



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**14th INTER-AMERICAN MEETING, AT THE MINISTERIAL
LEVEL, ON HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE**

Mexico City, D.F., Mexico, 21–22 April 2005

Provisional Agenda Item 5

RIMSA14/INF/2 (Eng.)
4 April 2005
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

THE HOUSTON DECLARATION

Agreed upon at the

**HEMISPHERIC CONFERENCE
ON THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE**

Houston, Texas, 3 and 4 March 2004

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The Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture and Health, Presidents and Representatives of Federations and Associations of Producers, and others involved in the livestock production chain, and the Representatives of International Agencies present at the Hemispheric Conference on the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease,

CONSIDERING:

1. The highly contagious nature of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), the harm it has caused to livestock production in the Hemisphere since its introduction in the late nineteenth century, its spread during the first half of the twentieth century to all the countries in South America, as well as the risks posed by its presence in the Hemisphere to all the countries of the Region;
2. The significant progress made in the eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the South American countries and in its prevention in the disease-free countries of North America, Central America, and the Caribbean as a result of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PHEFA), developed under the guidance of the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COHEFA) and implemented by the countries with the cooperation of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), through the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA);
3. The successes achieved and the availability of technical tools and animal-health infrastructure for the control and eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the Region, which create an enabling environment for the final phase of Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication;
4. The existence of regional and subregional coordination bodies, such as the South American Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COSALFA), COHEFA, and the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSA), which make it possible for countries of the Region to carry out joint and coordinated actions, an aspect that is essential for the eradication of the disease;

5. The importance of eradicating Foot-and-Mouth Disease from the Americas, given the enormous benefits for the producers, industries, and peoples of the countries of the Region, in terms of preventing livestock production losses and lifting the barriers to domestic and international trade that the disease necessitates, as well as the social benefits from generating jobs and income;
6. The existence of international standards based on sound scientific evidence, established by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE);
7. The persistence of endemic areas of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the Region, which are a permanent source of infection for disease-free areas, hampering efforts to meet the eradication targets established in PHEFA, and in which there are structural weaknesses in the veterinary services and limited funding for conducting the programs;
8. The differences existing in environmental and cultural conditions and availability of resources, including the adequacy of veterinary education, which affect the countries' progress towards meeting the Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication targets, necessitating that the strategies adapt to these conditions and bolster the quality of veterinary services and the active surveillance systems currently in place, as an effective scientific basis for assessing the progress of eradication programs;
9. The final stage of Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication, which implies the need for renewing the political, technical, administrative, and financial commitments of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and Mouth-Disease, launched in 1987;
10. The Pan American Health Organization, pursuant to Resolution 9.R2 of COHEFA 9, Resolution 13.R5 of RIMSA 13, and Resolution CD44.R7 of its Directing Council, which endorsed the previous resolutions, and in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture, organized the Hemispheric Conference on the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease, in Houston, Texas, 3 and 4 March 2004,

AGREE TO:

1. Renew the political, technical, financial, and administrative commitments to eradicate Foot-and-Mouth Disease from the Americas.
2. Establish an interinstitutional Regional Working Group within COHEFA with public and private sector participation, which will be responsible for preparing, supervising, and executing the Regional Project for the Final Phase of the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease from the Americas (Project), as part of PHEFA and in support of national FMD prevention and eradication programs. The Working Group shall also be responsible for

supervising the implementation of the Project and reporting to COHEFA on the progress made.

3. Create an Interim Working Group with membership consisting of one official and one private sector representative from each region of COHEFA, with PANAFTOSA as the Secretariat. The Interim Working Group will consist of 13 members, three of which will constitute an Executive Group. The Interim Working Group will seek advice from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), International Regional Organization for Health in Agriculture and Livestock (OIRSA), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), academia, and veterinary associations.
4. Entrust the Interim Working Group with the following activities:
 - (a) During COSALFA 31, to be held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on 1 April 2004, set up communication mechanisms to meet the collaboration and technical assistance needs of the representatives of the national services and producers in countries where Foot-and-Mouth Disease is still endemic, and determine the human and financial resources required for implementing the Project's Plan of Action.
 - (b) By 31 August 2004, organize a planning meeting for the Project and develop the Plan of Action for 2004-2006. The plan will include:
 1. Continued efforts to improve the characterization of factors associated with environments where endemic Foot-and-Mouth Disease occurs.
 2. The development of an eradication approach suited to those environments.
 3. Continued efforts to improve the use of scientific methods for evaluating the progress of eradication activities.
 4. The development of independent methods for evaluating this progress, based on auditing systems.
 5. Suggestions on how countries can demonstrate their commitment to follow the recommendations issued by the evaluation group.
 6. An estimate of the human and financial resources required to complete the final stages of Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication.
 - (c) By 30 September 2004, prepare an outline for the study of the institutionality of existing FMD programs.
5. Entrust the Interim Working Group to submit the Project for approval to an extraordinary meeting of COHEFA, convened for this purpose and attended by donors and representatives of the technical cooperation agencies of the Region. COHEFA shall submit a report to the 45th Directing Council of PAHO, which meets in September 2004.

6. Commit themselves to identifying and mobilizing resources to meet the operational needs of the Working Group and the activities stipulated in the Project, whose implementation shall be coordinated with the national FMD eradication plans in the South American countries and the national prevention plans in FMD-free areas throughout the Hemisphere.
7. Formally state their commitment to maintaining and strengthening their national Foot-and-Mouth Disease eradication programs under the terms recommended by the Working Group, and request an identical commitment from the Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture and Health and producers of the countries unable to attend the Conference.
8. Reiterate their firm intention to cooperate and work in a coordinated manner through the bodies created under this agreement.
9. Endorse and use the OIE standards and guidelines as the competent international standard related to animal disease and zoonoses recognized by the World Trade Organization.

Thursday, 4 March 2004