

# ~~GUIDE TO THE USER'S GUIDE OF THE AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH CODE~~

## A. Introduction

- 1) The OIE *Aquatic Animal Health Code* (hereafter referred to as the *Aquatic Code*) ~~sets out~~ provides standards for the improvement of aquatic animal health worldwide. ~~More recently, the~~ *Aquatic Code* has also included standards for the welfare of farmed fish and use of antimicrobial agents use in aquatic animals. The purpose of this guide is to advise the ~~Veterinary Authorities and other~~ Competent Authorities in OIE Member Countries on how to use the *Aquatic Code*.
- 2) ~~Veterinary Authorities and other~~ Competent Authorities should use the standards in the *Aquatic Code* to ~~set up~~ develop measures ~~providing~~ for early detection, internal reporting, notification and control of pathogenic agents in aquatic animals (amphibians, crustaceans, fish and molluscs) and preventing their spread via international trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.
- 3) ~~The~~ *Aquatic Code* ~~currently does not encompass any zoonotic disease, however, veterinary public health is part of the mandate of the OIE, including in the field of aquatic animal health.~~
- 34) The OIE standards are based on the most recent scientific and technical information. Correctly applied, they protect aquatic animal health during the production and trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products as well as the ~~and welfare of farmed fish during production and trade in aquatic animals and aquatic animal products.~~
- 45) The absence of chapters, articles or When the Aquatic Code does not include recommendations on particular pathogenic agents or commodities ~~does not mean that~~ Veterinary Authorities and other appropriate sanitary measures can still be applied by Competent Authorities ~~may not apply appropriate aquatic animal health and welfare measures provided they are based on a risk analysis conducted in accordance with the Aquatic Code.~~ However, such measures should be based on sound scientific justification according to the principles of the WTO-SPS Agreement.
- 56) The complete text of the *Aquatic Code* is available on the OIE website and individual chapters may be downloaded from: <http://www.oie.int>.

## B. Aquatic Code content

- 1) Key terms and expressions used in more than one chapter in the *Aquatic Code* ~~with a contextual meaning~~ are defined in the Glossary. The reader should be aware of ~~the contextual~~ definitions given in the Glossary when reading and using the *Aquatic Code*. Defined terms appear in italics. In the online on-line version of the *Aquatic Code*, a hyperlink leads to the relevant definition.
- 2) The term '(under study)' is found in some rare instances, with reference to an article or part of an article. This means that this part of the text has not been adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and the particular provisions are thus not part of the *Aquatic Code*.
- 3) The standards in the chapters of Section 1 are designed for the implementation of measures for the ~~diagnosis, surveillance and notification of pathogenic agents.~~ The section standards includes the criteria for listing aquatic animal diseases, the diseases which are listed by the OIE, procedures for notification to the OIE, and criteria for listing species as susceptible to infection with a specific pathogen.
- 4) The standards in the chapters of Section 2 are designed to guide the importing country in conducting import risk analysis in the absence of OIE trade standards. The importing country may also use these standards to justify import measures which are exceed more trade restrictive stricter than existing OIE trade standards.

- 5) The standards in the chapters of Section 3 are designed for the establishment, maintenance and evaluation of Aquatic Animal Health Services, including communication. These standards are intended to assist the Competent Authorities, Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services of Member Countries to meet their objectives of improving aquatic animal health and welfare of farmed fish, as well as to establish and maintain confidence in their *international aquatic animal health certificates*.
- 6) The standards in the chapters of Section 4 are designed for the implementation of measures for the prevention and control of pathogenic agents. Measures in this section include zoning, compartmentalisation, disinfection, contingency planning, ~~following, and~~ disposal of aquatic animal waste and control of hazards in aquatic animal feed.
- 7) The standards in the chapters of Section 5 are designed for the implementation of general sanitary measures for trade. ~~In particular, The chapters address certification and the measures applicable by the exporting, transit and importing countries. Section 5 also includes A~~ a range of model *international aquatic animal health certificates* is are provided to facilitate for consistent documentation to be used as a harmonised basis of for international trade.
- 8) The standards in the chapters of Section 6 are designed to ensure the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in aquatic animals.
- 9) The standards in the chapters of Section 7 are designed for the implementation of welfare measures for farmed fish. The standards cover the general principles for welfare of farmed fish, including ~~their welfare during their transport, at the time of stunning and killing for human consumption, and when as well as in the situation of killing for disease control purposes.~~
- 10) The standards in each of the chapters of Sections 8 to 11 are designed to prevent the aetiological-pathogenic agents of OIE listed diseases from being introduced into an importing country. Each disease chapter includes a list of currently known susceptible species. The standards take into account the nature of the traded commodity, the aquatic animal health status of the exporting country, zone or compartment, and the risk reduction measures applicable to each commodity.

