



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## THIRTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Brasilia, Brazil, 14 to 18 April 2008**

### TRANSBOUNDARY DISEASES

1. Transboundary animal diseases pose the greatest threat to livestock production globally. The American continent is the world's leading producer of beef, poultry and eggs, and is the world's third producer of pigmeat. For this reason, the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases, such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Bovine Rabies (BR) and the New World Screwworm (NWS) have been prioritized for Latin America and the Caribbean by FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs).
2. The countries of the Region have requested priority technical support from FAO for the prevention of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and for the control and progressive eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, on account of the heavy production and market losses that are caused by FMD and the risk that HPAI poses for poultry production and public health.
3. FAO's technical cooperation has contributed to strengthening national veterinary services and programmes of epidemiological surveillance, diagnosis and sanitary control for the prevention or eradication of priority transboundary diseases. However, there are asymmetries and differential developments in the capacity of national animal health systems in the Region and in the progress of programmes to prevent, control and eradicate these diseases.
4. Meat production in Latin America has grown at a rate of 3.8%, which is far higher than the average global growth of 2.1%, and this trend is expected to continue during the next biennium. The increase in meat production in the Region has been accompanied by greater access of Latin American livestock products to the global market. However, market requirements have also become more stringent in terms of safety and quality of product, calling for the urgent strengthening of national animal health systems to comply with regulations and sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPM) and to enhance herd status and the quality and safety standards of livestock products.
5. The main outcomes of FAO's cooperation for each of the prioritized transboundary diseases are detailed below. The emphasis has been placed on strengthening institutional technical capacity in order to enhance regional health status; to ensure animal health and the safety of meat and milk

For reasons of economy, this document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies, unless strictly indispensable.  
Most FAO meeting documents are available on Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

products; to consolidate market access; and to protect public health and food security of the population.

### **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza**

6. By April 2006, the date of the 29<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza epizootic H5N1 (Asian variety) had already infected a total of 33 countries in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. In 2004, FAO estimated an economic loss of 10 billion dollars for the Asian countries alone, without considering the social consequences of human deaths from the disease.

7. The American continent could be affected by HPAI from the introduction of contaminated birds or products and the migration of wild birds. Faced with this threat and because of the rapid spread of the disease, several countries requested emergency technical assistance from FAO to prevent and deal with such a possible entry. Four regional projects were implemented, worth a total of US\$2 million and covering 33 countries of the Region: in the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago); in Central America (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama); in the Andean Region (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela); and in the Southern Cone, the countries of the expanded MERCOSUR (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay).

8. The projects began in May 2006 and were delivered on time and with the full support of the participating countries, which meant that by the middle of 2007 significant progress had been made towards achieving the expected results. The participating countries benefited in the form of: i) enhanced capacity for early detection of HPAI through strengthened national systems of epidemiological surveillance of poultry and wild birds; ii) improved decision-making for prevention, control and, if necessary, eradication based on the availability of a geo-referenced HPAI epidemiological system covering 33 countries – one of its kind; iii) training of at least one professional in basic laboratory diagnosis of HPAI in each country, which is strategically vital during the emergence of the disease, coupled with; iv) the establishment of four regional laboratories (Guatemala, Barbados, Brazil, Colombia) for further technical assistance in HPAI diagnosis; v) existence of national contingency plans in each country, for an ordered response to any incursion of HPAI supported by; vi) experience gained from first-hand simulations and a remote course on HPAI simulations adapted to regional situations; vii) information on at least two possible systems of compensation per country to offset producer losses from an HPAI outbreak; viii) availability of a continent-wide strategy and platform of interactive communication of HPAI risk and information, in national, subregional and regional contexts, including the design of electronic and printed outreach materials; ix) creation of a network of HPAI experts from participating countries; and x) availability of investment projects, intended for international financing agencies, to strengthen national emergency projects. By mid-2007, HPAI had affected 59 countries but Latin America and the Caribbean were free of the disease, in part because of the emergency prevention projects implemented by FAO.

9. FAO's initial activities were aimed at training the 33 countries of the Region in the early identification of infection, in controlling that infection and in keeping the Region free of HPAI. However, because of the socio-economic and epidemiological diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean, this work needs to be continued to overcome the shortcomings encountered and to maintain the systems developed and the networks of experts established. FAO considers it crucial to enhance capacity for epidemiological surveillance of backyard poultry and wild birds, diagnosis and communication in national and subregional contexts, and will do all it can to further help countries establish programmes for the effective prevention of HPAI.

