ADB Turns Over Equipment to Fight Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

Baku, Azerbaijan (10 March 2006) - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today turned over $50,000 worth of protective equipment and supplies to the Ministry of Agriculture to support urgent efforts to address the growing threat of avian influenza in Azerbaijan.

The equipment, provided to the State Veterinary Service for distribution to its regional offices, will help to protect and support workers involved in prevention and control activities, for its workers. The equipment includes 5,000 sets of disposable personal protective suits, disposable safety gloves and N-95 respirators, and 500 pairs of protective goggles. Provided as direct support to the Government’s strategy to combat avian influenza, the turn-over of equipment is the first level of assistance provided by ADB, to be followed with additional longer-term support being developed by a team of donors working closely with the Government.

“ADB is committed to supporting the Government in its campaign against avian flu, with our shared aim to limit the impact on people’s health and the economy”, said Matthew Westfall, ADB’s country director to Azerbaijan. “This equipment will help to protect those fighting on the front-line of the battle against avian influenza, and ensure that their health is protected during veterinary surveillance, poultry flock culling and disinfection activities.”

Working together with global, regional and country initiatives, ADB is formulating longer-term regional and country-level assistance to lower the probability of a H5N1-related avian influenza pandemic occurring in its member countries. ADB’s efforts will support regional coordination among international agencies and countries, and improving capacity for rapid field response and containment of outbreaks as they arise.

The global strategy to control avian influenza and prevent a human influenza pandemic starts with controlling the infection at source and effectively containing avian flu outbreaks, coupled with a strong public awareness and risk communications campaign, timely and systematic surveillance and testing, immediate reporting of outbreaks by authorities, and the transparent flow of information. Sharing of virus samples is essential to rapidly identify the virus subtype, which may aid in the preparation of a human vaccine.

In Azerbaijan, avian influenza is causing significant economic damage to small-scale poultry farmers, threatens the livelihood of many poor and near-poor households, and has placed human lives at risk. A related human influenza pandemic would have a major negative impact on human health, and on poverty reduction throughout the region.

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ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance. Established in 1966, it is owned by 64 members - 46 from the region. In 2004, it approved loans and technical assistance totaling $5.3 billion and $196.6 million, respectively.