

**Book Review**

**Good Governance and Financing of Efficient Veterinary Services. OIE Scientific and Technical Review 31 (2), 2012**

This publication of the Office International of Epizootics (OIE) of 321 pages containing 21 papers was edited by Dr. Laurent Msellati, Senior Manager of the Agriculture and Rural Development Team for the Latin America and Caribbean Region, World Bank, Washington.

The contributions deal with different aspects of the governance and financing of public veterinary services such as: good veterinary governance definition, measurement and challenges, veterinary service missions, animal health legislation, governance and management of veterinary laboratories, coordination between veterinary services, good governance in “one health” approaches, global public good concept, economic analysis of animal health, strategic plans for improving the performance, veterinary services in developing countries, financing public veterinary services, organization of veterinary services, public-private partnerships; etc.. At the end there is an interesting annex called “Good governance and the financing of efficient Veterinary Services guidance note” representing a form of a summary. The majority of the papers deal with selected subjects only theoretically without concrete examples proving practical application of the authors’ ideas. There are very few practical examples useful for the paying governments - members of the OIE as independent intergovernmental organization. Almost all papers call for strengthening veterinary services and refer to so called “OIE international standard” which is de facto only a form of a questionnaire. On the other hand among 352 literature references the most important documents on governance of public veterinary services such as “Standard of Veterinary Services” FAO, 1974 and “Guidelines for strengthening animal health services in developing countries”, FAO, 1991 are not mentioned at all. The editor and the contributors underestimated the fact that the main criterion of a good governance are practical results, i.e. how far the services had contributed to the protection and betterment of animal population health. It is a pity that not a single paper describes veterinary service efficiency using cost/benefit analysis, comparison of centralized with decentralized services governance, methods for identification of service priorities and a governance analysis from a country with excellent nationwide practical results.

As usually, also this OIE publication is dominated by a small group of major exporting developed countries. From 46 authors (only one is Chief Veterinary Officer having experience with national veterinary service governance), 17 indicate France as their country origin. This country, leading the OIE from its very beginning in 1924 (including the post of Director General) is “giving lessons” to all the countries and therefore one would expect its governance system as a good model for the others. Unfortunately, according to OIE documents, France has had problems with the efficiency of its veterinary services. For example: more than a half of present internationally reportable animal diseases are not officially notifiable (i.e. their occurrence cannot be known); 2001 export of foot and mouth disease into Netherlands (causing more than 200 000 dead animals); inability to eradicate bovine brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis and enzootic bovine leukosis (eradicated years ago in many European countries) etc.

The OIE selected as the Editor, instead of an experienced Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), an officer from the World Bank. In the 1990s, this organization, together with International Monetary Fund (both dominated by the same countries as the OIE) forced the governments to minimize their role through significantly reducing their budget. As the consequence public veterinary services in the majority of the countries have been drastically reduced and almost dismantled. CVOs of these countries, due to critical shortage of money and staff, became “generals without soldiers” not able to deal with national animal health problems as before. Their public veterinary services have lost previous capacity to control animal health situation, to eradicate infectious diseases, to inspect trade in animal commodities, to protect inhabitants against disease transmissible from animals, etc. Private “accredited veterinarians”, depending existentially on local breeders and producers, sometimes unreliable and easily to be corrupted, cannot replace at all the role of independent public services. No one paper deals with this fact when calling for strengthening public veterinary services. Due to actual critical lack of resources, in spite of availability of effective methods, rich experience and all the efforts of public veterinary services, animal health situation in the world is getting worse as never before.

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