



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



46th DIRECTING COUNCIL

57th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

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STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PAN AMERICAN CENTERS

TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN FOOD SAFETY PAHO/WHO, 2006-2007

The 136th Session of the Executive Committee (CE136) recommended discontinuing the activities of the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ). At the same time, it requested the Director of PAHO/WHO to reorganize and streamline technical cooperation capacity in food safety at the country, subregional, and regional level, and to submit an update on the planning of technical cooperation for the biennium 2006-2007 to the 46th Directing Council. The current proposal is based on the document RIMSA14/6 *Proposed PAHO/WHO Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007* (RIMSA14/6), adopted by the 14th Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (Resolution RIMSA14.R7). Moreover, it responds to PAHO's new regional budget policy in terms of seeking alternatives that will permit more rational use of the available resources. The formation of a Working Group specializing in food safety is proposed. The Working Group would be physically located in the facilities of the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center in Brazil. Furthermore, international advisers with intercountry responsibilities will be located in Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. Also proposed is the strengthening of global and regional food safety networks for the dissemination of information and training; and improvements in the management and coordination of resources with other internal and external institutions.

Cooperation efforts during the biennium 2006-2007 will be aimed at strengthening the basic components of food safety systems by means of projects in: Evaluation, Management, and Communication of Risks and Education. The political will and decision of the Member States in allocating and promoting the mobilization and coordination of resources at the national, subregional and regional level are a *sine qua non* for progress in reducing the health, social, and economic impact of water and foodborne diarrheal diseases and microbiological and chemical food contaminants.

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Background and Current Situation

1. In recent years, food safety has become an issue of growing importance at the global, regional and national level because of its impact on public health, trade, and tourism. The representatives of the countries of the Americas have expressed interest in this issue and given it priority in diverse forums. WHO and PAHO are responding to the countries' demand for technical cooperation in food safety and the priority accorded it in a variety of ways.
2. In 2000, the 53rd World Health Assembly (Resolution WHA53.15) identified food safety as a priority for technical cooperation, as reflected in its status as one of the WHO areas of work for the biennium 2006-2007. Changes were made to the WHO organizational structure to provide the most effective technical cooperation response in the area of food safety. In keeping with the current trend of comprehensive approaches in food safety encompassing the entire production chain (from field to table), the food and zoonoses units at WHO merged into the recently created Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses, and Foodborne Diseases. The underlying reasoning is that many zoonoses, particularly emerging ones, are foodborne. PAHO adopted this comprehensive approach in 1986.
3. The Veterinary Public Health Unit (PAHO) is responsible for cooperation in food safety. The Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ) is the nucleus for technical and human resources that support program activities, in coordination with the adviser on food safety at regional headquarters, the international country and intercountry advisers in veterinary public health stationed in Barbados, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela, and the national advisers or focal points in veterinary public health in Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay. The international and national advisers in these countries provide comprehensive technical cooperation for development of the regional plans on food safety, zoonoses, and foot-and-mouth disease.
4. In September 2000, the 42nd Directing Council of PAHO adopted the Regional Plan on Food Safety (Resolution CD42.R3) and entrusted its execution to INPPAZ. In 2001, the 43rd Council also adopted Resolution CD43.R5, which approved resolution RIMSA12.R3, and created the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA) as the regional body for intersectoral coordination in food safety.
5. In April 2005, the 14th Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA14) considered the documents *Report of the 4th Meeting of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety* (Document RIMSA14/7) and *PAHO/WHO Proposed Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007* (Document RIMSA14/6). RIMSA14 requested the Director to strengthen technical

cooperation in food safety, particularly at the local level, as a component of the productive and healthy communities approach, and to promote the mobilization of external resources (Resolutions RIMSA14.R2 and RIMSA14.R7).

6. The 136th Session of the Executive Committee (CE136) considered the documents *Strategy for the Future of the Pan American Centers* (Document CE136/12, Rev.1), and *Strategy for the Future of the Pan American Centers: Rationale for INPPAZ Discontinuation* (CE136/INF/8, Add. I, Rev.1).

