

7 Promoting Healthy Food Markets - Strategy and Plans

7.1 The impending need

A recent OIE, WHO and FAO consultation on Avian Influenza and human health²⁵ recognized the major role that wet markets have played in the emergence of Avian Influenza. In 1992, live poultry markets in USA were considered the "missing link in the epidemiology of influenza". In 1997, the wet markets were identified as the source of H5N1 infections in chicken farms in Hong Kong, wherein 20 % of the chicken in wet markets were found to be infected. In 2005, it has been reported that 83% of the human H5N1 cases around the world have had exposure to infected poultry.

A joint WHO/ FAO/OIE/World Bank Conference on Avian Influenza and Human Pandemic Influenza, held at Geneva (November 2005, stressed the need to contain the Avian Influenza H5N1 at the source i.e. at poultry farms and at live animal markets or "wet markets". Subsequently, experts have urged the countries to develop integrated national plans across all sectors.

While the efforts of many agencies are rightly and predominantly aimed at containing the virus at the primary end of the food chain i.e. at the poultry farms, WHO, with its experience of developing "Healthy Marketplaces", needs to take initiatives at the intermediate i.e. the marketplaces, particularly the "wet market" and the tertiary ends of the food chain i.e. the food service establishments and food processing industry, as well as the consumers of poultry products.

Accordingly, this Manual outlines the strategy and plans of action for evolving healthy market places with the emphasis on "wet markets".

7.2 Strategy

- a) Obtain broad political commitment at the local level and stakeholder participation²⁶.
- b) Assess the physical and operational environment of the market settings prioritize action and develop an action plan.

²⁵ OIE/FAO/WHO Consultation on Avian Influenza and Human Health: Risk reduction measures in producing, marketing and living with animals in Asia, July 2005, Malaysia

²⁶ Healthy marketplaces in the Western Pacific - Guiding Future Action - Applying a settings Approach to the promotion of Health in Marketplaces, WHO (WPRO), 2004. To be purchased at: http://www.wpro.who.int/publications/pub_9290611707.htm

- c) Develop communication plans and materials aimed at the general public
- d) Adapt / develop a framework for monitoring and analysis of costs and benefits²⁷ of "Healthy Food Markets"

7.3 Implementing the strategy

7.3.1 Obtain broad political commitment and stakeholder participation

- a) Familiarize stakeholders with the Healthy Food Markets concept and food safety, and foster political commitment of national, provincial and local authorities for supporting Healthy Food Markets Programme to ensure support with appropriate resources.
- b) Establish a local / district / provincial Healthy Food Markets committee with representation of all stakeholders for regular monitoring of implementation of action plans.
- c) Identify priority health and safety issues (current biosecurity level) of the live animal markets and assess their potential contribution to the current outbreak of Avian Influenza.
- d) Identify the salient markets that require priority implementation and facilitate the launch of a pilot "Healthy Food Market(s)".

7.3.2 Assess the Physical and Operational Environment of the market settings, prioritize action and develop an action plan.

- a) Jointly assess the current situation: design, construction and upkeep of the physical environment of the marketplace in the context of hygiene and sanitation. Chapter 3.3 in this Manual provides hints to help evaluate the market operations.
- b) Jointly identify the gaps concerning measures, including infrastructure, aimed at protecting the health of consumers and the market community. Adapt measures outlined under Chapter 5.3, 5.4. and Chapter 6.0 in this Manual.
- c) Prioritize the most urgent and feasible actions and organize them in a time framed plan, along with budgetary needs and identification of roles that each segment of the market community should fulfill.

7.3.3 Develop Communication plans and materials aimed at the general public

To raise awareness on the advantages of "Healthy Food Markets", some key messages have been included in this Manual. These, and the more general "5 key food safety messages"²⁸ can be adapted to local needs, for different public segments, with reference to Avian Influenza. For example:

²⁷ Costs and Benefits of regulatory Control in Wet Markets in Hong Kong, WHO (WPRO), Draft 02, 2004

²⁸ Five Keys to Safer Food: "First adapt, then act" WHO, SEARO, 2005.

<http://w3.who.sea.org/en/Section23/Section1001/Section1110.htm> and "Let us stop the killer virus at source" - Preventive Measures to stop the spread of bird flu (Draft) WHO/FAO/OIE (2005). As from March 2006, final version available at: www.wpro.who.int/avian

- ◆ Key food safety messages for consumers, including those for safe handling and consumption of poultry and animal products.
- ◆ Key food safety messages for the marketing community with specific reference to measures for "wet markets".
- ◆ Key food safety messages for food service establishments with specific guidance in the context of handling, slaughtering processing / cooking and serving of poultry products.

7.3.4 Adapt / develop a framework for monitoring and analysis of costs and benefits of "Healthy Food Markets"

- a) To assess the viability to replicate this initiative in other settings, develop /

adapt a framework for monitoring and analysis of the actual costs incurred by the wet market community and other contributors (local, district, provincial, national and international stakeholders). Include all cost elements viz. infrastructure, market surveillance, research, training, etc.

- b) Identify indicators to measure the benefits of Healthy Food Markets viz. enhanced public health; treatment and control expenditures avoided; economic losses avoided; preventing a pandemic; public empowerment; etc.
- c) Carry out an evaluation of the validity of Healthy Food Markets.