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Southeast Asia strengthens regional cooperation against Avian Influenza through One Health approach

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Across Southeast Asia, a silent but persistent threat continues to evolve. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) is circulating among domestic and wild bird populations that present sustained risks to animal health, public health, food security, conservation and livelihoods throughout the region. As the virus adapts and expands geographically, it threatens not only poultry farms and wildlife species, but also the economic stability of millions who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The scale of this challenge demands unprecedented regional cooperation. Because livestock value chains and wild bird migrations transcend national boundaries, this shared vulnerability has prompted Southeast Asian countries to move toward a unified, coordinated approach regionally.

FAO and the Government of Singapore lead coordinated response to HPAI

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of Singapore held a three-day â??One Health Workshop on the Multi-Sectoral Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza for the Southeast Asia Regionâ?, with funding support of UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK FCDO)-funded project, Quadripartite Support for the Implementation of the ASEAN One Health Joint Plan of Action. Running from 20 to 22 January 2026, the

workshop brought together over 100 experts, policymakers, and technical partners on avian influenza, wildlife biology livestock production and public health experts from Southeast Asia and regional and international organizations and institutions to strengthen regional coordination and address the sustained risks posed by HPAI. These include representatives from the region, Harbin Veterinary Research Institute, Hokkaido University, World Health Organization (WHO), and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), WOAH/FAO Network of Expertise on Animal Influenza (OFFLU), among others.

Workshop recommendations support the operationalization of regional frameworks which aim to provide a coordinated mechanism for managing avian influenza risks across Southeast Asian countries, strengthening veterinary services, advancing One Health collaboration, and ensuring evidence-based regional action.

"The recent evolution of highly pathogenic avian influenza representsÂ*ecological expansion*Â of HPAI to species and ecosystems that had historically not experienced such infections resulting in wildlife population impacts. In the Asia region, avian influenza viruses continue to pose a risk to food systems, economies, livelihoods, and public health across Southeast Asia," said Dr. Scott Newman, Senior Animal Production and Health Officer from FAO. "No single ministry and no single country can manage this alone. This workshop brings together animal health, public health, wildlife health and environment authorities into a single operational space as they transition from policy to practice. Our goal is simple: faster detection, smarter prevention, and coordinated action before outbreaks become crises," Dr. Newman affirmed.

â??Highly pathogenic avian influenza is not a static threat â?? it moves, evolves and often travels quietly across borders,â• said Mr Alvin Tan, Minister of State for National Development, Singapore. â??To stay ahead, our regional response must be designed to fly high, fly fast and fly together. This means taking a birdâ??s-eye view through science and data, moving with urgency through strong bio surveillance and preparedness, and working in formation across countries and sectors through a One Health approach.â•

â??Singapore is pleased to co-host this first regional workshop as part of the regionâ??s collective effort to address avian influenza through a One Health approach,â• said Dr Chang Siow Foong, Director-General, Animal & Veterinary Service, National Parks Board, Singapore. â??Disease risks cross borders through people, animals, and ecosystems. By bringing countries and sectors together in one forum, we strengthen the regionâ??s ability to detect threats early, respond faster, and protect human, animal and environmental health.â•

Over three days, participants reviewed the regional HPAI situation, assessed progress on regional frameworks, strengthened collaboration within the One Health approach, created parts of a monitoring and evaluation strategy, and agreed on key actions and recommendations for national and regional stakeholders to consider when moving forward in the fight against highly pathogenic avian influenza. The program included expert panels, country poster sessions on preparedness and control experiences, and a site visit to Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, which connects migratory bird ecology with disease risk across the human, animal, and environment interface.

â??The UK is proud to support FAO and the Government of Singapore in convening this important event. The workshop and field visits have helped advance a regional approach to preparedness for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza - widely recognised as a pandemic risk. By bringing together experts across human, animal and environmental health, the ASEAN-UK Health Security Partnership is helping countries operationalise a One Health approach to preparedness. Together, we can build resilient systems and protect lives, economies and biodiversity across Southeast Asia.â• This initiative reinforces FAOâ??s commitment to building resilient, coordinated responses to health threats that cross borders and require joint action across agriculture, health, environment, and wildlife sectors. The workshop recommendations are relevant to Southeast Asia and the broader Asia-Pacific region.