

# Ghana needs US\$14m to prevent avian influenza from spreading

Ghana's The Minister for Food and Agriculture says the country requires US\$14 million to prevent the avian flu disease from spreading beyond Tema and Sunyani. The establishment of a stable enzootic situation and further trans-boundary spread is inevitable because of the weaknesses of the veterinary infrastructures and operational capacities.

Accra - The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) have drafted a six-month Emergency Action Plan for Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza 2005-2006, in collaboration with FAO. The aim is to put in place timely and decisive interventions in order to avoid the development and establishment of a more serious situation in the near future with the spread of the disease to the districts, regions and even to neighboring countries.

Addressing a press conference held in Accra on avian influenza he said 'It is specifically based on the containment of actual outbreaks and the prevention of new ones through adequate response, strengthening of surveillance measures and increased awareness of all stakeholders for immediate alert and response actions to any outbreak which may occur in the country'.

The minister expressed concern that the location of the last confirmed avian influenza outbreak at Sunyani is close to Dormaa Ahenkro District, which is one of the most important sites for poultry products in the country. Dormaa Ahenkro has 190 commercial poultry farms with an estimated chicken population of around 1.57 million birds, of which 90% are layers.

In response to the outbreak, he said the Veterinary Service is conducting active surveillance activities involving sample collection from poultry farmers in the areas surrounding the outbreak farms. The Ghana Health Service (GHS) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) are also conducting health screening of the people on the affected farms as a precaution. He said that despite the economic challenges, the government has managed to allocate almost 350 million cedis compensation to farmers whose poultry or poultry products had to be destroyed as part of the containment efforts.

Despite these efforts, the fact remains that Ghana is unable on its own to meet the total costs of eradicating the outbreak. Other measures include implementing the recommended FAO/OIE strategy for HPAI control and eradication, which comprise depopulating contaminated farms, plus decontamination, cleaning and active disease surveillance of the affected farms, and others.

This means that the country needs another US\$14 million in order to accomplish these goals.

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