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**Animal Health Matters.**

**For Safe Food Solutions.**

## Towards harmonisation of animal health legislation: Development of a framework for cross-country comparison

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### BACKGROUND

In all countries, legislation provides the basis for assuring animal health and to define public health, food safety, surveillance and trade requirements. Relevant texts include legislation at national, union and international level as well as private standards set by the industry. Regarding the substantial number of possible documents and their relevance for international trade, comparison appears to be relevant to establish the current level of protection among trade partners.

### OBJECTIVE

This joint resident project aims to develop a framework for comparing legislation in animal health.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The development of the framework was guided by the topics covered in the relevant OIE Animal Health Standard and in European legislation, using African Swine Fever as an example. The combination of elements covered in these two sources was expected to cover all main points necessary and likely to appear in similar standards about animal health. A systematic analysis of the two sources allowed developing a list of elements to be included in a framework to assure complete coverage.

### RESULTS

A total of 71 relevant elements were identified and in a first step, separated in eight categories (Table 1). Within these categories, each item was then phrased as a question.

This list of questions is intended to be used when reviewing a document to capture all information relevant for a comparison.

Table 1. List of categories for comparison elements

Categories	Examples of element for comparison
General information about the studied legislation	What is the legislative reference document used? To whom, where and when does it apply?
General information about the country/sub-country area where it applies	Is the country historically free of ASF or free as a result of an eradication programme? Does the VA have authority over all domestic pigs in the country?
Case definition and reporting organisation	Define suspect case of ASF. How is a confirmed diagnosis followed up and traced?
Communication to the public	How is information about an outbreak situation communicated to stakeholders and the public?
Surveillance system in place	What is the monitoring/surveillance system in place? Is there a risk-based sampling strategy?
Control measures in case of suspicion	What control measures are implemented in a situation where ASF is suspected? How is the outbreak to be investigated (epidemiological enquiry)?
Control measures in case of confirmation	Is the country prepared to set up a disease control centre immediately in case of an outbreak?
Control of wildlife	Which measures apply to feral pig populations?
Importation strategy	Which control measures apply to import of live animals? Manure?



Figure 1. Description of a complete comparison process based on a descriptive analysis

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Comparative analysis of legislation and standards proved to be a challenging and time-consuming exercise that requires a systematic and organised process. This framework provides a structured approach for legislation comparison in animal health. It also provides a basis for further descriptive analysis such as a SWOT (Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threat) evaluation (Figure 1).

The method was applied to two case studies: African swine fever (documents from eight countries) and veterinary drug residues in foodstuff (four countries).

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