7. Through Resolution CE136.R8, CE136 supported discontinuing the activities of INPAZ. It furthermore requested the Director of PAHO/WHO to reorganize and streamline technical cooperation capacity in food safety at the country, subregional, and regional level, and to submit an update on the planning of technical cooperation for the biennium 2006-2007 to the 46th Directing Council.

Technical Cooperation Strategies

8. Cooperation efforts during the biennium 2006-2007 will be geared to strengthening the basic components of food safety systems through projects on:

- (a) **Risk assessment:** by strengthening epidemiological surveillance of foodborne diseases and monitoring microbiological and chemical food contaminants.
- (b) **Risk management:** through systematic risk assessment for the development of integrated food safety programs and interventions.
- (c) **Communication of risks and education:** by promoting the adaptation, validation, and adoption of the WHO manual for applying the five keys to safer food in schools, markets, and communities, especially in priority countries and the most vulnerable communities, and by developing programs for presentational and distance learning.

9. The deliberate contamination of foods with chemical, biological, or radionuclear agents can occur at any vulnerable point in the food chain from the farm to the table. The most obvious, immediate effects of biological or chemical weapons are disease and death, economic and trade repercussions, impact on public health services, and social and political consequences. The most efficient and effective way of counteracting many types of emergencies, including food terrorism, is to take sensible precautions, in addition to instituting sound surveillance and response capacities.

10. The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) will be consolidated, in coordination with FAO and WHO headquarters, and the participation of

the Latin American and Caribbean countries in Codex Alimentarius will be promoted and coordinated. The political will and decision of the Member States in allocating and promoting the mobilization and coordination of national, subregional, and regional resources are a *sine qua non* for progress toward the common objective of reducing the health, social, and economic impact of water- and foodborne diarrheal diseases and microbiological and chemical food contaminants. A detailed description of the technical cooperation strategy was presented in the *Proposed PAHO/WHO Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007* (Doc. RIMSA14/6) and in the Official Document *Proposed Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization for the Financial Period 2006-2007*, which will be presented to the 46th Directing Council of PAHO at its meeting in September 2005.

Proposal for the Reorganization of PAHO/WHO Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007

11. The proposal is based on the document *Proposed PAHO/WHO Plan of Action for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety, 2006-2007* (RIMSA14/6), adopted by the 14th Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (Resolution RIMSA14.R7). It is also a response to PAHO's new regional budget policy calling for alternatives that will permit more rational use of the available resources.

12. In the particular case of food safety, given the discontinuation of INPPAZ, the aim is to cut operating costs by using the existing infrastructure and services of the Veterinary Public Health Unit and the PAHO Representative Offices in the countries to improve coordination of the human resources, equipment, and operating systems necessary for technical cooperation in this area. The lower operating costs will make it possible to redirect resources in new modalities of technical cooperation by upgrading the skills of expert human resources, the sharing of experiences, and the mobilization of human resources among countries.

13. The proposal is based on optimization of the Organization's available human and institutional resources at the regional, subregional, and national level; the strengthening of existing epidemiological surveillance and training networks, and better coordination with national institutions of excellence and the WHO Collaborating Centers, in association with other international organizations and the private sector.

14. The existing capacity of PANAFOTSA in terms of administrative services (human and financial resources, procurement, general services, and maintenance); laboratory services, including biosafety; statistics and epidemiological surveillance; information technology (IT) and social communication will address the needs of the three components of technical cooperation in veterinary public health (food, zoonosis, and foot-and-mouth disease) in a uniform manner. In March 2006, the Planning and Budget

Committee will submit a detailed proposal for the restructuring of the Veterinary Public Health Unit.

