Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Object: FAO and IGAD are advising countries to remain vigilant about Rift Valley Fever

10 July 2020

On 17 May 2020, IGAD/ICPALD and FAO released a joint Rift Valley Fever (RVF) alert to IGAD and EAC member states, as well as to key stakeholders and partners, pointing out the high-risk areas and providing key recommendations to increase preparedness for this disease in the region.
IGAD/ICPALD and FAO commend the steps taken following the alert, such as:

- Communication and follow-up made by ICPALD/IGAD with the chief veterinary officers (CVOs) and epidemiologists of high risk member states;
- Activation of national RVF contingency plans in member countries in collaboration with Ministries of Health (MOH);
- Active surveillance and monitoring of local environmental conditions for better identification of risk areas;
- Equipment of RVF laboratory testing kits and reagents;
- Provision of vaccines aligned with the OIE Terrestrial Code and the requirements of trade partners when necessary;
- Increased readiness of field rapid deployment teams;
- Increased awareness of key stakeholders and partners in 'hot spot' areas.

Rift Valley fever is a viral zoonotic disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can cause severe disease in animals and humans, including death and abortion in infected livestock. This epizootic disease in animals, which can spill over to the human population, tends to develop extremely rapidly following abnormally high seasonal rainfall at the local, national or regional scale.

RVF outbreaks can disrupt the livestock sector by depleting future generations of affected herds and therefore constitutes an important socio-economic and food security threat to vulnerable households. The disease can disrupt communities depending on animal trade by affecting their local animal markets. It can also affect the funds directly available to households through their animals and thereby impact their capacities to access health care and child education.

As such, IGAD considers RVF a major threat to the economic development and stability of the region and strongly advocates for a regional approach to supplement national initiatives.

The FAO maintains a system for RVF forecasting based on precipitation and vegetation anomalies, among other environmental factors. During the past six months, most of the Eastern African countries remained at a persistent risk of RVF occurrence due to a rainy season that was the wettest on record since 1981. Exceptional rainfall and floods have enhanced and maintained suitable environmental and climatic conditions that will likely lead to the explosive proliferation of RVF vectors in the region.

The precipitation forecasts for **July -September 2020**, which coincide mostly with the rainy season in Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan as well as the dry season in the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Somalia, predict **above-average rains** for the whole region, particularly in northwestern **Kenya**, eastern **Uganda**, eastern **South Sudan** and southwestern **Ethiopia**. This suggests that the region will continue to remain under threat. The potential risk of RVF for July 2020 is still **high** for the region, particularly for **Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Somalia** and **Ethiopia**.

In particular, the analysis of change detection of the risk between June and July 2020 highlighted the following:

- An area of about **54 000 km^2** still **remains at high risk** of RVF occurrence due to persistent suitability of habitat and climate for vector breeding and development;
- **New areas** are projected to become suitable for vectors with an overall increase of the risk areas of about **15**%;
- About 30% of the area previously found at risk (potential for June 2020) is now at **low risk of vector amplification**.

The largest increase in risk areas for July 2020 is expected to occur in Tanzania (28% increased), Ethiopia (23% increase), Somalia (15% increased), South Sudan (10% increased) and Kenya (9% increased).

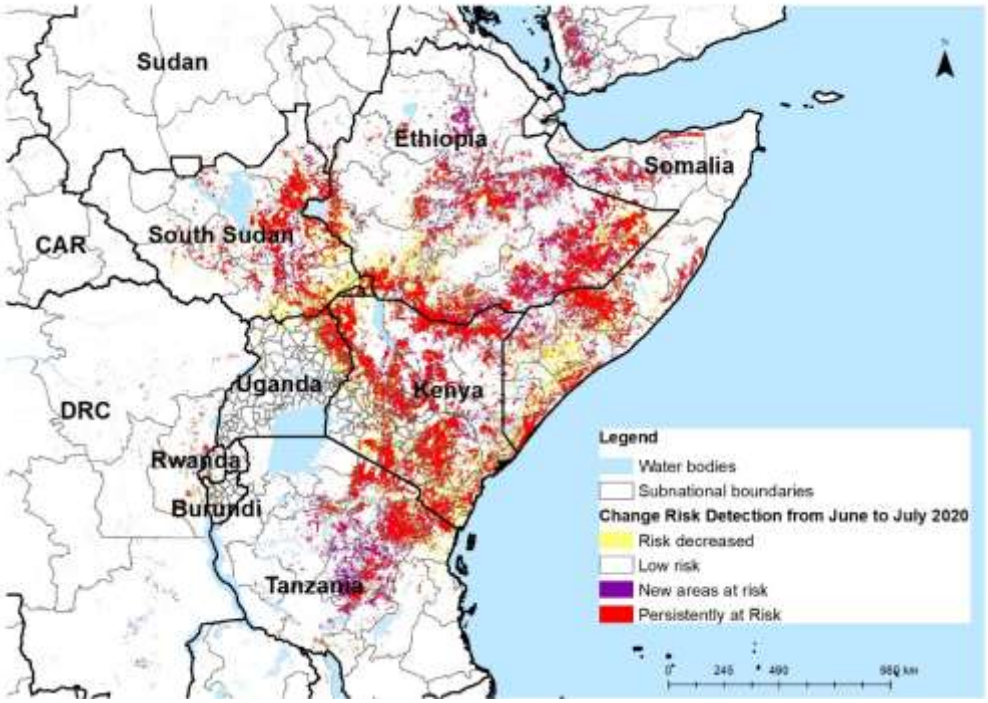

Figure 1: Areas at risk for vector amplification from June to July 2020 (source: FAO RVF Monitoring, Early Warning and Decision Support Tool)