10. If countries are to remain free of the disease, national and regional biosecurity, surveillance and prevention programmes will need to be beefed up and special attention will need to be paid to smallholder and backyard poultry production systems, which are those presenting greatest risk.

There is also a need to promote public policies of producer compensation in the event of HPAI outbreaks and to implement information and communication strategies aimed at both producers and the public at large.

### **Foot-and-Mouth Disease**

11. The sporadic outbreaks of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Argentina and Brazil in 2005 and 2006 in areas that had been declared free of FMD through vaccination, the outbreaks in Bolivia in 2007 and the endemic nature of the disease in Ecuador and Venezuela, which respectively accounted for 25% and 60% of outbreaks in 2006, indicate that, in spite of progress in controlling the disease and the lower number of outbreaks in the Southern Cone area, there is still much to be done and that, without change, it will not be possible to meet the target of eradicating the disease from the continent by 2009, as set in the Hemispheric Plan for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PHEFA). At present, 66.3% of flocks and 61.3% of cattle of the Region are in areas that are not free of FMD.

12. Through the GF-TADs, FAO has established the need to strengthen national, border and subregional programmes of control and eradication of FMD and to coordinate actions between international agencies and official veterinary services, in the context of the PHEFA.

13. The strategy to strengthen the PHEFA put forward by FAO includes the consolidation of strategic partnerships with other agencies for strengthening national veterinary services; priority attention to countries in endemic areas and border programmes; extension and protection of FMD-free areas; characterization of animal flows, examination of livestock production channels and regional marketing chains for cattle and livestock products; programmes of strategic vaccination in high-risk areas; increased funds for emergencies; development of economic and social impact studies; and support for the formulation of compensation policies for the recovery and rehabilitation of small-scale livestock production systems.

14. Because of the socio-economic significance of FMD in South America, the representatives of member countries asked FAO for more active participation in the control and progressive eradication of the disease, based on more than 25 years of experience in coordinating the Technical Committee of the *European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease*, a mechanism created to eliminate the disease in Europe. Acting upon the instructions of the member countries, FAO has implemented a technical assistance project, in conjunction with the Standing Veterinary Committee (SVC), for the formulation of a regional animal health programme in the Region's six countries with the largest cattle population (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay), all members of the Southern Agricultural Council (CAS).

15. The primary aim has been to develop national investment projects to finance the strengthening of veterinary services by banking institutions, in order to eradicate FMD in their territories. The project has also provided technical assistance to control the outbreak of FMD that occurred in Bolivia in early 2007, and through the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), led by FAO and OIE, it organized a consultation meeting, with a proposal that international and national agencies work closely together towards eliminating the disease through concerted action in maintaining and extending areas FMD-free without vaccination; reducing incidence in endemic areas; certifying and extending areas FMD-free with vaccination; zoning countries according to areas of prevalence; and zoning national and international borders. Also, at the global level, a road map for the strategy of control and eradication of the disease was established under the GF-TADs, which will complement the activities that FAO has undertaken in the Region and will continue to pursue until FMD has been eliminated, as requested by member countries.

### **Classical Swine Fever**

16. Given the importance of pigs as a source of animal protein and economic resource, and considering that the American continent is the world's third producer of pigmeat, FAO has continued to coordinate efforts to control and eradicate Classical Swine Fever (CSF) through the Technical Secretariat of the *Continental Plan for the Eradication of CSF in the Americas*. This plan has helped keep 67% (26 million km<sup>2</sup>) of the continent free of the disease and efforts are underway to complete eradication from the remaining 33% (13.5 million km<sup>2</sup>). This undertaking has a target date of 2020 and is formally supported by 19 countries of the Region. In 2006, FAO introduced the *Information System for CSF in the American Continent (SIPPCCA)* to strengthen actions. It permits epidemiological analyses and the appraisal of results, in relation to aims, of national eradication programmes. The SIPPCCA currently counts on the active participation of the countries of Central America and the Caribbean. The Regional International Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health (RIOPPAH) has assisted FAO in this activity in order to avoid duplication of effort. Technical assistance has also been given on technical and operational guidelines to enable Belize, Costa Rica and Panama to achieve international recognition as CSF-free countries, which Panama achieved in mid-2006. In the light of achievements, efforts will be continued to implement the plan, especially on account of the emergence in June 2007 of African Swine Fever in the Republic of Georgia, a disease with similar symptoms that is equally if not more devastating than CSF and had a devastating effect on LAC countries 35 years ago.

