

Who makes decisions about intra-EU cattle trade?

The aim at the beginning was to define which stakeholders are involved in the decision processes related to cattle trade in Europe.

From the outset, it turned out that the terms used in this work had to be redefined. For example, the subject is not EU cattle import but it has been generalized to European intracommunity cattle trade.

At present, the scientific literature does not identify the stakeholders nor explains the processes related to the decision making for cattle trade. As a consequence, a strategy was developed in order to collect the information.

The strategy consists of creating a common questionnaire that can be used as a basis for interviews and that can also be answered online as an anonymous questionnaire.

This questionnaire should allow a better understanding of the decision-making process for European intracommunity cattle trade and will provide a solid background to complement the research already carried out by the SOUND Control Project in order to advance the use of output-based surveillance to control non-regulated diseases of cattle in the EU.

Today, our understanding of non-regulated diseases is taking on a new dimension with the implementation of the Animal Health Law (AHL: Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the Parliament and Council).

The European Institutions have now included this disease in the list of transmissible animal diseases listed at European Union level. As such, paratuberculosis is categorised in E (notification, surveillance, and reporting) on a scale of A to E, for bovine, ovine and caprine species.

BVD and IBR are categorised in C, D and E. Categories C and D mean that measures are needed to prevent it from spreading on account of its entry into the Union or movements between Member States.

The questionnaires do not focus on a specific non-EU-regulated disease. Indeed, each country has a different strategy in place for each non-EU-regulated disease, and it appears that some countries have decided to implement eradication programmes for most of the non-regulated diseases at EU level, while others have focused on the most important diseases such as BVD and IBR. Paratuberculosis also shows great disparity at European level in terms of control and eradication programmes.

In this way, the questionnaires can give us an overview of the decision-making process for intracommunity cattle trade in relation to different non-EU-regulated diseases

Responses may differ depending on the stakeholder concerned and indirectly the questionnaires will allow diseases to be ranked according to their importance at national level or even regional level.

In Germany, IBR and BVD have national control programs. This allows Johne's disease, a non-notifiable disease, to be a priority in many federal states. The Federal State of Lower-Saxony also quotes that it would also be interesting to have a structured control program for Q fever.

In France, there are different choices for each GDS, depending on the funding available, the epidemiological situation of their departments with regard to other diseases, the expectations of livestock farmers, the types of farming, the constraints... In terms of voluntary actions, the priorities are not necessarily the same from one department to another, or from one region to another.

As the meetings progressed, it became clear that the main stakeholder in the decision on EU-intracommunity cattle trade was the farmer himself. It was therefore decided to carry out 2 questionnaires:

- A Top-down Approach for defined stakeholders
- A Bottom-up Approach for farmers

It was discussed that the best option for both questionnaires might be a semi-quantitative combined with open question.

1. Top-down Approach

The objective is to condense the questions as much as possible in order to have a questionnaire that responds to our problem while allowing the interviewees not to spend too much time on it.

This questionnaire is devised in 3 Groups:

- Group 1: Background information
- Group 2: Understanding the trade decision process
- Group 3: Mechanisms to influence decision-makers

a. Group 1

The Group 1 questions aim to define which is answering the questionnaire.

In this group, we have to define which stakeholders are targeted by our questions. The stakeholders are as follows:

- Livestock industry
- Academia
- National reference Laboratory
- Laboratory
- Veterinary authority
- Ministry

These stakeholders might more or less influence the decision-making process, and this depend on the country and the non-EU-regulated disease concerned.

If we have a look to the Netherlands, the government does not take part in this engagement Programme for paratuberculosis: this control programme is driven by the dairy industry.

However, in most cases, it is the government that leads the control programmes.

In Germany, for example, the elimination of BVD and IBR became compulsory but there is no compulsory required testing bevor importing cattle.

In Wallonia, ARSIA is run by breeders, it supports livestock farmers in animal health issues. Belgium is a good example. If the country of origin has an official BVD control plan, these guarantees can be given by certificates from the health authorities of the country of origin (examples: Germany or Luxembourg). In other cases, the bovine animal to be imported must be tested for BVD before it is introduced into a Belgian herd.

Furthermore, in order to cover a wide range of stakeholders, it was necessary to define the term "livestock industry". For the moment the following categories have been identified, but this could be change:

- Beef industry
- Dairy industry
- Breeders Association
- Cattle trade organisation
- Auction sale companies

1. In which country do you work ?

2. In which sector do you work?

- Livestock industry
 - Beef industry
 - Dairy industry
 - Breeders Association
 - Cattle trade organisation
 - Auction sale companies
- Academia
- National reference Laboratory
- Laboratory
- Veterinary authority
- Ministry
- Other

b. Group 2

The first part of this question is in the form of "open questions" and is "When a farmer imports one or more cattle from another EU country, how do the following contribute to the decision-making process?"

