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Published in:

International Society for Economics and Social Sciences of Animal Health - Inaugural meeting

Publication date:

2017

Document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Document license:

[Unspecified](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Christensen, T., Alban, L., Boklund, A., Hansen, H. O., Houe, H., Mortensen, S., & Denver, S. (2017). The marketing of veterinary preparedness is an overlooked asset in Danish export strategies. In *International Society for Economics and Social Sciences of Animal Health - Inaugural meeting: Conference abstracts* (pp. 75)

The marketing of veterinary preparedness is an overlooked asset in Danish export strategies

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The Danish food sector had an export value of EUR14.5 billion in 2015. The pig and cattle export accounted for 50% with large parts being exported to markets outside the EU. Access to export markets for animals and animal products depends crucially on the exporting country being able to stay free from serious contagious diseases such as foot and mouth disease (FMD). Officially, export markets can reopen after an outbreak when OIE grants a country status as FMD free. However, importing countries might demand further risk assessments, which will delay the reopening of trade between countries. Hence, trust in a system's ability to prevent disease introduction and spread, as well as in the system's effectiveness during an outbreak could be of outmost importance.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the importance and branding value of animal health standards and control systems in Denmark in relation to access to export markets and re-opening of markets after an outbreak of FMD.

A qualitative study of the main stakeholders in relation to export (people from the main abattoir company; a dairy company; companies specializing in exporting live animals and semen; and agricultural counsellors on Danish embassies representing the Danish authorities) was conducted. A questionnaire survey (18 respondents, response rate 53%) was supplemented with 5 individual interviews and a focus group interview.

Results indicated that there was little economic incentive for improving the veterinary preparedness, if the purpose was to improve market access in peace time or to prepare quick recovery to export markets after an FMD outbreak. Results indicated that marketing of the Danish activities in relation to veterinary preparedness as well as the transparency and open communication of any suspicions of outbreak had economic potential. Also, a "Danish model" with close corporation between veterinary authorities, the agricultural sector and research seems to be a good sales parameter.

**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR ECONOMICS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES OF ANIMAL HEALTH**
INAUGURAL MEETING

AVIEMORE, SCOTLAND
27TH AND 28TH MARCH 2017
CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

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International Society for Economics
and Social Sciences of Animal Health