

EPIZONE

A unique European-led network of researchers in support of the prevention and control of epizootic diseases

Epizootic diseases as avian influenza, foot and mouth disease, swine fever are a concern for the whole society, from the farmers to the consumers, and generate huge economic losses along the animal production chain causing food security issues and public health concerns. Research into prevention and control of epizootics is more than ever necessary. However, the need to reduce fragmentation of research seeking synergies by transnational co-operation and collaboration is urgent. In this framework, EPIZONE has been created and financed by the European Sixth Research Framework Programme by 14 million euro, providing a structure at the European level to unite research in this field.

Some infectious diseases of farm and aquaculture animals can quickly spread without respecting borders and causing devastating economic and social consequences. Good examples in Europe have been the outbreaks of foot-and-mouth, avian influenza H5N1 and bluetongue in the past decade. In developing countries, these diseases have a major impact on the livelihood of farmers given the multi-functionality of livestock. Furthermore, in some cases these diseases are of public health concern. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) the impact of animal diseases on losses on animal production (and on animal products) worldwide exceed 20%.

The research into preparedness, prevention, detection, and control of epizootics has to result from transnational cooperation, tackling the problem across the whole production chain of animal-related food.

From its creation in May 2006, the EPIZONE Network of Excellence has provided a structure at the European level to facilitate this united effort. It brings together the research of 17 institutions from ten European countries, along with China and Turkey, an international organisation (FAO) and an SME. It is the largest international network of researchers on major infectious animal diseases. It gathers over 300 scientists working to improve and provide the knowledge and tools for the prevention and control of epizootic diseases. A special attention is dedicated to new emerging epizootic diseases threatening the EU borders.

The network strongly enhances sharing expertise and spreading excellence between scientists, including a major effort on young scientists through the sub-network YOUNG EPIZONE. This integration is achieved through a variety of communication channels, meetings, training and continuous professional development.

EPIZONE also manages its own scientific work programmes through jointly funded and executed research by network members. The research covers four main themes: diagnostics methods, intervention strategies, surveillance and epidemiology, and risk assessment. Given the network structure, the technical resources and the scientific excellence at its disposition, EPIZONE ensures strategically driven state-of-the-art research of world-renown quality.

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