15. Specifically, the following alternatives are proposed for the reorganization and modernization of technical cooperation in food safety for the biennium 2006-2007:

Creation of a Technical Group Specializing in Food Safety

16. The Technical Group will be headquartered at the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) under the supervision of the Chief of the Veterinary Public Health Unit. The Technical Group will initially be comprised of:

- A professional in charge of coordinating technical cooperation activities in the field;
- A professional in charge of epidemiological surveillance systems for foodborne diseases and inspection systems;
- A professional in charge of testing and quality management in food laboratories, and of distance training and education systems in the area of food safety;
- A national professional in charge of creating, operating, and maintaining electronic systems;
- Two office assistants.

17. Physical space for the Technical Group was found in PANAFTOSA.

Redistribution of Professional Staff to the Countries (PAHO/WHO Representative Offices)

- Creation of a post for an Intercountry Adviser in Veterinary Public Health (VPH), with emphasis on food safety, in the PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Argentina.

18. The main functions of the adviser will be: a) to provide technical cooperation to Argentina in the area of VPH, with emphasis on food; b) to advise the National Food Commission (CONAL) on the preparation of a strategic plan on food safety for Argentina; c) to coordinate the technical cooperation agreement between PAHO and Argentina's Secretariat of Agriculture for training in modern inspection systems; d) to coordinate the consortium of universities for distance education programs in food safety with Argentine universities; and e) to support other activities in coordination with the

intercountry adviser for the Southern Cone, stationed in Brazil, and coordinate the cooperation with other international technical cooperation agencies and the private sector. The emphasis of the consultant's technical cooperation will be on domestic consumption and the international food trade.

- Creation of the post of Intercountry Adviser in Food Safety at the PAHO/WHO Representative Office for the Caribbean.

19. The consultant will work closely with the *Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute* (CFNI), the *Caribbean Epidemiology Center* (CAREC), and the PAHO/WHO Representative Offices in the countries. The adviser's principal task will be to coordinate technical cooperation activities in food safety with national authorities of the non-Latin Caribbean countries, other technical cooperation organizations, and the private sector, with emphasis on: a) setting up epidemiological surveillance systems, inspection services, and the network of food analysis laboratories; b) conducting studies and organizing risk analysis plans (evaluation, management, and communication), and c) organizing and promoting training activities in the investigation of cases and outbreaks of foodborne disease, as well as information, education, and the promotion of food safety. The emphasis will be on tourism and food imports.

- Transfer of the post of Intercountry Adviser in Veterinary Public Health from the PAHO/WHO Representative Office in Panama to the Representative Office in Guatemala.

20. The transfer has already been approved and the selection process for the adviser has begun. The emphasis in the adviser's work will be on food safety, and the work will be carried out in close coordination with the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP) and the PAHO/WHO Representative Offices in Central America. The adviser will also serve as a liaison with the ministries of agriculture, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Regional International Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health (RIOPPAH/OIRSA), and the private sector in the areas of food, zoonoses, and other technical cooperation activities in veterinary public health. The emphasis will be on food safety.

Conversion of Country Posts to Intercountry or Subregional Posts

21. The posts of Country Adviser in Veterinary Public Health in Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela will become intercountry posts, with a view to expanding technical cooperation coverage, especially in the area of food safety, to countries that do not have a specific adviser in this area. A program will be developed to update national and international advisers in the countries, adapting their competencies to technical cooperation needs in food safety.

Strengthening and Expansion of Global and Regional Cooperation Networks and Information Systems in Food Safety

22. In the past decade there have been several initiatives to promote national programs in food safety that have proven very useful in harmonizing procedures, data sharing, evidence-based decision-making, and increasing the transparency of information. The networks are comprised of public and private institutions in the countries, including universities and international agencies. The existing networks are listed below:

Global

- International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) of WHO. Regional coordination: Technical Group on Food Safety, PAHO/WHO;
- Global Salm-Surv (GSS) network of WHO for epidemiological surveillance of *Salmonella* and other foodborne pathogens. Regional focal point: Instituto Malbrán, Ministry of Health, Argentina.