### **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy**

17. The presence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in 2003, with the first case in Canada and subsequently in the United States in 2005, caused regional alarm and led to a drastic closure of borders to bovine products from those countries. This was a clear indication of how importing countries react, establishing protection measures to prevent the entry of transboundary animal diseases (TADs) into their territories and in this case causing economic losses to those countries estimated at over US\$5 billion. In addition to being a transboundary animal disease, BSC is also a zoonotic disease linked to the emergence of a new variant of Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease in humans. While this disease is not present in Latin America and the Caribbean there is nevertheless a risk that it might appear through the introduction of infected animals or products. Control and eradication procedures are very costly and lengthy. As a result and as requested by countries, FAO has provided technical assistance to help them upgrade their prevention systems through: a) technical guides on the domestic control of sources of infection through feed quality and safety assurance systems and the application of good practices in animal nutrition; b) recommendations for the prevention of BSC and assessment of regional harmonization based on international guidelines; c) the issue of scientific and technical information through the electronic *Bulletin of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy*, with 12 bulletins published and distributed so far among more than 300 stakeholders in Latin America and the Caribbean; and d) the participation of experts in international forums on feed safety and the adoption of good practices in animal nutrition, including the Second Global Feed and Food Congress, held in Sao Paulo on 16 and 17 April 2007 and jointly convened by FAO and the International Feed Industry Federation. In view of the importance of preventing BSC, FAO expects to redouble its support to the countries of Central America and the Caribbean in the near future in relation to feed quality and safety methods.

### **New World Screwworm**

18. In 2002 it was conservatively estimated that annual losses incurred from the New World Screwworm (NWS) in the affected Caribbean countries (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago) were US\$135 million and US\$3.6 billion in South America where all countries were infested, except Chile. Those estimates did not take into account the social damage from being a serious zoonotic disease. The countries of North America, Central America and most of the Caribbean have managed to eradicate the disease using the Sterile Insect

Technique (SIT). NWS is a major TAD, as became clear in 1988 when it caused a global health scare as it moved from its original habitat in the American continent to North Africa. FAO led a successful programme to eradicate the disease in 1992, preventing it from establishing a foothold in Africa and spreading to other continents. At the request of the affected countries, FAO has been providing technical assistance at different levels for the control and subsequent eradication of this parasitic disease, especially in the countries of the Caribbean, and more recently, in conjunction with the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, it has conducted entomological studies to determine the genetic characteristics of NWS colonies in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, data that will be crucial for the future eradication programmes. At the same time, FAO helped install the SIT demonstration project in Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, promoted by the Mexico-United States Commission for the Eradication of NWS and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank for a total of US\$1 million. In the immediate future, FAO will continue to provide support and technical assistance in controlling and eradicating this destructive parasitic zoonosis.

### **Others**

19. In recent years, rabies in animals and humans has been reported in a number of countries of the Region, to the growing concern of their health authorities. FAO has therefore launched activities in collaboration with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) to provide supplementary assistance to countries. Also in the field of veterinary public health, FAO has provided technical assistance to the PAHO/FAO-Southern Cone Regional Project on the Surveillance and Control of Hydatidosis and in 2006 conducted a study to estimate the economic impact of this disease in the Region. Equally important was the recently completed technical assistance project to improve the control of Trichinellosis in Argentina. Another area of activity has been the prevention of food-borne diseases, with FAO support in international forums for the implementation and dissemination of Codex Alimentarius Codes of Practice, in particular those relating to the safety of foods of animal origin. At the institutional level, FAO and the OIE have cooperated in assessing the veterinary services of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and helped Panama and Ecuador to modernize their plant protection, animal health and food safety services.

20. The Conference, taking into account asymmetries between countries and the enormous challenges that lie ahead for achieving the required regional health status, may wish to invite FAO to strengthen its assistance and technical cooperation actions in the countries of the Region, with an emphasis on the improvement and modernization of their national animal health systems, the strengthening of public policies for sustainable livestock development, the improvement of livestock product quality and safety, programmes of support to small producers and the strengthening of institutional and human resource capacity in the areas of animal production and health, in order to advance comprehensively in positioning the Region as the world's largest producer and exporter of products of animal origin.

21. The Conference may wish to acknowledge the effort that has been made by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in implementing the recommendations from the 29<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference relating to Transboundary Animal Diseases. It may wish to instruct FAO to continue assisting countries in the control and progressive eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, Classical Swine Fever, New World Screwworm, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Rabies, on account of their relevance and importance to public health and the economy in the Region.