

**9th REGIONAL MEETING OF
PACIFIC HEADS OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY SERVICES (PHOAFS)**
(15-17 May 2024 Virtual Meeting)

Paper reference	Session 4 Agenda item 2
Title	Update on the Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Animal Production Services (PHOVAPS) Network
Action	For Information
Author(s)	Elenoa Salele, Dr Sripad Sosale , Reviewed by the PHOVAPS Council

Background

The Pacific Heads of Veterinary and Animal Production Services (PHOVAPS) is a multilateral network hosted by the Pacific Community, Land Resources Division. Its primary goal is strengthening Pacific Island Countries and Territories' animal health and production systems (PICTs), which contribute to sustainable livelihoods, food and nutrition security, and the resilience of Pacific communities.

PHOVAPS was established in 2006 following the resolutions at the first Regional Conference of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry Services (2005). At the time, ministers recognised the need to enhance the livestock sector, acknowledged the threat of exotic diseases, and recommended continued regional collaboration to prevent pest and disease outbreaks. Unfortunately, the network became inactive due to resource constraints, limiting PICTs' ability to coordinate and implement initiatives related to the Pacific's animal health, production, welfare, and biosecurity.

However, in 2021, PHOVAPS was re-established in response to concerns expressed during the Pacific Head of Agriculture and Forestry Services (PHOAFS) meeting. The PHOAFS highlighted the lack of capacity in the surveillance and management of zoonotic diseases and animal health and urged SPC to expand animal health services as quickly as possible. Urging SPC LRD to expand animal health services, the PHOAFS emphasised the critical need for veterinary services. In collaboration with PHAMA Plus, SPC conducted consultations and assessments with member countries and territories. As a result, key animal health and production priorities were identified and consolidated into the Pacific Animal Health and Production Framework (PAHPF). Additionally, PICTs agreed to revive PHOVAPS, establishing new mission and operational priorities outlined in the PHOVAPS Charter. The PAHPF and PHOVAPS charter were endorsed by the PHOAFS in 2021.

In 2021, the PHOAFS recommended that SPC advance para-veterinary training programmes to address the long-standing scarcity of veterinary and para-veterinary services in PICTs. Collaborating with the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), with additional funding support from the European Union, SPC convened a

workshop of experts in Nadi, Fiji, from 25–27 July 2022. The workshop aimed to review the PAHPF and develop a capacity development plan aligned with identified priorities. These recommendations and priorities were consolidated in the Pacific Animal Health and Production Capacity Building Plan (PCBP) 2022-2025 for consideration by all the 22 Member countries of PHOVAPS. The PCBP outlines regional capacity-building interventions to support animal health and production in PICTS.

The Pacific Animal Health and Production Capacity Building Plan (PCBP) 2022-2025 was endorsed by the PHOAFS in 2023. The reinvigorated PHOVAPS network includes the 22 PICT members' international and regional technical partners.

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the current progress of the PHOVAPS network as a regional technical network.

Key Progress Updates:

Since the endorsements of the PHOVAPS Charter, the Pacific Animal Health and Production Framework and the Pacific Animal Health and Production Capacity Building Plan 2022-2025, several significant activities have been successfully delivered to members:

New Funding

New funding has been secured from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) through DAFF for two years. This funding will facilitate in-person PHOVAPS meetings.

A new Grant Funding Agreement has been secured with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the PHOVAPS Interim Work Plan 2024 – 2025 in coordination with the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI). The grant aims to strengthen the PHOVAPS network's capacity to carry out its core functions and address the long-standing scarcity of para-veterinary services in the Pacific region. Furthermore, the grant will support the region by supporting the role of the SPC Veterinarian.

PHOVAPS Regional Meeting, November 2023

After a gap of 17 years, the first in-person PHOVAPS meeting was held in November 2023. Highlights from the PHOVAPS meeting included the endorsement of the following :

- **PHOVAPS Interim work plan: 2024 – 2025** - PHOVAPS members endorsed this interim work plan, establishing tangible, achievable, short-term deliverables for the PHOVAPS Network. It will be implemented while the PHOVAPS Business Plan and a longer-term work plan are developed. (**Refer to Annex 1**)
- **PHOVAPS Governance Documentation:**
 - Draft amendments to the governance structure of the PHOVAPS Charter will be considered at the 2024 PHOVAPS meeting.
 - The following technical working groups within PHOVAPS were acknowledged and endorsed: the One Health Technical Working Group, the Pacific Paravet Technical Working Group, and the Pacific Wildlife Network.
 - Terms of Reference (TOR) has been developed for the Pacific Paravet Technical Working Group (TWG). The Pacific Wildlife Health Network has been endorsed by the WOAH PWHN member country representative. The TORs for the Pacific

