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BAGONG PILIPINAS
*Masaganang Agrikultura, Maunlad na Ekonomiya*

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**ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR**
No. 09
Series of 2025

**SUBJECT: GUIDELINES ON THE BILATERAL RECOGNITION ON REGIONALIZATION OF HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) FROM ACCREDITED COUNTRIES FOR EXPORT OF LIVE BIRDS (POULTRY AND NON-POULTRY), ITS PRODUCTS AND BY-PRODUCTS**

**WHEREAS,** it is expected that there will be a world's population expand, with a constant demand for sources of poultry (such as day-old chicks), premium cut poultry meat and eggs, and a need to ensure food security;

**WHEREAS,** worldwide yearly occurrence of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) can impact global food security by affecting the poultry industry and restrict the international trade of live birds and poultry meat, and in turn affect prices and impact national economies;

**WHEREAS,** the occurrence of HPAI from exporting countries and the imposition of a whole country temporary ban limits the sources of day-old chicks, parent stocks and poultry meat, which in turn affects the prices;

**WHEREAS,** in order to ensure food security and ensuring safe trade of poultry and poultry commodities, the Philippines has been guided by the principles of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) for zoning/regionalization, and its application for the movement and trade of local poultry and poultry products from zones/regions which are free from HPAI;

**WHEREAS**, the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC) provides guidelines on the bilateral recognition of country or zone status by trading countries, and official recognition of disease freedom, countries may recognize each other's status through a bilateral process;

**WHEREAS,** the WOAH regionalization guideline assists countries in the establishment and maintenance of different subpopulations with specific health status within their territory;

**WHEREAS**, the Executive Order No. 280 series of 2004, defines the powers, functions and responsibilities of government agencies in response to Avian Influenza (AI); wherein the Department of Agriculture is mandated to prevent, restrict, minimize or otherwise regulate the entry of poultry, fowl, birds, or other animals coming from infected countries or from any other country which are potential or suspected to be, afflicted or carriers of the avian flu virus, including the imposition of total or partial bans on imports of poultry and other animals;

**WHEREAS,** the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and WOAH, provide guidelines on the recognition of areas (zones/regions) free of animal diseases through a bilateral process;

**IN VIEW THEREOF**, and in order to assist the Philippine Government in the evaluation of an accredited country's application for recognition of HPAI regionalization, this Circular is hereby



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**Chief, Records Division**
**Department of Agriculture**

issued to serve as guidance and requirements governing the importation of live birds and poultry, including hatching eggs/day-old chicks, and poultry meat and products, while protecting the Philippines from communicable avian diseases:

## I. SCOPE

This Circular covers applications for recognition of HPAI regionalization from countries that have an existing accreditation from the Department of Agriculture (DA) or Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), allowing the export of live animals, and their products (such as meat) into the Philippines.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Lead Evaluation Officer (LEO)**- refers to a BAI veterinarian (part of the BAI Risk Assessment Team) who is in charge of organizing and carrying out assessments of the animal health statuses of foreign areas or compartments, as well as determining the hazard of opening the Philippines' markets to goods from those areas.

**High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI)** - refers to an infection of poultry by any influenza A virus that has been determined as high pathogenicity in accordance with the Terrestrial Manual.

**Poultry** - refers to all birds reared or kept in captivity for the production of any commercial animal products or for breeding for this purpose, fighting cocks used for any purpose, and all birds used for restocking supplies of game or for breeding for this purpose, until they are released from captivity. Birds that have direct or indirect contact with poultry and poultry facilities are considered poultry.

**Non-poultry** - refers to birds that are kept in a single household, the products of which are used within the same household exclusively, provided that they have no direct or indirect contact with poultry or poultry facilities; and birds that are kept in captivity for other reasons, including those that are kept for shows, racing, exhibitions, zoological collections and competitions, and for breeding or selling for these purposes, as well as pet birds, provided that they have no direct or indirect contact with poultry or poultry facilities.