Regional

- Regional Surveillance System for Foodborne Diseases (SIRVETA). Focal point: PANAFTOSA, PAHO/WHO;
- PulseNet network for molecular fingerprinting for surveillance of foodborne diseases in Latin America. Regional focal point: CDC, Atlanta, USA;
- Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL). Regional focal point: PAHO/WHO-FAO;
- Consortium of Latin American and Caribbean Universities for Research and Distance Education in Food Safety. Focal point: Argentina;

- Full-text database of Food Legislation (LEGALIM) for updating and harmonizing standards with the *Codex Alimentarius*. Focal point: Argentina;
- Virtual Veterinary Public Health Library (VHL PANAFTOSA). Focal point: BIREME, PANAFTOSA, PAHO/WHO;
- Distance education system to offer Internet courses on quality management in food analysis laboratories (webcast courses). Focal Point: Technical Group on Food Safety (PAHO/WHO).

23. An added value of the networks is facilitated information exchange in real time in areas of common interest and the development of training programs for the staff of network institutions.

Management and Coordination of Available Resources

24. The following actions are proposed to improve resource management, with emphasis on food safety:

Internally

- Coordinate the planning and execution of activities among the Representative Offices in the countries, the Technical Group on Food Safety, and the coordinator at Headquarters in Washington, D.C., as well as other units, areas, and PAHO's specialized centers (CAREC, CFNI, and INCAP);
- Develop a plan to update the technical staff of the Veterinary Public Health Unit in food safety, with emphasis on knowledge management;
- Expand the food safety webpage of the Virtual Veterinary Public Health Library that is being set up with BIREME support.

Externally

- Strengthen existing cooperation agreements and establish new strategic agreements with national, subregional, regional, and global institutions of excellence, as well as public and private agencies, including nongovernmental organizations;
- Review the terms of reference of WHO Collaborating Centers on food safety and promote greater participation in their strategic initiatives;

- Promote use of the existing expertise in the universities of the countries to promote research and develop training programs.

Distribution of Regular Budgetary Funds (RB) 2006-2007

25. The table below shows the distribution of regular budgetary funds for technical cooperation in food safety.

Level	Posts	Non-Posts technical cooperation	Total
Regional	1,195,084 ^a	438,098 ^c	1,633,182
Subregional		20,000	20,000
Countries	185,956 ^b	445,900	631,856
Total	1,381,040	903,998	2,285,038

^aFour professional posts and one general services post.

^bTwo professional posts.

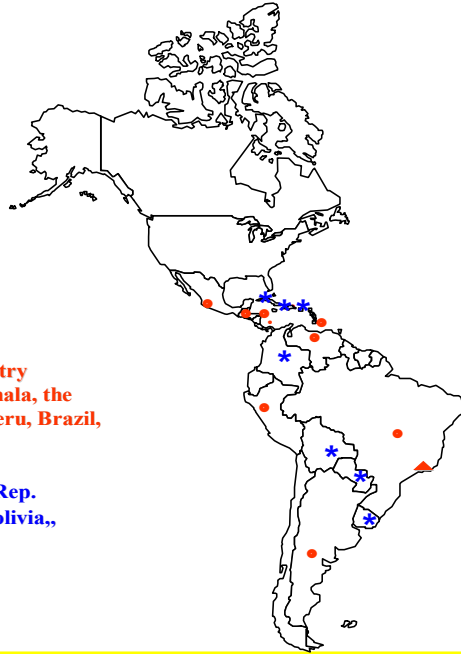
^cIncludes one national professional post and two office assistant posts.