Animal Health Laboratory Network (PAHLNet) and One Health are under review and will be developed for each Technical Working Group (guided by the PHOVAPS secretariat)

- **PHOVAPS Business Plan:** A consultant will be engaged to develop the PHOVAPS Business plan with funding support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The funding arrangements were finalised in April 2024

PHOVAPS Council

The newly established PHOVAPS Council comprises representatives from three subregions: Melanesia (New Caledonia and Fiji), Polynesia (American Samoa and Cook Islands), and Micronesia (Guam and Kiribati), and a representative each from Australia and New Zealand. These representatives include experts from relevant veterinary services, animal health laboratories, academia, and regional research institutions.

The Council's primary responsibilities are as follows.

- I. **Adopt resolutions:** The Council adopts resolutions related to regional animal production and health programmes that align with country priorities.
- II. **Guide implementation: It guides the implementation of PHOVAPS priorities, including the Pacific Animal Health and Production Framework,** at the regional and national levels.
- III. **Monitor the progress:** The Council monitors animal health and production (AHP) initiatives in PICTS and facilitates feedback reporting to the PHOVAPS secretariat.
- IV. **Maintain linkages:** PHOVAPS fosters ongoing dialogue and networking amongst its members through appropriate communication platforms such as video conferencing, emails, social media, etc.
- V. **Support advocacy, visibility, and representation:** It supports advocacy efforts and ensures visibility and representation in relevant national, regional, and global platforms.
- VI. **Technical Working Groups:** Council members participate in relevant technical working groups as needed.

Additionally, the newly elected PHOVAPS Council has appointed the following officers.

- PHOVAPS Chair: Cook Islands representative, Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, Mrs Temarama Anguna-Kamana
- PHOVAPS Vice Chair: New Caledonia representative, Head of Veterinary Inspection Services, Dr Loise De Valicourt

Summary of activities implemented in the Interim Workplan (2024-2025)

PHOVAPS Business Plan Development

The PHOVAPS secretariat will develop a Terms of Reference at the end of April 2024 which outlines the requirement for a consultant to develop a PHOVAPS Business Plan . This Business Plan will be based on priorities identified by the PHOVAPS members in the PAHPF and the PCBP. The interim workplan will cover a period of two years and address a subset of priorities while the longer-term PHOVAPS business plan is under development. The Business Plan will outline the priority projects over a 5-to-10-year period and identify opportunities for partners and donors to support these initiatives.

Update on the Paraveterinary Training Program

The para-veterinary training programme has been completed for Fiji, the Cook Islands, the Solomon Islands, and Nauru. Paravet training is currently being conducted in Niue. Training for Tonga, Republic of Marshall Islands and Kiribati will also be completed in 2024. Paravet technical training has been successfully delivered with NZ MPI and DAFF support. Under the new grant funding agreement with NZMFAT expanding the scope of paravet training to other countries which include Vanuatu and PNG.

Para-veterinary training 2023 - 2024		
Countries completed and graduated.	Current training	Countries to receive training - 2024
Fiji 25 para vet graduates	Niue 12 in training	Tonga
Cook Islands 5 para vet graduates		Kiribati
Solomon Islands 24 graduates		Republic of Marshall Islands

Infectious Bursal Disease Virus (vIBDV): SPC and DAFF provided a technical response after receiving official country request in July 2023 to an outbreak of a strain of very virulent Infectious Bursal Disease Virus (vIBDV), which was confirmed in the Guadalcanal province of Solomon Islands. The ability of this strain to cause mass mortality events in farmed broiler and layer birds is a concern to the Solomon Islands and the region. The virus represents an imminent threat to Pacific livelihoods and food security. A media alert was distributed to the PHOVAPS network on 15 August 2023 with approval from the Solomon Islands government.