The "open question" format will allow as much detail as possible to be provided on how decisions are made on intracommunity cattle trade. Using the responses, it will then be possible to generate flowcharts to represent the connections between each stakeholder.

When considering the risk to the health of a herd, there are several means by which these risks can be introduced to a herd or spread within the herd. Exposure area could be feeds, water, animal contacts, wildlife, etc. An important source of risk for non-EU-regulated diseases is the introduction of new animals.

The health status of imported cattle is not checked for non-EU-regulated diseases and quarantine is not carried out before they are introduced into the herds, as it is not mandatory.

For example, for Johne's disease, the introduction of a new animal is considered to be one of the most important risks of introducing Johne's disease into a farm.

Many Johne's disease control programmes seek to reassure trade in animals by guaranteeing 'low risk' status. This status is national, and it turns out that every guarantee scheme is different. It is therefore important to know how stakeholders quantify the problem of introducing a disease into a herd by importing an animal from a different European country.

Question 2 therefore seeks to quantify the perceived risk of introducing a disease by introducing an animal from a different European country into the country.

2. Is there a risk of introducing a disease into your country when cattle are purchased from other EU countries?

Negligible risk	Minimal risk	Neutral	Moderate risk	Large risk
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In addition, it also seems interesting to know how stakeholders are concerned about the risk of introducing a non-EU-regulated disease by importing from other EU-countries.

3. How concerned are you about introducing a disease into your country when cattle are purchased from other EU countries?

Not concerned	A little concerned	Neutral	Moderately concerned	Very concerned
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

c. Group 3

This group should allow the description of the mechanisms that influence decision-makers.

It could be interesting to know if there are non-EU regulated disease control programmes in a country that in some way encourage or discourage the import of cattle from certain other EU countries.

As far as BVD is concerned, it seems that some intracommunity EU cattle trade is facilitated between countries if they have eradication programmes, this is the case of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany for example.

For example, in Germany, IBR has had a control programme since 1997. In the Ordinance there is a paragraph for the movement of breeding and productive cattle that do not come from BHV1-free regions.

originate. The regulation states:

- Each cattle to be moved to the BHV1-free region must not have been vaccinated against BHV1.
- There must have been no clinical or pathological signs of BHV1 infection on the holding of origin in the previous 12 months.
- The animals to be moved must have been kept in an isolation facility approved by the competent authority for the 30 days immediately prior to the movement (quarantine!)
- No animal shall show clinical signs of BHV1 infection during the isolation period.

- All animals in this isolation facility must be tested serologically for BHV1 infection with negative results at the earliest on the 21st day after the last animal was placed in isolation.

In addition, there are recommendations for quarantine measures. Additional voluntary blood test before placing in quarantine, because if only one animal has a positive result in the quarantine blood test (from the 21st day after placing in quarantine), the whole group of animals must not be moved.

However, what is more subtle, is whether control programmes discourage intracommunity cattle trade with certain countries.

If control programmes have an influence of whether some cattle could be introducing from an other EU country, it has to be described how this mechanism is built.

From the beginning, the questionnaire was quite general and did not point to any particular disease, however it seems interesting for the mechanisms of encouragement and discouragement that the interviewees give examples of diseases with their mechanism.

1. There are non-EU regulated disease control programmes in my country that in some way encourage the import of cattle from certain other EU countries.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you think control programmes (CPs) encourage trade with certain countries? Please provide examples of CPs for non-EU regulated diseases that could illustrate these mechanisms.

Another question, based on the same pattern, deals with discouragement.

The next question was whether or not control programmes build trust and whether other tools can influence trust in cattle trade. One possible answer to this is certification programmes.

As the introduction of a positive animal is one of the main sources of contamination, certification or classification of herds are essential concepts for control programmes based on risk control strategies.

Regarding Johne's disease, some classification programmes aim to ensure the quality of a product, while others allow the risk level of a farm to be "assured" so that animals considered to be at low risk of Johne's disease can be traded.

It seems that some certification schemes have a good reputation at European level and help to reassure confidence in cattle trade at an EU-level but also above. If we take the example of the UK, which is no longer part of the European Union, it appears that the quality of its classification programme allows it to maintain a leading position in cattle trade with European Union countries. A lot of beef cattle with high pedigree are sent to Germany every year. The English certification programme is therefore internationally renowned, and this allows them to export their animals.

