

Key factors for sustainability of regional animal health networks: CaribVET example

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CaribVET is a collaborative network of veterinary services, research institutes and regional/international organizations whose objective is to improve animal and veterinary public health in the Caribbean. Set up on a bottom-up process about 15 years ago, CaribVET progressively achieved recognition and was officially endorsed in 2006 by the CARICOM as the Caribbean Animal Health Network. In 2010, it expanded to 32 countries and territories and 10 regional/international organizations. Its operation relies on a Steering Committee, a Coordination Unit and 6 working groups. Efficient and coordinated set of initiatives, projects and funding from different partners, mutual trust and responsibilities handover are essential for its sustainability. Quality Assurance principles are being implemented including formalized organization, clear rules (trilingual charter), and traceability (members, data) to improve network efficiency and operation. Interaction between professionals working in research, surveillance or control allows the definition of (1) relevant research questions according to needs evidenced in the field; (2) scientifically-based recommendations/tools to improve prediction of emergence (pathogen evolution, population dynamics); disease surveillance (design risk-based surveillance) and control strategies (appropriate treatment, vaccine, vector controls). Such interactions ensure implementation by decisions makers of research outputs, guarantee of sustainable improvement of animal health. These approaches contribute to network long-term operation to be complemented by cost-benefit studies and performance indicators development to gain advocacy of policy makers at the highest level of country members, about the essential role of CaribVET to support national networks and improve their prediction, prevention and control capacities.