

RISK ANALYSIS IN ANIMAL HEALTH: THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICA?

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Risk analysis originated in the aerospace industry following the loss of life due to a fire on Apollo flight AS-204 in 1967. The tool was later developed in the nuclear industry for the reactor safety. It reached the animal health sector through the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement signed in 1994 during the Marrakech agreement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The SPS agreement entered into force with the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 1 January 1995.

The SPS agreement recognises the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as the relevant international organization entrusted with the development of import risk analysis techniques in animal health. The (appropriate) level of protection that countries imposed to avoid ingress of highly infectious diseases through restriction of imports had to be based on scientific principles (i.e. risk analysis).

Development of risk analysis studies requires available data, teamwork, as well as specific skills. One can understand the impact of such studies in terms of access to market for specific commodities and in terms of protection against transboundary diseases introduction.

We assessed the extent to which risk analysis is used in Africa in compliance with OIE standards and guidelines, through a study based on two approaches. A questionnaire evaluating the capacity, capacity building and the risk assessment studies produced or received was carried out through all the African countries. In parallel, the risk analysis section of evaluation reports produced by OIE in almost all African countries as part of the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) pathway was analysed.

Results allowed us to draw a picture of the situation in Africa regarding the use of this very technical tool as well as to formulate some recommendations to improve the sanitary protection and the access of African countries to international markets.

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