The main objective of the top-down approach is to define the role of each stakeholders in the decision-making process of cattle trade in the EU regarding non-EU-regulated diseases.

An important aspect of this questionnaire is to define all the important stakeholders in the decision-making process for introducing some cattle. Depending on the country, the same organisations may or may not have an important role.

2. Bottom-up Approach

This questionnaire is entirely dedicated to breeders. It will enable us to find out more about their motivations for importing animals from foreign EU countries and how they have built up their trust with these countries.

This questionnaire is under discussion. It will be able to be adapted and improved in the coming weeks.

The organisation "La Grande Région" which links livestock farmers and professionals in order to inform, improve knowledge of the rules for the cross-border trade of cattle and help people to meet regional and national health requirements. It links 5 large neighboring regions: Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, and Wallonia.

This organisation shows that there is a lack of information at European level regarding animal trade.

On their website, one can find a brochure containing the procedures for cross-border imports between these regions as well as additional sanitary requirements according to the regions and additional recommendations for farmers.

This document dates from 2013 but seems to me to be an interesting lead. (I think it would be interesting to contact the different partners of this "organisation" to find out if any changes are going to be made to their document in view of the new animal health law and the non-regulated diseases.)

This document also details the health organisation (including indications of the stakeholders making decisions on intra-community trade).

(<http://ma-vache-en-granderegion.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Brochure-GR-final-FR.pdf>)

Such a website can help farmers to find out about health measures in other countries regarding non-EU-regulated diseases and thus reassure them about the "quality" ("free" status of diseases) of imported cattle.

The different objectives of this questionnaire are

- to understanding the trade decision process and relationships with trading partners
- to know CP's influence the decision-making process
- the motivations for trading cattle for foreign countries
- and farmer's awareness about intracommunity-EU cattle trade

Below is an overview of the topics discussed.

a. Understanding the trade decision process and relationships with trading partners

1. Did you buy cattle from a foreign country within the last 5 years?

YES

NO

2. If YES, how many animals did you buy in total? From which country?

3. How did the process work? Was it easy for you to make this trade?

YES

NO

4. Did you want to buy cattle of foreign origin or were you recommended to do it? By whom?

5. Did you contact the seller/trader by yourself or was there an intermediary?

How did you hear about this seller/trader?

Did you do business with them before?

YES

NO

6. What were the factors that made you buy animals from other country instead of doing it locally?

7. What were the factors that you used to select the animals/trader/country? What factors were important for your decision?

8. Did you get all the information you wanted from the seller?

YES

NO

9. Was the information accurate?

YES

NO

10. Was there any other piece of information you would like to have to make your decision?

If YES, what?

YES

NO

11. Do you build a trading relationship with a seller/trader?

YES

NO

b. CP's influence in the decision-making process

1. I am aware with the CPs in place in my country.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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0	0	0	0	0
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How do you get informed about them?

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2. I am aware of the CPs in place in the country with which I am trading.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. The CPs in my country influence who I am trading with.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you agree, please explain how.

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5. Even if I don't know the CPs of the foreign countries I trade with, I find out about the health measures taken by these countries.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

c. Motivations and awareness

1. I am prudent when I am trading cattle from other countries regarding non-regulated diseases.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Animal health is an important aspect when I am buying cattle from another countries.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Do you ask/receive information about biosecurity aspects of the seller/trader?

YES

NO

4. If I receive information about biosecurity aspects, it reassures me regarding the safety of introducing an animal regarding non-regulated disease?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. When I am buying animals from another countries, my peers stigmatize it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. My knowledge about non-regulated diseases is sufficient?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. I would like to know more about the risks involved when trading cattle with foreign countries regarding non-regulated disease.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It seems that the consideration of the risk of introducing a non-EU-regulated disease by buying some cattle is very unknown.

These questionnaires will permit us to know more about the decision-making process of buying cattle from foreign countries and to know if CP's influence it and how.

In my opinion and regarding the work I do for paratuberculosis. There is unconditionally a risk of introducing non-EU-regulated disease in a farm by buying cattle, but a farmer may either ignore it by buying cattle without paying attention or not introduce cattle at all for fear of introducing the disease. Although it is essential to make the farmer aware of the risks involved in the introduction of a new animal, certain "sanctions" linked to the introduction of a positive animal allow faster and more effective prevention.

As the success of any control programmes or eradication programmes is dependent on the synergistic actions of farmers, veterinarians, diagnostic laboratories, breeding associations, food processors and state veterinary authorities among other stakeholders. It is therefore essential to define the role of each stakeholders involved in the decision-making process of intracommunity cattle trade regarding non-EU-regulated disease.