These standards assume that the agent is either not present in the importing country or is the subject of a control or eradication programme. Sections 8 to 11 each relate to amphibian, crustacean, fish and molluscan hosts, respectively. ~~Chapters include specific measures to prevent and control the infections of global concern.~~

### C. Specific issues

#### 1) Notification

Chapter 1.1. describes Member Countries' obligations under the OIE Organic Statutes. ~~Listed as well as emerging~~ diseases, as prescribed in Chapter 1.1., are compulsorily notifiable. Member Countries are encouraged ~~also~~ to also provide information to the OIE on other aquatic animal health events of epidemiological significance, including occurrence of emerging diseases.

Chapter 1.2. describes the criteria for the inclusion of a disease listed by the OIE.

Chapter 1.3. ~~provides~~ specifies the diseases that are listed by the OIE. Diseases are divided into four sections corresponding to amphibian, crustacean, fish and molluscan hosts, respectively.

#### 2) Pathogen differentiation

Some pathogens have one or more variants. Existence of highly pathogenic variants and the need to differentiate them from more benign variants is recognised in the *Aquatic Code*. When pathogenic agents have strains that are stable, possess characteristics that can be used for diagnostic purposes, and display different levels of pathogenicity, different standards providing protection should be proportionate to the risk posed by the different strains of the pathogenic agent should be applied. As an example, Infection with infectious salmon anaemia virus is a ~~the first listed disease for which offering risk management options based on strain differentiation are provided for infection with infectious salmon anaemia virus is~~ Infection with infectious salmon anaemia virus.

### 3) Determining the susceptibility of species

The *Aquatic Code* proposes the use of criteria to assess the susceptibility of host species to the pathogenic agents of diseases listed in the *Aquatic Code*. This is of particular importance in the context of aquaculture context, given the large numbers of existing species, and the number of new aquaculture species existing in being introduced to aquaculture.

### 4) Trade requirements

~~International~~ Aquatic animal health measures related to international trade measures should be based on OIE standards. A Member Country may authorise the importation of aquatic animals or aquatic animal products into its territory under conditions different from more or less restrictive than those recommended by the *Aquatic Code*. ~~To scientifically justify~~ However, if measures exceed are more trade restrictive than OIE standards measures the importing country should provide scientific justification by conducting a risk analysis in accordance with OIE standards, as described in Chapter 2.1. Members of the WTO should refer to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement).

Chapters 5.1. to 5.3. describe the obligations and ~~ethics~~ ethical responsibilities of importing and exporting countries in international trade. ~~Veterinary Authorities and other~~ Competent Authorities and all veterinarians or and certifying officials directly involved in international trade should be familiar with these chapters. ~~These chapters 5.3 also provide describes~~ guidance the OIE for informal procedure for dispute mediation by the OIE.

Disease-specific chapters in the Aquatic Code include articles listing the commodities that are considered safe for trade without the imposition of disease-specific sanitary measures, regardless of the status of the exporting country or zone for the pathogenic agent in question. Where such a list is present, importing countries should not require any conditions related to the agent in question apply measures trade restrictions to the listed commodities with respect to the listed commodities.

### 5) Trade in aquatic animal commodities

Chapter 5.4. describes the criteria used to assess the safety of aquatic animal commodities ~~that are listed in Articles X.X.3. and X.X.11. (crustacean and mollusc) or X.X.12. (amphibian and fish) disease-specific chapters.~~

Based on assessments using criteria in Article 5.4.1., in all disease chapters, point 1 of Article X.X.3. lists aquatic animal ~~products~~ commodities that may be imported for any purpose from a country, zone or compartment not declared free from the disease in question. The criteria for inclusion of aquatic animal ~~products~~ commodities in point 1 of Article X.X.3. are based on the absence of the pathogenic agent in the ~~traded aquatic animals commodity~~ and aquatic animal products or inactivation of the pathogenic agent by treatment or processing.