Other Relevant Training and Consultations

Import Risks Assessment (IRA) regional training: Conducted introductory IRA regional training for the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu in November 2023 to enhance the understanding of risk pathways related to importing live animals and animal products. The main requirements for importing live animals and animal products are generally based on an initial import risk analysis for that particular animal/animal product. These requirements may include sourcing from countries or zones within a country free of that specific disease of concern, the testing and certification of freedom from disease, or a course of vaccinations before export. The biosecurity service generally has the responsibility of checking the documentation, together with the arrangement of detention of live animals in isolated animal quarantine facilities, if these are available. The regional training was carried out in conjunction with DAFF and FAO in Nadi.

Global Framework – Transboundary Animal Diseases” (GF-TADS): In collaboration with WOA, representatives of 14 Pacific countries including participants from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, New Zealand, and Australia attended the 7th Sub-regional Global Program – Transboundary Animal Diseases” (GF-TADS) meeting for the Pacific on 2nd November as a back-to-back event with the PHOVAPS Network meeting 2023. The conclusions and recommendations of this have been published at https://rr-asia.woah.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/01-summary-recommendations_gf-tads-pacific_final_20240228.pdf. The PHOVAPS Chair will also be included in the upcoming GF-TADS Steering Committee meetings for the Asia Pacific Region. The Pacific GF_TADS meeting

resulted in a 2-year sub-regional GF-TADs Workplan 2024-2025 (**refer to Annex 2**) developed and aligned to the PHOVAPS Interim Workplan. The PHOVAPS Council will oversee the implementation of the GF-TADs work plan for the Pacific.

World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) Training: In collaboration with WOA, WAHIS training was successfully conducted for 15 SPC member countries under the SAFE Pacific Project from 21-23 June 2023, in Chiba, Japan. The project was able to fund the training for the ten non-WOAH member countries, i.e. Samoa, Kiribati, Palau, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, to improve reporting of diseases to the information system. WAHIS ensures the prompt dissemination of information on potential outbreaks and facilitates decision-making regarding the international trade of animals and animal products by collecting, verifying, and publishing official animal health information, following a standardised process, thus providing high-quality, reliable data. WOA has launched the leading, most technologically advanced reference platform for reporting animal disease and veterinary capacities – the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS)- to support countries in maintaining global transparency and reporting animal and public health matters. This work is vital for SAFE Pacific’s overall aim to provide assistance and support to Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to increase export capacity and improve economic growth by protecting local industries and the agriculture sector from exotic and invasive threats.

Emergency Response Plans (ERP) review: Completed desktop review of generic response plans with FAO and currently working with countries, that are part of the paravet training to update their respective ERPS and holding simulation exercises to aid implementation.

Provision of laboratory consumables to Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa and Niue to assist with surveillance and para-vet training to countries. Animal disease surveillance training has been completed for Samoa and Solomon Islands to enable early detection and response to possible disease incursions.

Inception workshop for Pacific Networked Diagnostics and Support (PaNDaS). Under the PHOVAPS network, the secretariat of PHOVAPS supported the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) to operationalise this Pacific Animal Health Laboratory network. This network provides advice and support and develops specific plans for animal health and animal biosecurity laboratories and relevant departments in PICTs to build field diagnostic capacity and collect and send samples to laboratories for testing. The Inception workshop was held in Noumea in March 2023.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) approved training in the packaging and transporting of infectious substances in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Academy of Australia. Fourteen countries have completed the first phase of this training which focused on strengthening and enhancing laboratory services to mitigate these threats. The second phase of the training is to commence in June 2024. The training addresses the timely transport of biological samples and provides and renews sample transport certification for participants. Participants include the Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Recommendations:

The PHOVAPS are invited to note the consolidation of activities and progress of the PHOVAPS Network.

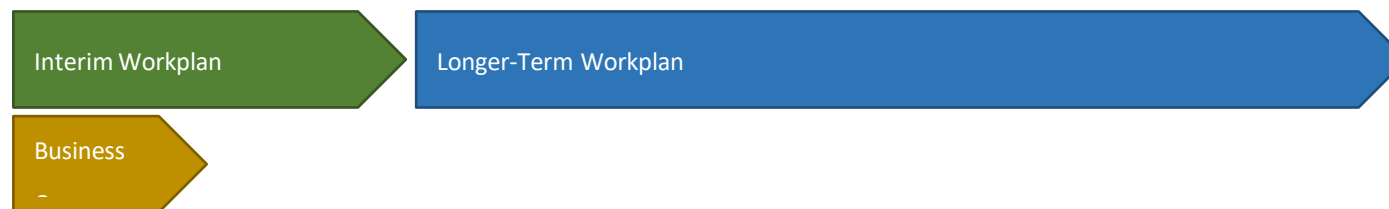
ANNEX 1: PHOVAPS Interim Workplan 2024 - 2025