**Region** - refers to a geographic land area which is identifiable by geographical, political, or surveyed boundaries.

**Regionalization** - same definition as zoning in the WOAH, where it is a procedure implemented by a Member Country under the provisions of WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapter 4.3 with a view to defining subpopulations of distinct health status within its territory for the purpose of disease control and/or international trade. Zoning applies to an animal subpopulation defined primarily on a geographical basis (using natural, artificial or legal boundaries).

**Risk Import Assessment Team (RIAT) -** refers to a unit of BAI veterinarians, created by a Special Order, responsible for the coordination of regionalization and compartmentalization evaluations as required, as well as data collection and analysis, official correspondence production, risk analysis, decision implementation, and



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assistance with the creation of policies, guidelines, regulations related to the processes.

**Accreditation** - refers to the authority of the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) to evaluate firms and establishments based on a set of criteria with the objective of providing eligibility to conduct/undertake specified activities.

**Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC)** - from the WOAH providing standards for the improvement of terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide. The health measures in the Terrestrial Code are used by the Veterinary Authorities of importing and exporting countries to set up measures providing for early detection, reporting, and control of pathogenic agents, including zoonotic ones, in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds, reptiles, and bees) and preventing their spread via international trade in animals and animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.

**Competent Veterinary Authority** - refers to the exporting country's Governmental Authority of a Member Country of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), having the primary responsibility in the whole territory for coordinating the implementation of the standards of the WOAH Terrestrial Code.

## III. PROCEDURES

### A. Application Phase

1. Any request for HPAI regionalization shall be accepted only from DA accredited countries or a recognized authority of the DA accredited countries, allowed to export their poultry and poultry commodities to the Philippines.
2. The Competent Veterinary Authority or a recognized authority of the DA accredited countries shall submit an official request to the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) Director for the application for an HPAI regionalization. All submissions related to the HPAI regionalization requests may be submitted using the online link: ***bit.ly/PH-Regionalization***.
3. In addition to the official request, the following information/description must be submitted:
   a. Scope (indicate commodities and HS Code) being requested;
   b. Veterinary control and oversight;
   c. Disease history (indicate cases and locations) and vaccination practices (if any, especially for HPAI vaccination (brand and type of vaccine used);
   d. Poultry and non-poultry demographics;
   e. Movement traceability (such as animal identification system, reporting protocol, etc.);
   f. Epidemiological separation for (potential) sources of infection;
   g. Surveillance and epidemiological investigations of the detections;
   h. Diagnostic laboratory capabilities,
   i. Disease detection and notification;
   j. Emergency preparedness and response;
   k. Disease control procedures and measures
      - indicate the identification of free, infected, protection, and/or containment zones)
      - stamping out, cleaning and disinfection, etc.



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e. Disease prevention procedures and measures (provide clear description of zoning/compartmentalization implemented in the event of HPAI detection).
f. Existing regionalization arrangements with other countries (If applicable).

**B. Evaluation and Verification Phase**

1. The BAI Director shall forward the request to the Chief of the National Veterinary Quarantine Services Division (NVQSD) and/or Animal Health and Welfare Division (AHWD) that serve as the Unit Leaders of the Risk Analysis Unit. They shall, in turn, assign the Lead Evaluation Officer (LEO).
2. The LEO shall acknowledge the receipt of the application and conduct a preliminary review of the completeness of the documents and information submitted (Annex A. Documentary Checklist of Zoning/Regionalization Application).
3. If the application passes the preliminary information, the LEO and his/her risk import assessment team (RIAT) shall use the HPAI Regionalization Checklist to note the documents/information submitted and indicate the findings whether it is acceptable, not acceptable, or need more information.
4. Once the HPAI Regionalization Checklist is accomplished, an overall result for the evaluation and corresponding recommendations for the bilateral recognition of regionalization shall be determined. The LEO and Unit Leaders shall affix their signatures in the appropriate area of the Checklist Form.
5. If the result of the evaluation shows that the applicant country failed to explain the basis for claiming a specific animal health status for a given zone under consideration and/or there is insufficient information to support that they were able to implement the recommendations in the WOAH TAHC for establishing and maintaining a zone, the BAI headed by the RIAT shall send communication to request for additional information from the applicant. The RIAT may also opt to call for a virtual meeting with the applicant to discuss any information that needs clarification. All of the newly collected information/ documents shall be used by the RIAT to accomplish an updated HPAI Regionalization Checklist and return to item number 3 of the Evaluation and Verification Phase.
6. If the result of the evaluation shows that the applicant country passed the evaluation, the final accomplished form shall be used as the basis to draft the HPAI Regionalization Agreement for the requesting country. The regionalization/zoning arrangement shall be endorsed to the BAI Director and a communication letter shall be prepared to the requesting country/applicant.

