

Kiribati participates in international animal disease reporting system

In the midst of climate change and disaster risk preparedness planning, raising awareness on terrestrial and aquatic animal disease reporting has become an important need for Kiribati. This was highlighted during a five-day workshop attended by government officials from Kiribati's Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture and its Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource Development.

The training, held in South Tarawa from 23 to 27 September 2013, was also attended by fish farmers and exporters of live aquatic organisms. Kiribati is one of the largest exporters of marine ornamentals among SPC member countries and territories, and this sector could be jeopardised by the current limited knowledge regarding the health status of aquatic animals.

Kiribati is not a member of the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE), but it is a member of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). SPC has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with OIE that establishes guidelines and obligations governing data and information sharing between OIE and SPC. Data shared with OIE are in turn fed into the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), an online disease reporting system. The MOU highlights SPC's role in encouraging and facilitating the process to enable its members to regularly provide information and updates on terrestrial and aquatic animal disease status via WAHIS. SPC has also established an agreement with the European Union (EU) enabling non-OIE members to export marine ornamentals to EU, provided they regularly update their aquatic animal disease status on WAHIS.

Temwanoku Ioakim, Livestock Officer and OIE WAHIS focal point in the Ministry for Environment, Lands and Agriculture, said, "Kiribati is free from all the major exotic disease of livestock. There is no clinical evidence to suggest that any of the diseases listed in the OIE manual are present in the country."

As part of the five-day training, Ruth Garcia Gomez (SPC Aquaculture Officer – Mariculture) and Anju Mangal (SPC Information and Knowledge Management Officer, Land Resources Division) provided an overview of WAHIS from a regional perspective and discussed the relevance of animal disease reporting through the system.

WAHIS is an early warning system for informing the international community, by means of "alert messages" and basic health status information, of relevant epidemiological events that occur in OIE member countries. It is also a monitoring system for following up OIE listed diseases (presence or absence) over time. Ministry focal points were trained to provide accurate information for



Taere Ratieta (Fisheries Officer) and Tooreka Teemari (Livestock Officer) learning about the WAHIS software (image: Ruth Garcia Gomez).

disease notification, including epidemiological notification, aquatic and terrestrial information.

The official OIE focal points went through a training exercise on submitting immediate notification of the occurrence of a disease outbreak. In the event of an important epidemiological outbreak affecting terrestrial or aquatic animals, and as part of a disaster risk preparedness plan, OIE delegates and focal points must immediately inform OIE by sending notifications through WAHIS.

As part of the training, the focal points submitted their official six-monthly reports and annual reports for 2012 and 2013.

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