

Media Update

2 February 2023

FAO

PRESS RELEASE

Animal Diseases Surveillance System to Improve Livestock Sector in Pakistan

Despite its importance in terms of income, trade, employment, livelihood and nutrition and share in agriculture GDP, livestock sector has not received the attention it deserves. In order to harness, livestock potential and development in Pakistan meaningful collaborations between organizations are required. Taking a step in this direction Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Pakistan and the Ministry of National Food Security & Research, Government of Pakistan have initiated a Project under Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) to improve the animal disease surveillance system and establish a real-time animal disease reporting system in Pakistan. The announcement was made at a two-day inception workshop held at a local hotel in Islamabad on Wednesday.

In his welcome address, Dr. M. Akram, Animal Husbandry Commissioner, Ministry of National Food Security and Research Government of Pakistan (MoNFSR) said that this collaboration with FAO under TCP is a welcoming step. It is hoped that the feasibility study will be completed in the next six to nine months to establish animal diseases surveillance system in Pakistan. Livestock has a huge potential but we only earn USD 350 million annually in exports. In addition, we cannot meet our local per capita requirements. A majority of the livestock farmers is living on subsistence level and is unable to make livestock a commercial enterprise. Being the custodian of livestock sector in Pakistan, this is a huge challenge for the MoNFSR. We need to enhance the productivity of our livestock as well as add value to it. Therefore, this

collaboration with FAO is a very encouraging. The inception workshop will be the first milestone, as it will allow deliberations from the experts, learn about the existing disease surveillance systems in various provinces, best practices and lessons learned. The valuable suggestions from the participants will steer the feasibility study in the right direction.

Dr. Akram further added that along with the disease surveillance system, regulatory framework is equally important. The Ministry has developed a draft National Animal Health Act in accordance with the World Health Organization guidelines. It will be presented to the workshop participants for review. Their recommendations will be incorporated in the final draft. Later, it will be moved towards legislation. Upon approval, it will be the first document related to animal health at national level.

Dr. M. Afzal, Livestock expert at FAO presented the salient features of the feasibility study and shared that animal disease surveillance is a systematic process of collection, analysis, interpretation and communication of animal disease data for timely evidence-based decision-making, early warning and taking measures for controlling the disease. An accurate and timely reporting of the diseases in livestock is essential for effective disease control and prioritizing the resources required for the prevention and control of these diseases. The project aims at improvement of animal disease surveillance in Pakistan. Under the project we want to assess the current surveillance system through a tool, Surveillance Evaluation tool (SET) that is already in use by many countries in the world. The tool was developed by FAO five years ago. That will assess quality and capacity of existing animal surveillance systems. Work already done for animal surveillance will also be reviewed. The ultimate objective is to draft an animal surveillance system that is suitable to Pakistan and develop an IT infrastructure for a robust animal diseases surveillance system for real time reporting.

Ms. Florence Rolle, FAO Representative in Pakistan thanked all the participants for attending the workshop and said that FAO has a long history of collaboration with all the stakeholders present at the workshop. It is unfortunate that livestock does not get its share in what it contributes in agriculture GDP of Pakistan. To look into this issue is extremely important for FAO so that the

potential livestock has in Pakistan could be utilized fully. The participants of the workshop are experts in the field and FAO has full confidence in their abilities to make this project a success.

Concluding the inaugural session, chief guest Capt. (Retd.) M. Asif, Additional Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research said that the purpose of the workshop is to know the current animal surveillance system presently working in different provinces, what are the capacities we have, and where we deficiencies. What is the coordination system we already have, where are gaps in this coordination and how we can fill these gaps. Livestock contributes a lot in the GDP but there are some policy gaps that need to be addressed. The most important thing at the policy level is that our thinking should be based on well informed, scientific knowledge based and system from where we could get timely and reliable information. Based on that information we can have our policy interventions to address these gaps and issues. If we do not have a surveillance system, we cannot have access to international markets, or fetch the desired rates. The challenge is that Pakistan has a huge and varied landscape and every landscape has its own livestock, species, and genepool. Because of these different landscapes, habitats, specie and pedigreed animals have different responses to different diseases. If we do not have early warning system and actual information about the disease, how it effects the animals, how we need to react to that, we will not be able to fight it. Once we have an efficient, reliable and responsive surveillance system, only then we can compete in the international markets and have sustainable livestock for our farmers.

Workshop brought together veterinary and livestock experts from all over the Pakistan.

For more information

Fareeha Sultan

Communications Specialist

0310-5944889

Fareeha.sultan@fao.org

UNHCR

PRESS RELEASE

UNHCR Pakistan launches one-off cash assistance scheme for 1.3 million Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD, 02 February 2023: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, today launched a one-time cash assistance scheme for some 1.3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan affected by devastating 2022 floods as well as the prevailing economic situation.

The assistance is being provided, in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan, to reach refugees who are not eligible to access social safety nets available to Pakistani citizens. The initiative is modelled on the Government's emergency cash programme for vulnerable Pakistani families affected by floods. Registered Afghan refugees will receive up to PKR 25,000, adjusted depending on the family size.

The Minister for State and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Muhammad Talha Mahmood, and Habib Bank Limited's Chief Representative, Mr. Mohammad Ali Syed launched the scheme on Thursday with UNHCR's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Indrika Ratwatte. Representatives from different donor countries also attended the event.

"We are honoured to work together with our long-standing partner, the Government of Pakistan, through its SAFRON Ministry, as well as Habib Bank Limited — for the first time — to support Afghans affected by the devastating floods and who remain in difficult economic circumstances. This support comes in addition to UNHCR's emergency flood response for Afghan refugees and affected Pakistani host communities," said Mr. Ratwatte.

He added "the partnership is UNHCR's first private sector engagement with the country's banking system and is a great example of the commitment of the Government and private sector in the country to find innovative approaches to support vulnerable Afghans. I hope this partnership is something we can build on further, including in the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum later this year."

UNHCR continues working with Pakistan as it recovers from the aftermath of last year's devastating floods, with a special focus on areas hosting refugees. Some 800,000 refugees live in areas that were impacted by the devastating monsoon.

Muhammad Talha Mahmood, the Minister of SAFRON, welcomed ongoing international support for Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan.

“We have generously supported Afghan refugees in our country for over four decades. Even as we face our own challenges, we remain committed to our promise to help. But we cannot do it alone and call for additional international support at this time in line with the global commitment to share responsibility for refugees made under the UN Refugee Compact.”

Habib Bank Limited's Chief Representative, Mr. Mohammad Ali Syed welcomed the opportunity to team up with UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan to deliver cash assistance.

“Our bank is committed to high standards of delivery and accountability. We are proud to do our part and to demonstrate how our advanced banking system can efficiently deliver this important humanitarian cash assistance to refugees in Pakistan.

Sustained international support for Pakistan is required to find solutions for Afghan refugees, particularly within the framework of the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees. For more information: <https://ssar-platform.org/>

Media Contact

Mr. Qaiser Khan Afridi, UNHCR Pakistan Spokesperson, +92-300-5018696