

Summary of the U.S.-Canada Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) Zoning Initiative for the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health—June 2014

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is asking the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Health to deliberate on the U.S.-Canada FAD Zoning Initiative and the *Framework for Implementing and Maintaining the Arrangement between the CFIA and the USDA for the Recognition of Foreign Animal Disease Control and Eradication Zones* (hereafter Framework; attached).

Background

An FAD outbreak in either the United States or Canada could cause major economic losses as a result of both the disease control measures applied and the loss of trade across the common border. Representatives of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Canadian Food Inspection Service (CFIA) met in 2007 to discuss zoning for control of FAD outbreaks and the potential for trade to continue or resume quickly from disease-free zones. Both countries have historically recognized each other's zoning decisions for outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza and vesicular stomatitis, but no formal mechanisms exist to ensure that this type of recognition occurs.

As a first step towards developing such mechanisms, APHIS and CFIA evaluated each other's ability to control and eradicate an FAD outbreak through zoning and ensure the sanitary safety of animals and animal products outside of a control zone (evaluations available upon request). The evaluations concluded that each country has sufficient resources and technical capability to establish and maintain an effective control zone in the event of a limited FAD outbreak. For the purposes of international trade, each agency would be able to provide accurate and valid certification that animals and animal products originate from a disease-free zone.

While the evaluations were ongoing, the project became an initiative under the U.S.-Canada Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC), a high-level program intended to increase regulatory transparency and coordination across the border. There are two action items on the RCC FAD Zoning Initiative workplan:

1. An arrangement for mutual recognition of zoning decisions in the event of an FAD outbreak; and
2. A guidance framework to implement and maintain the zoning arrangement.

Based on the reciprocal evaluations, the United States and Canada entered into an Arrangement in October 2012 to facilitate recognition of each other's zoning decisions if an FAD outbreak occurred.¹ The Arrangement establishes the intent and basic parameters for trade between areas that remain free of an FAD, while safeguarding animal health. For example, the affected country must ensure movement standstill as appropriate, adopt a stamping-out or other effective FAD control strategy, and provide a written description of the control zone and response measures to the other country. The Arrangement also directs APHIS and CFIA to develop a framework to provide guidance on implementation.

Guidance Framework

APHIS and CFIA convened a working group to develop the framework which consisted of subject matter experts in regionalization (zoning), emergency response, and import/export. The Framework was

¹ *Arrangement between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the United States Department of Agriculture for the Recognition of Foreign Animal Disease Control and Eradication Zones.*

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published in the *Federal Register* for public comment on May 13, 2014. It is restricted in scope to highly contagious FAD outbreaks in domestic livestock and does not apply to endemic diseases or to aquatic species, pets, wildlife, or laboratory or research animals. The intent is to provide an operational plan for APHIS and CFIA to implement the Arrangement during an outbreak, establish processes for maintaining the Arrangement over time, and outline a strategy to engage stakeholders in developing the resources and strategies to effectively implement the Arrangement.

Part I—Procedures for recognition of zoning decisions

Recognition of zoning decisions under the Arrangement and Framework would occur administratively and does not involve rulemaking. The Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) of the affected country must notify the partner country of any confirmed highly contagious FAD outbreak. The partner country may initially prohibit or restrict importation of animals and commodities that could transmit the disease agent, while the affected country is establishing a control zone (aka area of control). Once the CVO of the affected country is satisfied that the area of control is effectively established, s/he would provide the information required by the Arrangement to the partner country, invite one or more qualified staff members to embed in the response, and request recognition of the zoning decision for trade purposes.

The CVO of the partner country would either request additional information or accept the zoning decision and allow trade between disease-free zones (outside of the area of control) to continue or resume. The affected country would notify the partner country of any modifications to the boundaries of the area of control during the response period. The partner country would modify import restrictions as appropriate to safeguard animal health in response or as recommended by embedded staff members. All changes to import policies would occur through notices to the border ports.

In rare instances, a widespread, multi-focal, or rapidly-progressing highly contagious FAD outbreak may temporarily overwhelm the resources of affected country and negatively impact its ability to contain the disease agent through zoning. In this case, the CVO of the affected country would contact the partner country to initiate monitoring by embedded staff members, but—following OIE recommendations for a disease containment zone—would not request recognition of an area of control until two incubation periods have elapsed with no new cases have outside of the area of control.

Part II—Maintaining the Arrangement

Maintaining the Arrangement over time requires both a governance structure and ongoing initiatives to foster the credibility of the Arrangement among stakeholders. The Framework outlines an APHIS and CFIA governance structure consisting of a Steering Committee composed of senior-level representatives and a Working Group consisting of staff members with appropriate and complementary professional, technical, or specialist skills. The Steering Committee has primary responsibility for preserving the concept and intent of the Arrangement; the Working Group is responsible for reaching out to other stakeholders to cooperatively develop the resources and strategies necessary to effectively implement the Arrangement during a highly contagious FAD outbreak.

Projects are specific activities, plans, or tasks led by the Working Group to foster credibility and facilitate implementation of the Arrangement. Examples include bilateral participation in cross-border FAD exercises that include zoning recognition and joint participation of technical specialists in training on

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FAD response. The Working Group would identify projects in consultation with other stakeholders, taking into account existing venues and opportunities.

Part III—Promoting stakeholder awareness and involvement

Stakeholder engagement is essential to realizing the intent and purpose of the Arrangement. Re-opening trade between disease-free zones during a highly-contagious FAD outbreak will require the support of Federal, State, Provincial, and industry stakeholders. Objections from any of these entities may create delays and/or obstacles to resumption of trade, thereby compounding economic losses.

Under the Framework, APHIS and CFIA would formally solicit feedback at least once per year on existing Working Group projects and priorities, and also solicit proposals for additional projects. The Working Group intends to promote stakeholder engagement through periodic webinars, conference calls, and updates at established forums such as national and regional U.S. Animal Health Association meetings.

Committee deliberations

The USDA requests that the Committee deliberate on the U.S.-Canada FAD Zoning Initiative and Framework document in order to:

1. Provide feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, value, and feasibility;
2. Identify potential issues or points of controversy among their constituent industries and advise on how to address;
3. Recommend actions USDA could take to promote acceptance and support among State and industry stakeholders; and
4. Recommend projects and priorities under the Framework for 2014-2015, focusing on tie-ins with existing venues and planned events.