



## **THE SADC SUPPLY HUB FOR LABORATORY REAGENTS FOR HPAI DIAGNOSIS**

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has caused enormous losses to the poultry sectors worldwide, including Africa, where the disease was first recorded in 2006 in Nigeria. Since then 11 countries in Africa have reported the disease.

To date, fortunately, the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have remained free from the infection. Countries have successfully developed Preparedness Plans, instigated vigilance in regards to awareness creation and early detection and are including poultry surveillance into their disease control plans.

To carry out surveillance effectively, good laboratory services with established diagnostic capacity and trained personnel are required. FAO has assisted many countries in the region to upgrade these services at national level. At regional level, the region is privileged to have a designated laboratory which can offer diagnostic services to other SADC Member States that have not yet developed national capacity.

The Agriculture Research Council-Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (ARC-OVI) of South Africa has assumed this role because of its capacity and expertise in veterinary diagnostics. It has assisted countries of the SADC region and beyond with diagnostic services for their poultry samples to test them for the presence/absence of the HPAI virus.

With funds from FAO and partners, a project was implemented from 2006 in which thousands of samples collected from poultry and wild birds in many SADC countries and throughout Africa were tested at the ARC-OVI. The testing for avian influenza and Newcastle Disease viruses continues at ARC-OVI as part of ongoing national surveillance, in collaboration with interested partners.

The objective declared by the SADC Laboratory Diagnostic Sub-Committee of the Livestock Technical Committee, is that every National Veterinary Laboratory in the region should have the capacity to have at least one of the OIE recommended serological tests established to screen for LPAI and endeavour to set up RT-PCR for HPAI virus detection.

While collaborating partners like FAO have provided technical and financial assistance to many laboratories in the region in order for them to meet this objective, the shortcoming for many laboratories remains the capacity to have easy access to reagents to carry out these diagnostic tests.

Not only are the reagents costly, but they cannot necessarily be purchased locally in all countries, require imports from outside the country, necessitating the use of foreign currency.

An initiative has therefore been put in place for ARC-OVI to host a Demand-Supply Hub for laboratory reagents necessary for performing serological tests for avian influenza in poultry.

This hub will store the essential reagents to performing HA/HI, AGID and ELISA tests for poultry serum samples submitted to the National Veterinary Laboratories of SADC Member States.

This will assist countries to be able to test for samples collected in enhanced surveillance, presently promoted in all countries under the FAO/USAID projects and the AU-IBAR SPINAP project.

For the period May to December 2009, countries can order these reagents from the hub in order to meet their needs for sample testing. Countries will have to fill a prescribed requisition form and will have to justify quantities they order with specific numbers of samples to be tested.

**In return, countries will have to make a report of the activities in which they have used these reagents on a monthly basis to the SADC Laboratory Diagnostic Subcommittee with a copy of the same to FAO – ECTAD (<http://www.fao-ectad-gaborone.org>). Reporting is conditional for supply of reagents!!**

The key reagents currently available at the Demand-Supply Hub are: complete ELISA kit, antigens (H5N1, H7N1, and H7N7) and antisera (SPF negative, H5(N2) and H7(N7)).

For further information, please contact:

Dr Phelix Majiwa, Manager,  
Molecular Epidemiology and Diagnostics Programme,  
Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute,  
Private Bag X5  
Onderstepoort 0110  
South Africa  
E-mail: [majiwap@arc.agric.za](mailto:majiwap@arc.agric.za)  
Tel: +27-12-529-9441  
Fax: +27-12-529-9249

For more information on this project and other related initiatives, please contact FAO-ECTAD office for Southern Africa:

The Regional Manager  
P.O.Box 80598  
Gaborone  
Tel: +267 3953100  
Fax: +267 3953104  
Email: [Susanne.munstermann@fao.org](mailto:Susanne.munstermann@fao.org)

This initiative is funded in the framework of the OSRO/RAF/719/USA project, with funds from USAID and implemented by FAO-ECTAD Southern Africa.