Priorities	Focus Action Areas	Deliverables	Implementation Timeframe
<p>Increase Paraveterinary capability in the Pacific region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCBP Recommendation 3 PAHPF Key Result Area 11 <p><u>Technical Working Group</u> <u>Alignment:</u> PACVET/Paravet & One Health.</p>	<p>SPC, member countries, and partners to implement an integrated para-veterinary training scheme.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of hands-on-training using the SPC Para-veterinary Training program to 7 PICTs by the end of 2024. Explore accreditation pathways that will allow recognition of para-veterinary training across all PICTs Relevant PHOVAPS technical working group to scope ongoing professional development for para-veterinarians (e.g. practical experience in other PICTs). <p><i>These deliverables to be reflected in the PHOVAPS Business Case.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Half 2025 1st Half 2025 1st Half 2025
<p>Strengthen in-country technical capacity in livestock production, animal husbandry, safe animal slaughter, and meat inspection processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCBP Recommendation 8 PAHPF Objective 4 PAHPF Key Result Area 7 <p><u>Technical Working Group</u></p>	<p>SPC, member countries, and partners to coordinate and develop resources to enable PICTs to strengthen technical capacity of farmers, livestock officers/paraveterinarians, abattoir/slaughterhouse workers, and meat safety inspectors.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> PHOVAPS Secretariat to develop SOPs for their coordinating role in this space. Collate and review regional resources that support ongoing education and training of farmers, livestock officers/paraveterinarians, abattoir/slaughterhouse workers, and meat safety inspectors (e.g. including tools such as a meta-analysis, gap analysis, and case studies). <p><i>These deliverables to be reflected in the PHOVAPS Business Case.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Half 2024 1st Half 2025

<p><u>Alignment:</u> Animal production, AnGR, Welfare, & One Health.</p> <p>Operationalisation of functional biosecurity (animal disease) surveillance systems in the Pacific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAHPF Objective 1 • PAHPF Key Result Area 1 <p><u>Technical Working Group</u> <u>Alignment:</u> Biosecurity, PAHLNet, & One Health.</p>	<p>SPC, member countries, and partners to coordinate and develop resources to inform biosecurity capacity building and to support animal disease surveillance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. PHOVAPS Secretariat to develop SOPs for their coordinating role in this space. 7. SPC and partners to develop and implement a point in time survey of member countries to determine the history of animal disease surveillance in PICTs (e.g. date of most recent disease surveillance activities), in-country biosecurity surveillance capability, and in-country biosecurity testing capacity. <p><i>These deliverables to be reflected in the PHOVAPS Business Case.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. 1st Half 2024 7. 2nd Half 2024
<p>Increase veterinary capacity in the Pacific region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCBP Recommendation 1 • PCBP Recommendation 2 • PAHPF Key Result Area 11 <p><u>Technical Working Group</u> <u>Alignment:</u> PACVET/Paravet, & One Health.</p>	<p>SPC, member countries, and partners to coordinate to develop resources that will support longer-term PHOVAPS work to increase Pacific veterinary capacity.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. PHOVAPS Secretariat to develop SOPs for their coordinating role in this space. 9. Development of a policy paper that examines issues responsible for low veterinary capacity in the Pacific region and explores strategies to address these issues (e.g. veterinary response network, tele-vet services network). This paper will collate and synthesise the evidence base that will inform the longer-term PHOVAPS workplan. <p><i>These deliverables to be reflected in the PHOVAPS Business Case.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. 1st Half 2024 9. 2nd Half 2025

ANNEX 1.B: IMPLEMENTATION OF PAPHF AND PCBP PRIORITIES

PHOVAPS Priorities	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030 +
PCBP 3: Develop an integrated paravet training scheme.							
PCBP 8: Improve livestock production and animal husbandry.							
PAPHF 1: Operationalisation of efficient and functional biosecurity surveillance systems in the Pacific.							
PCBP 1: Support for national veterinary services.							
PCBP 2: Pacific rapid response team / mobile veterinary unit.							
PHOVAPS Business Case							
PCBP 4: Establish and implement animal welfare standards.							
PCBP 5: Establish slaughterhouses, training in humane slaughter and meat inspection.							
PCBP 6: Improve diagnostic capacity.							
PCBP 7: resourcing, management and coordination.							
PAPHF: Other priorities identified in the PAPHF							



ANNEX 2: PROPOSED SUB-REGION GF-TADS WORKPLAN FOR THE PACIFIC 2024 – 2025.

