

Animal Disease Eradication: Healthier Animals, Safer Food

The “Animal Disease Eradication: Healthier Animals, Safer Food” conference addressed the importance of animal health for food safety and reduction of losses for farmers with a focus on *brucellosis*. The conference, which took place at Hidden Garden, Nicosia on Thursday, 13 June 2019 also highlighted the EU contribution in improving animal and public health in the Turkish Cypriot community by implementing EU standards.

Eradication of *brucellosis* from the island is the ultimate objective. It is very complex and hard work, as pointed out by the EU expert Dr Yolanda Vaz (Portugal), who shared with participants, the years of challenges to eliminate brucellosis in Portugal. The EU expert Dr Nick Taylor explained the general importance of animal disease prevention and explained how to prevent animal diseases entering farms. Experts highlighted that success in eradicating brucellosis depends on many factors such as understanding what contributes to disease introduction, spread and persistence; support and participation of all interested stakeholders; shared responsibility and transparency; availability and use of tools (such as robust legal texts, animal identification and registration systems, animal health data management system, controls, etc.). Without such tools and interactions, success to eliminate any animal disease can only be partial.

The conference highlighted the importance of continued detection and elimination of brucellosis infected animals and, in particular, of protection of negative farms. Farmers have been reminded that in order to maintain the good brucellosis status of their herds, all eligible animals need to be tested annually. Many participants stressed the importance of continued efforts to eliminate priority animal diseases (such as brucellosis), emphasising that veterinarians and animal producers should work together to achieve this objective. The participants also recognised the importance of continued EU support to achieve the objective of the elimination of brucellosis and other important diseases in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Finally, the conference participants recognised that society is better informed, demanding quality and safe products and this indicates the level of public interest in the elimination of important animal diseases in the Turkish Cypriot community.

In the context of the EU Aid Programme, more than €20 million has been allocated to improve the performance of the livestock sector, in particular animal production and health. Assistance to improve animal production and health is provided to livestock owners (especially dairy producers), and veterinary services. Technical trainings in farming practices and hygiene, animal diseases prevention, control and elimination, dairy products hygiene, and food safety have been provided to more than a thousand farmers.

The conference was organised by the EU Infopoint and the EU-funded technical assistance project to strengthen the capacity of Turkish Cypriot veterinary services to eradicate, control and prevent animal diseases.

More than 100 farmers, veterinarians, representatives of local bodies, and other interested operators participated.



Background:

The EU animal health policy is the result of several years of development in the fight against transmissible animal diseases (often epidemics) and covers all animals in the EU kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos. It also covers wild animals and animals used in research where there is a risk of them transmitting disease to other animals or to humans. It protects human and animal health and welfare as well as food safety as it is working towards high animal health status of livestock, poultry and fish by controlling animal disease outbreaks and by surveillance and eradication programmes. It ensures smooth and safe internal EU market (including introduction into the EU) of live animals and products of animal origin (including animal by-products) by legislative and non-legislative measures. It works under the motto "prevention is better than cure".

In September 2007 the Commission adopted its Animal Health Strategy. The Strategy had 4 pillars, along with two key underlying principles apply to all the work: partnership and communication. These pillars are "defining priorities", "EU Animal Health framework", "prevention, surveillance, preparedness", and "science, innovation and research": https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/health/strategy2007-2013_en

Media Contact : EU Infopoint: info@abbilgi.eu, 228 2577



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