



# Kenya makes strides towards forming an animal health association

On 9 October 2017, the Global Alliance for Livestock and Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed) convened a half day meeting in Nairobi with 22 private sector representatives, including livestock product manufacturers, distributors and importers, to discuss how Kenya's first animal health industry association should be structured and run. Participants explored the economic feasibility of forming an animal health association, its name, purpose and aims, in addition to deliberating how an association would best represent their interests before government regulatory authorities, and the self-regulation of members to ensure adherence to good industrial practices.

Although Kenya has several industry associations that focus on certain aspects of animal health, none deal exclusively with animal health issues, and especially, the provision of veterinary care. The existing associations, for example, focus on pest control, livestock feed or agrochemicals. The animal health industry in Kenya is therefore lacking an association to lobby on their behalf on issues such as the slow registration of new animal health products, and the prevalence of stringent taxes and duties on livestock product imports. According to Dr Kenneth Mbogori, Director of Metrovet Kenya Limited, a veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturing company, the absence of an animal health association (AHA) also makes it hard to prevent the circulation of counterfeit livestock products, and weed out rogue practitioners in the industry.

The recent half day meeting was a follow up to earlier events facilitated by GALVmed in 2014 and 2016, which brought animal health actors in Kenya together to discuss constraints in getting products and services to livestock keepers. In both the previous meetings, the formation of an AHA was proposed to represent its members, and raise the issue of inefficient animal health service delivery with regulatory authorities.

## Following by example

To provide participants with an idea of how an AHA operates, Andre Westerveld, the President of the South African Animal Health Association (SAAHA), gave a presentation on how and why SAAHA was set up, highlighting the benefits for SAAHA members, such as a reduced cost and time taken to evaluate

applications for animal health product licenses; because of this, SAAHA membership has doubled in the last 6 months. “Non-members are seeing an association that adds commercial value to them, and they are joining it,” says Westerveld. He explained how Kenyan companies could receive such benefits if a similar association was formed in the country.

Led by an appointed independent general manager who is unaffiliated with of

its members, SAAHA has gained credibility among regulatory authorities. The association has also aided the South African Government to form an independent veterinary regulatory body made up of experienced animal health researchers to evaluate dossiers for new products from its members. As a result, the time taken for the registration of new animal health products with regulatory authorities has reduced from about 5-6 years to about 6 weeks.

An AHA can also build an online forum to help members understand the market size and their company’s rank within the market, based on the sales data they provide. Members can then work to improve their sales if they have a low ranking, or work to maintain a top position if they are ahead. For Dr Patrick Mugo of Eagle Vet Kenya Limited, the potential of having access to market ranking data via an online forum is an exciting prospect. “Using the market information to know the market size and your position, you can act accordingly,” says Mugo. He also feels that an AHA would cater specifically to the needs of the veterinary industry, unlike the other associations currently in place in Kenya.

The Kenyan animal health industry players resolved to form their own association largely modeled on SAAHA, starting by appointing a 10-member committee. The committee members were drawn from the animal health companies represented at the meeting. It was also agreed by those in attendance that the committee formed would discuss the aims of the AHA, types of memberships to be offered and their costs, and the pros and cons of its formation. The committee would then present its deliberations in a month’s time (November 2017) to all prospective members.

## Professional services for producers

Formation of the association comes at a time when the veterinary medicines directorate (VMD) has been authorised to take up the mandate of regulating veterinary medicines in Kenya, which was initially with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Kenya. According to Dr Mbogori, the AHA would be able to conduct advocacy activities on members’ including representing their interests before regulatory authorities such as the VMD. This would address challenges such as the lengthy process for registration of animal health products.

According to GALVmed’s Director of Policy and External Affairs, Dr Lois Muraguri, formation of the association will be driven by animal health stakeholders in the country, and GALVmed’s role will be to facilitate their meetings, and bring them together. “Our aim is to have a professional industry where farmers can get quality services delivered to them, because they deserve it,” says Dr Muraguri.

Written by James Karuga



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