Objective 1	Establish strategies for priority TADs at the Regional and Sub-Regional level.				
Expected Product/Result	1. TADs prioritisation facilitated/coordinated. 2. Regional and sub-regional TAD control strategies are formulated in alignment with global and regional strategies 3. Mechanisms for harmonisation/coordinated planning established				
Activities		2024	2025	Lead Organisation	Comments
Pacific	Sub-regional GF-TADs Meeting (PHOVAPS)	○		WOAH, FAO	
	Develop or update (sub-)regional strategies or roadmaps of priority TADs for the Pacific.			SPC	
	Participate in the development of a new AI Global Strategy.		○	WOAH, FAO	
	Sub-regional risk pathway				
	Emergency Preparedness & Response Program				
	Training and awareness for priority TADs (ASF, Avian diseases, FMD, LSD, PPR, rabies)				
	Animal Health and Production Legislation				
	Strengthen biosecurity practice in aquaculture.				

Objective 2	Develop and strengthen to prevent and control TADs				
Expected Product/Result	1. Capacity gaps are identified, and priorities for capacity building are addressed. 2. Strengthening capacity of laboratory and epidemiology for prevention and control of TADs. 3. Multi-disciplinary planning for preventing and controlling priority TADs is strengthened. 4. Providing harmonised mechanisms/tools to monitor the control of priority TADs.				

Activities		2024	2025	Lead Organisation	Comments
Pacific	Participate in the annual Regional Avian Disease meeting/workshop.	○	○	WOAH, FAO	
	Veterinary Legislation Support (Vanuatu, Fiji, PNG)	○	○	WOAH	VLSP Support Program
	Participate in a Standing Group of Experts meeting for ASF (twice a year)			WOAH, FAO	
	Participate in regional workshops or training for LSD.	○/□		WOAH, FAO	
	Establish and strengthen the roles of leading laboratories for each priority disease if they do not exist.	○		SPC, ACDP	
	Information sharing on novel scientific data or control measures				
	Apply “Strengthening biosecurity”, “Compartmentalisation”, etc.	○/□		WOAH	
	Raising awareness of AMU/AMR in aquaculture	○/□		WOAH	
Objective 3	Improve the sustainability of priority TAD strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships.				
Expected Product/Result	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen engagement and coordination with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector. 2. Strengthening coordination amongst FAO and WOAHA at the global level and the regional level 3. Improve policy dialogue to advocate the TADs control for Members. 4. Promote Sustainable funding mechanisms 				
Activities		2024	2025	Lead Organisation	Comments
Pacific	Resource mobilisation to improve diagnostic capacity for aquatic diseases				
	Apply for WOAHA endorsement of Official Control Program/ Disease-free status for PPR and FMD.				

Legends: ●= Physical (completed), ○= Physical (planned), □= Virtual (planned), ■= Virtual (completed), x = pending, Δ = ongoing

Objective 3	Improve the sustainability of priority TAD strategies through multi-disciplinary partnerships.				
Expected Product/Result	5. Strengthen engagement and coordination with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector. 6. Strengthening coordination amongst FAO and WOAHA at the global level and the regional level 7. Improve policy dialogue to advocate the TADs control for Members. 8. Promote Sustainable funding mechanisms				
		2024	2025	Lead Organisation	Comments
	Activities				
Pacific	Resource mobilisation to improve diagnostic capacity for aquatic diseases				
	Apply for WOAHA endorsement of Official Control Program/ Disease-free status for PPR and FMD.				

Legends: ●= Physical (completed), ○= Physical (planned), □= Virtual (planned), ■= Virtual (completed), x = pending, Δ = ongoing

PHOAFS 9/Working Paper 4.2
15-17 May 2024

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH