



19 June 2006

❖ Avian flu: a problem for both ACP and EU countries

**P r e s s   R e l e a s e**

# ***Avian flu: a problem for both ACP and EU countries***

Debate : 19.06.2006

In debating avian flu, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly highlighted that it poses a global threat with possible repercussions for human health, the global economy and world stability, since little is known about human immunity to a mutated H5N1 subtype.

John **BOWIS** (EPP/ED, UK) said what was needed was a sense of urgency recalling the previous flu pandemics of the twentieth century. The ACP countries need to examine the issues of possible vaccinations of poultry and free-range poultry. Mr Bowis said that tracking the spread of the different viruses was very important. ACP countries needed access to well equipped laboratories and protective equipment. The issue of access to vaccines was also key because of limited availability with the WHO estimating maximum production at 300 million doses.

Marie Arlette **CARLOTTI** (PES, France) said “*Avian flu is on the front-page of newspapers, but we have our eyes focused on the European continent. With eight African countries affected, H5N1 is a time-bomb waiting to happen*”. She sighted possible side-effects of the crisis: the threat of a possible health crisis and the threat of the negative effects on small-scale poultry farmers who are at the heart of food security. Mrs Carlotti also highlighted the destabilisation of the African market with its massive amounts of poultry imports coming from Europe.

The representative of **SUDAN** said that his country had created a committee on avian flu on the joint initiative of the Agriculture and Health Ministries. “*We have limited poultry imports, given our proximity to Egypt which is the only African country to have suffered transmission to humans*”. In April 2006, the first case of avian flu was recorded in Sudan, but there had been no human cases so far.

Walter **MZEMBI** (Zimbabwe,) a poultry farmer himself, said that there had been no human cases reported in Zimbabwe, nevertheless, the Zimbabwean government had set up a task force to deal with potential cases with the assistance of the FAO and the WHO. He called on the EU to assist Zimbabwe with the strengthening of its laboratory capacities.

The Assembly, in a draft joint resolution, will draw attention to the need to draw up emergency plans in the event of human or animal infection and takes the view that those emergency plans should focus on:

- strengthening surveillance and detection capacities,
- preventive containment measures at the slightest suspicion of infection,
- making the general public and the professionals concerned more aware of what is at stake, educating them and making appeals to their individual sense of responsibility,

- supporting those affected by the crisis so they can develop their ability to overcome it,
- promoting vaccine research and development,
- supporting the measures needed to contain the disease;

The joint draft resolution on avian influenza will be adopted by the JPA on Thursday 22 June 2006.

For more information:

Richard Freedman

Press Officer

Austria Center, Vienna

Tel. +43.1.26069.2051/2052

Mob. +32.498.98.3239

**e-mail :** [rfreedman@europarl.eu.int](mailto:rfreedman@europarl.eu.int)