

Integrated Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Prevention and Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses in Africa (IRCM) Strategic Framework



I. Introduction

Africa suffers a very heavy burden of transboundary animal diseases (TADs) and zoonoses. The threat posed by these diseases to livelihoods and public health is likely to increase due to globalization and changes in the ecosystem that favour disease spread, emergence and re-emergence. These changes include rapid urbanization, intensification of animal agriculture, rapid movement of people and commodities across borders and ecosystems, amplified interaction between domestic and wild animals and humans, growing human population and encroachment into wildlife habitats, increased commercialization of wildlife, and consumption of bush meat. Additionally, global warming and climate change are encouraging the spread of pests and invasive species and increasing the ecological range of some of these diseases.

Due to the significant impacts of TADs and zoonoses on animal productivity, market access and public health, their effective management is an urgent imperative for Africa. They pose a threat to the continental

integration and economic development agenda driven by the African Union and spearheaded at the regional level by the RECs because they constitute a major barrier to international and regional trade in animals and animal products.

The African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), a specialized technical office of the African Union is mandated to support and coordinate the development and utilization of animal resources for human wellbeing and economic development through support and empowerment of AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The Integrated Regional Coordination Mechanism for the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses in Africa (IRCM) is conceptualized in line with this mandate. It is designed as a business process model for the prioritization and mainstreaming of interventions for the prevention and control of TADs and zoonoses within the institutional structures and decision making processes of the Regional Economic Communities and member states. It is

intended to be embedded into existing institutions. The IRCM initiative seeks to improve coordination among stakeholders and the establishment of critical competences in all the relevant departments. It has a strong regional thrust to ensure support for inter-country coordination and support to the regional integration agenda that is spearheaded by RECs.

2. Objectives of the IRCM

Overall Objective (Goal)

To contribute to the reduction of hunger and poverty, and enhancement of public health in Africa

Purpose

To strengthen the capacity of RECs and their member states to effectively coordinate, harmonize and execute interventions in the prevention and control of TADs and zoonoses, including emerging and re-emerging diseases

Specific Objectives are to:

- i. Provide an objective approach for strengthening the coordination of TADs & zoonoses prevention and control among Regional Economic Communities and the African Union Member States
- ii. Provide mutually acceptable approach to inter-country interactions in regard to TADs & zoonoses
- iii. Serve as the entry point for investment and capacity building for the progressive control and eradication of priority TADs and zoonoses in Africa
- iv. Provide a strategic framework for the institutionalization of TADs and zoonoses

prevention and control in line with the economic and political integration agenda of the African Union

- v. Provide a platform for the operationalization of the one health strategic framework in Africa

Expected Results

- Road map for coordination of TADs & zoonoses prevention and control within and between the RECs established
- Formal mechanisms for interaction between Member States, sectors and actors in regard to TADs & zoonoses established
- Objective plans for capacity building and support to the coordination of TADs & zoonoses in RECs, their MSs and institutions developed and operationalized
- The means to streamline investments in the coordination of TADs and zoonoses prevention and control in Africa established
- Trade and free movement of goods in Africa's animal resources sector in line with Africa's integration agenda accelerated

3. IRCM Development Process

The IRCM has been established through a participatory and multi-disciplinary process. Initial consultations carried out with specialized technical organizations; namely Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) and the African Union's Directorate for Social Affairs (responsible for public health) under the leadership of AU-IBAR agreed on the concept and a roadmap for



its development. A stock taking exercise at the REC level to identify existing coordination mechanisms, capacities and gaps and to consult with stakeholders was agreed on to inform the design of the mechanism. This was conducted by a multi-disciplinary team representing all the partners. The stock taking exercise targeted all 8 AU recognized RECs and involved desk reviews and onsite visits to REC secretariats to discuss with various officials, experts and primary stakeholders. Individual REC reports detailing specific findings and recommendations were prepared. The IRCM strategic framework has been developed from the consolidation of these findings with proposals for addressing existing gaps.

4. IRCM Strategic Orientation

The IRCM is aligned with relevant strategies on agriculture and public health at continental and global levels. Alignment has been ensured with the CAADP framework, Africa Health Strategy (2007-2013), AU-IBAR Strategic Plan 2010-2014, the NEDAP vision, the global One Health strategic framework, IDSR and IHR (2005) and the Global Framework for the control of Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) to name a few. IRCM also supports and aligns with the RECs efforts to promote regional integration and the free movement of people, goods and services.

Strategically the IRCM seeks to support capacity building and facilitate entrenchment of the coordination and management of TADs and zoonoses within the institutional structures and processes of the RECs and their Member States. This has the dual impact of ensuring the diseases remain in the limelight of REC political and technical leadership, and are accorded requisite priority as well as resources for action. It is conceived as a mechanism that aims to bring relevant actors together in a coordinated manner to consistently address gaps that are likely to impede effective management of TADs and zoonoses. Key actions will involve investment in capacity building and provision of functional support to the relevant components and structures within animal and human health systems. This approach is warranted by the recognition that effective collaboration among the different health system components and stakeholders cannot be achieved if they individually lack capacity for effective functionality. On the other hand, strengthening cross-sectoral linkages and collaborations will promote synergies and cooperation, timely information sharing, networking and sharing of capacities, processes and facilities, joint programming and promote increased stakeholder participation and ownership.

Operationalization of the IRCM will build on existing structures and systems, while investing where gaps exist to ensure improved effectiveness and efficiency at all levels. It will thus function as a medium term strategic framework for capacity building to assist RECs to converge towards coordinated approaches and procedures for the prevention and control TADs and zoonoses. In line with the current global dispensation, the interventions supported will seek to promote the One Health approach. Priorities will include leveraging intersectoral collaboration, fostering evidence based decision making processes, enhancing capacity building, strengthening institutions and entrenching “whole system approaches” in addressing TADs and zoonoses challenges in Africa.



5. IRCM implementation arrangements

The IRCM strategic framework will be implemented through a decentralized arrangement involving all the 8 RECs. Every REC will develop a specific implementation plan to ensure regional priorities, specificities and capacity gaps among their membership are accurately addressed.

At the central (AU-IBAR) level an implementation plan has been developed to provide the overall scope for IRCM implementation. Technical organizations (FAO, OIE, WHO, and others) including technical offices of the African Union are expected to provide support towards implementation by the RECs and Member States in accordance with their mandates and comparative advantage. Such support will be delivered through formal and accountable arrangements.

Establishment of strong multi-sectoral and multi-agency partnerships is envisaged to provide the requisite technical and financial resources for the IRCM. Thus partnership agreements and collaborative arrangements between RECs and AU-IBAR with multi-lateral and bilateral financial and technical organizations are anticipated. Due to the wide scope of the IRCM, the partnerships may target specific areas of interest e.g. strengthening surveillance capacities form zoonotic diseases.

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