Proposal for Staff Distribution for the Veterinary Health Program Responsible for Food Safety : 2006-2007

▲ PANAFTOSA

• International intercountry advisors: Mexico, Guatemala, the Caribbean , Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, and Argentina

* National: Cuba, Haiti, Rep. Dominicana, Colombia Bolivia,, Paraguay, and Uruguay



WHO Collaborating Centers on Food Safety

1. **WHO Collaborating Center for Risk Assessment and Hazard Identification in Foods of Animal Origin.** Food Safety Research Program - Iowa State University
2. **WHO Collaborating Center for Surveillance, Epidemiology and Control of Salmonella and Other Foodborne Diseases,** U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases, Foodborne and Diarrheal Diseases Branch, Foodborne Disease Epidemiology Team, WHO Global Salm-Surv Team
3. **WHO Collaborating Center on Food Virology,** Food Safety Unit, Department of Population Health and Reproduction, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California
4. **WHO Collaborating Center for Food Contamination Monitoring,** “Bureau of Chemical Safety, Food Directorate, Health Canada
5. **WHO Collaborating Center for Risk Assessment in Food Safety,** Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, University of Maryland – College Park.
6. **WHO Collaborating Center for Food Contamination Monitoring,** Laboratorio Nacional de Salud, Guatemala
7. **WHO Collaborating Centre for Food Contamination Monitoring,** Division of Contaminants Chemistry Center Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, US FDA

National Networks of the Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL)

Based on Articles 2-5 of its Statutes, INFAL acts in the countries through national networks of food analysis laboratories. The following countries have networks:

Country	Name of Network	Since	Contact
Uruguay	National Network of Food Analysis Laboratories - RENLAA	27 November 1998	Dr. Delvey Anchieri - MSP
Venezuela	Venezuelan Network of Food Analysis Laboratories - REVLAA	15 October 1999	Dr. Betsi Bastardo - INHRR
Uruguay	National Municipal Network of Food Analysis Laboratories	1 August 2000	Dr. Nilo Perdomo – IM Maldonado Dr. Gustavo Lancibidad – IM Montevideo
Bolivia	Network of Official Food Analysis Laboratories - RELOAA	23 April 2003	Dr. Maria Rosa Pantoja Vacaflor - INLASA
Brazil	Brazilian Network of Health Analysis Laboratories - REBLAS	6 November 2003	Dr. Galdino Guttman Bicho - ANVISA
Argentina		Not yet established	Dr. Celia Puglisi – INTI Dr. Susana Gandia – INAL Dr. Veronica Torres Leedham - SENASA

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9. Pan American Health Organization /World Health Organization. Resolution RIMSA14.R7. Resources for the the Plan of Action in Food Safety. Mexico: PAHO; 2005.
10. World Health Organization. WHO Global Food Safety Strategy for Food Safety. Safer Food for Better Health. Geneva: WHO; 2002.



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



12th INTER-AMERICAN MEETING, AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, ON HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE

São Paulo, Brazil, 2–4 May 2001

RESOLUTION

RIMSA12.R3

CREATION OF THE PAN AMERICAN COMMISSION FOR FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA)

THE 12th INTER-AMERICAN MEETING, AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, ON HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE

Having seen Document RIMSA12/11: *Proposal for the Creation of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)*;

Considering that major outbreaks of foodborne disease have occurred throughout the world in the past 10 years, alerting country authorities to the need to take steps to prevent the risk of their transmission to the population and economic losses stemming from food contamination;

Considering that the global food safety situation was recently reviewed at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly, which issued a resolution (WHA53.15) establishing food safety as a priority and made corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO;

Taking into account Resolution CD42.R3, whereby the Directing Council of PAHO adopted the strategic plan on food protection for the Region of the Americas and requested the Director to explore the possibility of creating a regional commission for food safety to develop regional policies in this area;

Considering that the creation of the World Trade Organization has spurred the countries to review their policies and adopt the Codex Alimentarius standards as the scientific and technical foundation for guaranteeing that the food consumed by the population is safe, in addition to facilitating international food trade;

Recognizing that a commission at the appropriate level will permit leaders in the health and agriculture sectors, producers, and consumers, as well as international organizations, to collaborate in the development and coordination of technical cooperation in priority areas to ensure that the people of the Americas have access to safe food; and

Taking into account the endorsement of the proposal to establish the Pan American Commission for Food Safety and the extensive discussions on the proposed terms of reference,

