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# MoFA, FAO launch digital tool for surveillance, disease reporting in animals

By Pacome Emmanuel Damalie

**T**HE Veterinary Services Directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), has launched a digital application for disease surveillance and reporting in animals.

The Event-based Mobile Application plus (EMA-i+), which was launched in Accra, is a national digital tool for surveillance and reporting of diseases in domestic animals, wildlife, aquatic animals and bees.

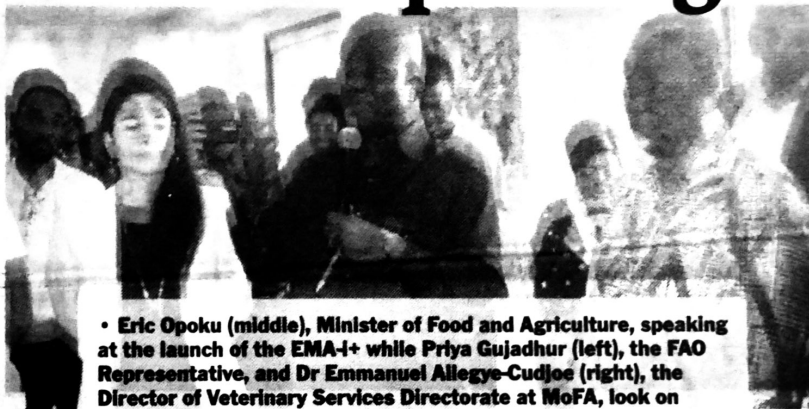
It is designed to enhance early detection, reporting and rapid response to animal disease threats in the country.

It aims to strengthen decision-making in developing countries by facilitating timely information sharing among all stakeholders, frontline animal health and veterinary authorities at all levels.

## Background

The EMA-i+ was first piloted in 20 districts in 2019. The earlier EMA-i application led to a threefold increase in reported disease outbreaks within six months compared to 2018.

In 2023, FAO upgraded the application to the enhanced EMA-i+ version. This upgraded system provided broader coverage, improved features, and a user-



• Eric Opoku (middle), Minister of Food and Agriculture, speaking at the launch of the EMA-i+ while Priya Gujadhur (left), the FAO Representative, and Dr Emmanuel Allegye-Cudjoe (right), the Director of Veterinary Services Directorate at MoFA, look on

friendly interface.

It integrated veterinary officers, community animal health workers, fisheries, and wildlife officers into a single reporting system, making animal health surveillance more cost-effective, efficient, and transparent.

With EMA-i+, reports could be submitted in real time from the field, reducing communication delays, improving data quality, and enabling rapid response to animal health threats.

Over the past year alone, over 900 reports were submitted, covering pigs (four per cent), poultry (10 per cent), small ruminants (59 per cent), cattle (18 per cent), and dogs (nine per cent).

These reports captured several priority zoonotic diseases such as avian influenza, rabies, and bovine tuberculosis, as well as high-impact transboundary animal

diseases, including Peste des Petits Ruminants, Foot and Mouth Disease, and African Swine Fever.

## Milestone

At the launch, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, Eric Opoku, said the innovation marked a significant milestone in the country's journey to strengthen animal health surveillance, enhance early warning systems, and improve disease notification across the country.

He emphasised that the well-being of animals was directly linked to food security, public health, and the national economy.

"In today's interconnected world, animal diseases do not respect borders, and zoonotic diseases pose risks not only to livestock but also to human lives and

livelihoods.

"It is therefore imperative that we equip ourselves with modern tools to detect, respond to, and recover swiftly from these threats," he said.

He indicated that the EMA-i+ would provide the country with even greater capabilities, including "real-time, geo-referenced animal disease reporting; strengthened early warning and rapid response systems; integration of terrestrial, aquatic, wildlife, and public health surveillance and improved national planning supported by credible data".

Mr Opoku added that despite the successes, the ministry and its partners were mindful of the challenges that remained, particularly in ensuring internet connectivity, strengthening laboratory infrastructure, and providing adequate user devices.

"These challenges are real, but they are not insurmountable. The ministry is committed to mobilising resources and embedding EMA-i+ into our broader national animal health strategies to ensure its sustainability," he said.

## Improvement

For her part, the FAO Representative, Priya Gujadhur, highlighted the success of a digital application in improving animal disease reporting in Ghana, saying it had led to a significant increase in timely reporting of disease outbreaks.