Implementing rules for the import of ungulates, SANCO G2

The Commission briefly explained the rationale for the planned new rules (\textit{NOTE: adopted since as Regulation (EU) No 780/2013\(^4\)}) namely that it harmonises the conditions for ungulates destined to approved bodies and centres and brings legal clarity to a hitherto unclear area. It also added that the rules are planned to place the responsibility onto the member States for the details and for the proper follow-up of the imported animals into their establishments. It also added that the draft will be shortly circulated to comments to this forum with ample deadline for responses (\textit{NOTE: done since}).

12. Any other business:

None.

\(^3\)The EFSA Journal 2011; 9(5): 2189.