**C. Finalization Phase**

1. BAI shall notify the applicant of the result through an official communication, and assisted through DA - International Affairs Division (DA-IAD). The communication shall include the following:
   a. Drafted HPAI Regionalization agreement on: "Animal Health Requirements and Import Terms and Conditions (ITC) in Relation to the Bilateral Recognition of Regionalization on High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) for Poultry and Poultry Meat to be exported to the Philippines from (country applicant)".
   b. Request for the submission of draft and revised Veterinary Health Certificates (VHC) from the applicant for poultry and poultry commodities which reflects the proposed zoning arrangement complementary to their corresponding import terms and conditions.



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2. HPAI regionalization may commence upon satisfactory compliance of the applicant of all the requested requirements, AND upon receipt of the official agreement from the applicant to the "Animal Health Requirements and Import Terms and Conditions (ITC) in Relation to the Bilateral Recognition of Regionalization on High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) for Poultry and Poultry Meat to be exported to the Philippines from (country applicant)".
3. All approved updated VHCs shall be disseminated to all BAI-VQS as reference to all related commodity arrivals from the requesting country.
4. All countries with approved HPAI regionalization shall be posted in the BAI website to serve as public information.

**D. Monitoring and Evaluation**

1. When the HPAI Regionalization Agreement is in effect, prompt submission (upon confirmation of a positive case) of HPAI updates shall be required from the requesting country (a link to the prescribed format is available on *bit.ly/HPAI_reportingtemplate*). All submissions related to the HPAI regionalization agreement may be submitted using the online link: ***bit.ly/PH-Regionalization***.
2. An evaluation of the implementation of the present bilateral/multilateral recognition of regionalization on High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) shall be made on a regular basis, but no less frequently than every two (2) years, in order to determine whether the present HPAI regionalization agreement is satisfactory and beneficial.
3. The HPAI regionalization agreement may be amended by mutual consent expressed in writing at any time in accordance with the countries' respective statutory requirements.
4. Either country may terminate the present agreement by giving written notice of termination to the official veterinary services of the other country. The termination shall be effective **three (3) months** after it is delivered to the receiving country unless otherwise agreed in writing by both countries.
5. In the event of any violation of the obligations concerning the exchange of data referred to in the present agreement (such as but not limited to, violations in the veterinary health attestations, food safety concerns, and non-declaration of existing HPAI cases), the Philippines reserves the right to terminate the agreement at any time without prior notice and with immediate effect.

**IV. REVIEW CLAUSE**

Pursuant to Section 5 of RA 11032, this Circular is hereby issued consistent with the provisions on pilot implementation of regulations. There shall be a mandatory review after two (2) years from the issuance of this Circular in compliance with the provisions for ex-post assessment of regulations pursuant to Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) Memorandum Circular No. 2022-06. Revisions to this Circular shall observe the principles of good regulatory practices set forth in Department Order No. 10, series of 2024.

**V. SEPARABILITY AND REPEALING CLAUSE**

If any portion of this Circular is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portions thereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

All existing memorandum orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof, which are



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inconsistent with the provisions of this Circular are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

## VI. EFFECTIVITY

This Circular shall take effect immediately following the completion of its filing with the National Administrative Register of the University of the Philippines Law Center.

Done this 2nd day of May 2025.

**FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR.**
Secretary

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