RESOLVES:

1. To congratulate the Governments on their decision to give high priority to food safety in their policy agendas and encourage them to organize programs involving all sectors and institutions connected with food safety.
2. To approve the creation of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA).
3. To request the Director of PAHO to:
 - (a) provide technical and budgetary support for COPAIA's operations;
 - (b) convene a small working group to assemble the comments regarding the scope, framework, and terms of reference of COPAIA provided during the discussion at RIMSA 12, and present them to COPAIA;
 - (c) convene a session of COPAIA as soon as possible to assess the comments assembled by the small working group and to draft terms of reference to carry out the work of COPAIA.

(Fourth session, 3 May 2001)



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



43rd DIRECTING COUNCIL
53rd SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 24-28 September 2001

RESOLUTION

CD43.R5

**XII INTER-AMERICAN MEETING, AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL, ON
HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE**

THE 43rd DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having considered the final report of the XII Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (Document CD43/8);

Taking into account Resolution CD17.R19, which authorized the Director to convene these meetings, and Resolution RIMSA11.R3, ratified by the 41st Directing Council, which approved changing the name of the Meeting to “Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture,” retaining the acronym RIMSA;

Considering that RIMSA has been constituted as the intersectoral forum at the highest political level in order to establish, orient, and monitor matters of mutual interest to the agriculture and health sectors; and

Aware of the broad response to the call by the Director of PAHO for the ministers of health and agriculture of the Member States to participate for the first time in RIMSA,

RESOLVES:

1. To endorse the Resolutions of RIMSA 12.
2. To urge the Member States to continue to bolster intersectoral action for the organization and execution of regional strategic plans for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease, the control and elimination of zoonoses, and the monitoring of food safety.

3. To thank the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil for serving as the venue for RIMSA 12.
4. To request the Director to:
 - (a) continue to convoke the ministers of agriculture and health every two years to participate in RIMSA with the object of evaluating technical cooperation in veterinary public health and the performance of its specialized centers, the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) and the Pan American Institute for Food protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ);
 - (b) continue to include food safety, zoonoses, the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease, and other matters related to animal and human health as standing agenda items for RIMSA meetings;
 - (c) support the development and implementation of the plan of action of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety.

(Fifth meeting, 26 September 2001)

ANNEX

Proposed Regulations of the Pan American Commission For Food Safety (COPAIA)

1. BACKGROUND

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is responsible for establishing the orientations and providing technical cooperation in public health. In the area of food safety, at the request of the countries, it is implementing a strategic plan for technical cooperation in food safety for the Region. In order to address the current problem of foodborne diseases (FBDs) and the need to protect health and facilitate the national and international food trade, a Strategic Plan was prepared that was presented and adopted by the XI Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (RIMSA XI) through resolutions RIMSA11.R5 and RIMSA11.R6, by the 126th Session of the Executive Committee through resolution CE126.R7, and by the 42nd Directing Council through resolution CD42.R3. These resolutions request the Director of PAHO "to explore the need for a regional commission on food safety to deal with matters related to the development of regional policies in this area."

Food safety problems were recently discussed at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO), which adopted resolution WHA53.15 establishing food safety as a priority and an essential public health function and made the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO.

Outbreaks of FBDs on several continents, including the Americas, during the past decade have given a new dimension to food safety programs in the countries. The frequency of the outbreaks and their consequences for the health of the population and the domestic and international food trade have led to a review of food safety policies in the countries and of the measures established for the prevention and control of FBDs.

The globalization of markets and the Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) of the World Trade Organization imply that food for domestic consumption and export must both meet stringent sanitary standards. To this end, it will be necessary for the countries to have effective food safety programs in place to guarantee safety in the domestic and export markets.

Since the modern approach to food inspection and control is based on the concept of the food chain "from the farm to the table," it is of priority importance to have mechanisms for coordinating all the links of the chain, especially between the health and agriculture sectors and between these sectors and producers and consumers.