Based on assessments using criteria in Article 5.4.2, in all *disease* chapters, point 1 of Article X.X.12. (for Chapter 10.4. the relevant Article is 10.4.17.) ~~(amphibian and fish disease chapters)~~ and Article X.X.11. ~~(crustacean and mollusc disease chapters)~~ lists aquatic animals or aquatic animal products commodities for retail trade for human consumption from a country, zone or compartment not declared free from the disease in question. The criteria for inclusion of aquatic animals commodities or aquatic animal products in point 1 of Article X.X.12. ~~(amphibian and fish disease chapters)~~ and Article X.X.11. ~~(crustacean and mollusc disease chapters)~~ include consideration of the form and presentation of the product, the expected volume of waste tissues generated by the consumer and the likely presence of viable *pathogenic agent* in the waste.

~~Disease-specific chapters in the Aquatic Code reflect the reality of trade and include traded commodities, accounting for their diversity, and propose a list of safe commodities for trade facilitation. The disease-specific chapters of the Aquatic Code include an article listing the commodities that are considered safe for trade without the imposition of sanitary measures, regardless of the status of the country or zone for the agent in question. This is a work in progress and some chapters do not yet contain articles listing safe commodities. Where such a list is present, importing countries should not apply trade restrictions to the listed commodities with respect to the agent in question.~~

## 56) International health certificates

An *international aquatic animal health certificate* is an official document ~~that drawn up by the Veterinary Authority or other Competent Authority of the exporting country draws up issues~~ in accordance with Chapter 5.1. and Chapter 5.2. ~~It Certificates lists the aquatic animal health requirements for the exported commodity.~~ The quality of the exporting country's ~~Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services~~ is essential in providing assurances to trading partners regarding the safety of exported aquatic animals ~~commodities and aquatic animal products.~~ This includes the ~~Veterinary Services or Aquatic Animal Health Services'~~ ethical approach to the provision of international health certificates and their history in meeting their notification obligations.

International health certificates underpin international trade and provide assurances to the importing country regarding the health status of the aquatic animals ~~commodities and aquatic animal products~~ imported. The measures prescribed should take into account the health status of both exporting and importing countries and be based upon the standards in the Aquatic Code.

The following steps should be taken when drafting *international aquatic animal health certificates*:

- a) ~~identify list~~ the diseases, ~~for from~~ which the importing country is justified in seeking protection ~~in regards to because of~~ its own aquatic animal health status. Importing countries should not impose measures in regards to diseases that occur in their own territory but are not subject to official control ~~or eradication~~ programmes;
- b) for commodities capable of transmitting these diseases through international trade, the importing country should apply the relevant articles ~~addressing the commodity in question~~ in the relevant disease-specific chapters. The application of the articles should be adapted to the disease status of the exporting country, zone or compartment. Such status should be established according to Article 1.4.6. except when articles of the relevant disease chapter specify otherwise;
- c) when preparing *international aquatic animal health certificates*, the importing country should endeavour to use terms and expressions in accordance with the definitions given in the Glossary. As stated in Article 5.2.3., *international aquatic animal health certificates* should be kept as simple as possible and should be clearly worded, to avoid misunderstanding of the importing country's requirements;
- d) ~~as further guidance to Member Countries,~~ Chapter 5.10. provides, as further guidance to Member Countries, model health certificates that should be used as a baseline.

## 76) Guidance notes for importers and exporters

It is recommended that ~~Veterinary Authorities and other~~ Competent Authorities ~~are recommended to~~ prepare 'guidance notes' to assist importers and exporters to understand trade requirements. These notes should identify and explain the trade conditions, including the measures to be applied before and after export, and during transport and unloading, and the relevant legal obligations and operational procedures. The guidance notes should advise on all details to be included in the health certification accompanying the consignment to its destination. Exporters should also be reminded of the International Air Transport Association rules governing air transport of aquatic animals and aquatic animal products.

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