

# DISCONTTOOLS

“Disease Control Tools”

Executive Summary

05th March 2008

The concept of this project arose from the work of the European Technology Platform for Global Animal Health<sup>1</sup> (ETPGAH) which was launched in December 2004. Since then the ETPGAH has developed a Vision, a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) and an Action Plan to implement the recommendations in the SRA.

Following the publication of the Action Plan, one of the calls under the Seventh Research Framework Programme FP 7 (FP7-KBBE-2007-1-3-03)<sup>2</sup> related to “Optimising research efforts for the development of the most effective tools for controlling infectious animal diseases”.

The International Federation for Animal Health – Europe (IFAH-Europe) submitted a proposal under this call which was for a Coordination Support Action (CSA). In the call, an acronym was developed for the project. DISCONTTOOLS was chosen as an acronym for “Disease Control Tools”.

The DISCONTTOOLS project is a joint initiative of industry and a wide range of stakeholders including the research community, regulators, users and others. It is actively encouraged and funded by the European Commission services. Starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2008, it will be carried out over four years and will provide a mechanism for focusing and prioritising research that ultimately delivers new and improved vaccines, pharmaceuticals and diagnostic tests. The project will make a major contribution to the objectives of the call.

There are three complimentary work strands backed up by the development of a governance and a comprehensive communication strategy.

The first strand will provide a validated database and peer reviewed methodology in order to prioritise infectious animal diseases. Gap analysis is the second strand and will be carried out to identify those areas where information and knowledge of the disease is deficient and where current tools are lacking, inadequate or could be improved. Information will be collected in a standard format for validation and entry into a specific disease database. A detailed analysis will then be carried out for each of the priority diseases to identify gaps in key areas. These first two steps have been developed to a certain level by the ETPGAH and reported as recommendations in their SRA and Action Plan.

The third strand, currently a recommendation by the ETPGAH, is to identify current and new technological tools that may be used to improve the ability to control infectious animal diseases. The work will include the review of existing processes by stakeholders and the development of methodologies to identify and evaluate new technology. Effective identification and technology transfer is essential if new tools for disease control are to be developed.

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<sup>1</sup> ETPGAH - <http://www.ifaheurope.org/EUPlatform/Platform.htm>

<sup>2</sup> [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html)

These strands all contribute to the primary goal of the call. This is to enable research to be optimised by public and private funders in a more effective manner to enable new and improved tools to be developed and delivered for the control of the major infectious diseases of animals, including zoonoses.

The interaction of 5 synergistic work packages (WP) in the project is essential for the successful delivery of the objectives.

The WP1 will establish and maintain effective management and coordination of the project with the involvement and agreement of all stakeholders through an appropriate governance structure.

The aim of the WP2 is to build a disease prioritisation model. The criteria for the prioritisation of diseases will be determined followed by the systematic collection of disease information which will be validated by invited experts (drawn from stakeholders and individuals). At the same time the disease prioritisation model will be developed and once peer reviewed by an expert working group will be placed as a living and evolving database on a public website. Diseases will be scored against the criteria and evaluated by experts in order to produce a prioritised list of diseases. As this will be placed on the website it will enable stakeholders to better understand and agree on priorities, which can of course change over time. If stakeholders manage to target research and thus achieve early breakthroughs, the way we control serious zoonoses may potentially bring huge benefits.

The WP3 goal is to conduct a gap analysis of the priority diseases to identify those areas where information and knowledge of the disease is deficient and where current tools are lacking, inadequate or could be improved. The invited stakeholders' representatives will decide on the critical gaps and seek to influence research in filling those gaps.

A strong coordination between WP2 and WP3 will be the key for an efficient prioritisation model that covers both animal diseases and research priorities.

WP4 will provide a horizon scan for new technologies, in animal health and in other areas such as human health, biotechnology, immunology nanotechnology, crop protection, chemistry, biocide, etc. This will ensure after evaluation its deployment in the animal health sector as early as possible.

To ensure the effective communication strategy and dissemination of information from the project, WP5 will deliver a public, user friendly and updated website providing all the information about DISCONTTOOLS meetings. This will provide information on agendas, minutes and related documents, events, database and the prioritisation model. This work package will also ensure that the information flow between the different groups and stakeholders of the project happens in real time.

One of the main features of the project is the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders who will actively participate in the governance of the project. This will ensure that the stakeholders involved from research through to delivery of new control tools will be able to contribute to the project, agree on the priorities and take important decisions for the future.

DISCONTTOOLS will assist DG Research and the ERA-Net in prioritising research. In addition, DISCONTTOOLS is of interest to DG Sanco in the context of the Community Animal Health Policy (2007-2013) – "Prevention is better than cure". EFSA and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) are also interested in DISCONTTOOLS as it will attempt to prioritise zoonoses and to look at emerging zoonoses.