Since 1968 PAHO has been convening RIMSA, originally known as RICAZ, with the participation of the ministers of agriculture and some ministers of health. Since RIMSA XII, pursuant to resolution RIMSA11.R3, the ministers of health have formally participated, with the object of evaluating and adopting the program and budget of the regional veterinary public health program of PAHO. RIMSA has become the intersectoral forum for health and agriculture at the highest political level of the Region of the Americas.

In 1987, resolution RIMSA5.R13 empowered the Director of PAHO to create the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease in order to muster the political will to eradicate this disease from South America and prevent its introduction into countries free of foot-and-mouth disease in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. The activities of this Committee have been fundamental in encouraging the countries to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease in South America.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Commission is to contribute to improving the safety of food for domestic consumption and export by maintaining the political will of the countries of the Region to set up integrated food safety programs as an essential function of the health and agriculture sectors, to apply the technical aspects of the programs, to promote coordination with producers and consumers, and to facilitate the execution of PAHO's regional plan for technical cooperation in food safety.

3. OBJECTIVES

- Promote the organization of food safety programs as an essential activity for the inspection and control of food for domestic consumption and export in all the countries of the Region.
- Promote and strengthen intersectoral coordination at the different links of the food chain.
- Promote coordination and partnerships with other national, international, and binational organizations for technical cooperation programs in food safety.
- Define the policies needed to successfully implement the technical aspects of food safety.

- Review and evaluate the countries' progress in food safety.
- Promote collaboration among the countries for food safety.

4. FORMATION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission is an Advisory Body of RIMSA. The Director of PAHO appoints the members of the Commission on a rotating basis. The Commission will be comprised of a minister of health and a minister of agriculture from each of the subregions: North America, the Andean Area, the English-speaking Caribbean, the Southern Cone, and Central America and the Latin Caribbean, together with a representative of both food producers and consumers for each of these same subregions.

The subregions are defined as follows: North America (Canada, the United States, Mexico), the Andean Area (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela), the English-speaking Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago), Central America and the Latin Caribbean (Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama), and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay).

Two representatives are selected from the private sector, one for the producers/processors and one for the consumers of each subregion. Given the wide variety of products and processes, an effort should be made to ensure that the two representatives cover the different types of food produced.

Ministers of Agriculture and Health from Member States that are not members of the Commission and representatives of international technical, and financial cooperation agencies such as FAO, IICA, OIRSA, IDB, World Bank and others are invited as participants to the meetings.

Invited observers may present papers and participate in the debates without the right to vote.

Commission members hold office for two years corresponding to the period between RIMSA sessions. The Director will have the authority to extend the period only once.

5. SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS FUNCTIONS

Representing the Director of PAHO, the Pan American Institute for Food Safety and

Zoonoses (INPPAZ) acts as the Secretariat of the Commission, and its Director, as Secretary ex officio.

6. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSIONS

One session will be held per year, convened by the Director of PAHO.

The officers of the Commission, consisting of a president, a vice president, and a rapporteur, are elected every two years at the regular meeting.

A majority of the members of this Pan American Commission constitute a quorum.

The provisional agenda of the sessions is prepared by the Secretary ex officio and sent with the convocation of the meeting. Commission members can propose additional items.

The reports on the sessions of the Commission are submitted to RIMSA for approval and forwarded by the Secretariat to all the ministers of health and agriculture of the countries of the Region of the Americas and to the observers.

The decisions of the Commission shall be adopted preferably by consensus, or in its absence, by a majority vote of the members present, and shall be expressed in the form of recommendations.

7. FINANCING

PAHO would provide the necessary resources for the participation of the Ministers of Health and Agriculture at the regular meetings. The producers' and consumers' organizations would cover the expenditures of their delegates.

8. MODIFICATIONS TO THE REGULATIONS

The present Regulations may be reviewed at the request of a Member State and modified fully or in part with the approval of RIMSA.

All other matters not foreseen in these Regulations shall be resolved directly by the Commission.