An overview of risk areas for vector amplification by countries is given below:

Country	Moderate risk (new areas at risk)	High risk (persistently at risk)	Total % area at risk for July 2020
Kenya	Tana River, Narok, Garissa, Wajir	Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, Baringo, Laikipia, Meru, Kajado	37%
Ethiopia	Afar, SNNPR	Gambela, Somali, Oromia, Amhara	25%
Somalia	Galgaduud, Mudug, Togdheer, Bay, Juba Dhexe	Juba Hoose, Gedo, Bakool, Shabelle Hoose, Hiraan	20%
South Sudan	El Buheyrat, Central Equatorial, Western equatoria	Upper Nile, Jonglei, Eastern Equatoria	17%
Tanzania	Tabora, Shinyanga, Simiyu, Tanga, Mbeya	Arusha, Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Dodoma, Singida, Iringa	14%
Uganda	Lamwo, Abim, Bulambuli, Kasese, Kabale, Bushenyi, Kabale	Karamoja, Moroto, Kaabong, Kotido, Napak, Nakapirpirit, Amudat	9%

More specifically, FAO and IGAD recommend, as per the RVF expert decision support table (DST workshop, Entebbe, December 2019) and depending on the level of risk of a given area, to apply the follow risk mitigation measures:

Overall risk of occurrence (likelihood + impact)	
Moderate	**High**
Active surveillance (particularly those bordering high risk areas)	Sentinel herds monitoring (during alert periods)
Continue passive surveillance	Continue passive surveillance (enhance syndromic surveillance during the alert period)
Awareness creation ++ Target communication messages Alert of possible outbreaks	Awareness creation+++ Target communication messages Alert of possible outbreaks
Vector surveillance ++	Vector surveillance +++
	Vaccination
Risk assessment/monitoring	Risk assessment/monitoring
Vector control	Vector control
Training personnel on sampling, disease recognition, disease reporting, Personal protection / biosafety	Training personnel on sampling, disease recognition, disease reporting, Personal protection / biosafety

In case of any inquiry on the subject, including the need for technical support or information on the disease and at-risk areas, you may wish to contact the following technical officers from FAO and IGAD:

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Useful links

IRI seasonal precipitation forecast	IRI	https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/seasonal-climate-forecasts/
CPC/NOAA seasonal precipitation forecast		https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/international/nmme/html_monthly/precip_anom_africa_body.html
Real-time monitoring and forecasting of Rift Valley fever in Africa	FAO FCC Information Sheet	http://www.fao.org/3/ca5511en/ca5511en.pdf
USDA/NASA RVF update	USDA	https://www.ars.usda.gov/southeast-area/gainesville-fl/center-for-medical-agricultural-and-veterinary-entomology/docs/rvf_monthlyupdates/
Rif Valley fever surveillance	FAO Manual	http://www.fao.org/3/I8475EN/i8475en.pdf
Rift Valley Fever in Niger: Rapid Risk Assessment Report	FAO Risk Assessment	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/dbd28e22-1784-450e-a7c4-681e39da71f4
CDC RVF posters	CDC	https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/rvf/resources/posters.html
Africa. El Niño and increased risk of Rift Valley fever – Warning to countries	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5282e.pdf
FAO helps countries prevent and control Rift Valley fever	FAO FCC Information Sheet	http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5149e.pdf

The last hurdles towards Rift Valley fever control : 5–7 March 2014. Ad hoc workshop on the current state of Rift Valley fever vaccine and diagnostics development (Rome, Italy)	FAO Report	http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4466e.pdf
Climate Models Predict Persistent Above-Average Rains and Risk of Flooding in East Africa: FAO, OIE and WHO Warn Countries to Remain Vigilant about Rift Valley Fever	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/d181bf2e-e893-477e-b327-97b55d480aa2
OIE Rev. sci. tech. Off. int. Epiz., 2014, 33 (2), 555-567	OIE article	https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8f7b/b3edf7c0d9ed8383bbb6e98016e2fb2252c5.pdf
Rift Valley Fever Vigilance needed in the coming months	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/3/ap392e/ap392e.pdf
Rift Valley fever vaccine development, progress and constraints: GF-TADs meeting / November 2010	FAO Proceedings	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/34229ff6-b1c2-5a71-9768-197cef203eb8
Rift Valley fever outbreaks in Madagascar and potential risks to neighbouring countries	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/e1617dbc-3e26-577c-8d1b-f02921af10c8
Climate models predict increased risk of	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/3c537000-d197-54f2-b044-1bff542e497c

precipitations in the Horn of Africa for end of 2008		
Recommendations of joint FAO/WHO Rift Valley fever outbreaks forecasting models brainstorming workshop	FAO/WHO Recommendations	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/3e25b40f-a572-5242-9c96-c8bfca9a5e81
Rift Valley Fever could spread with movement of animals from East Africa	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/735aab71-3b62-5cea-baab-a4a06f09672e
Possible RVF activity in the Horn of Africa	FAO EMPRES Watch	http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/25ef7f33-117f-58ce-a3ec-81794577c846
Recognizing Rift Valley Fever	FAO Manual	http://www.fao.org/3/Y4611E/Y4611E00.htm
Preparation of Rift Valley Fever Contingency Plans	FAO Manual	http://www.fao.org/3/Y4140E/Y4140E00.htm
Rift Valley Fever (RVF) disease leaflet	OIE Leaflet	https://www.oie.int/doc/ged/D13962.PDF
WHO RVF disease card	WHO	https://www.who.int/health-topics/rift-valley-fever