



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



42nd DIRECTING COUNCIL

52nd SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., 25-29 September 2000

Provisional Agenda Item 4.6

CD42/10 (Eng.)

21 July 2000

ORIGINAL: SPANISH

FOOD PROTECTION

During the past 10 years serious outbreaks of foodborne disease have occurred throughout the world, alerting health authorities in the countries to the need for measures to eliminate the risk of transmission to the population. The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has led countries to review their policies, standards, and strategies in food protection in order to guarantee that the food consumed by the population meets sanitary standards in addition to facilitating the international food trade.

This document analyzes food protection in the countries of the Region of the Americas and country activities in this area carried out with technical cooperation from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Regional Office of the World Health Organization, pursuant to the mandates of its governing and advisory bodies. The document was submitted to the 126th Session of the Executive Committee.

The problem of food safety was recently analyzed at the 105th Session of the WHO Executive Board and the Fifty-third World Health Assembly, which adopted a resolution establishing food safety as a priority and issued the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and to the Director-General of WHO.

The Members of the Directing Council are invited to examine the report, issue recommendations to the countries and the Secretariat for its application in the Region, and consider the adoption of the resolution proposed by the Executive Committee (CE126.R7, annexed).

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Food Protection: Current Situation.....	3
2.1 Epidemiological Aspects.....	3
2.2 Social and Political Aspects.....	5
2.3 Economic Aspects.....	5
2.4 Technical Aspects.....	6
3. The PAHO Response: Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection.....	6
3.1 Organization of National Programs.....	7
3.2 Strengthening of Analytical Capacity.....	8
3.3 Strengthening of Inspection Services.....	9
3.4 Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases.....	10
3.5 Promotion of Food Protection through Community Participation.....	11
4. Strategic and Programmatic Orientation for PAHO Technical Cooperation in Food Protection.....	11
5. Strategic Plan of Action.....	12
5.1 Strategic Foundations of the Plan.....	12
5.2 Execution of the Regional Program.....	13
5.3 Strategies.....	14
5.4 Short- and Medium-term Objectives and Goals.....	14
5.5 Long-term Objectives and Goals.....	16
Annex A: Objectives of the PAHO Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection	
Annex B: Resolution CE126.R7	

1. Introduction

In the past decade, outbreaks of foodborne disease (FBD) on different continents, including those of the Americas, have given a new dimension to food protection programs in the countries.

The frequency of these outbreaks and their impact both on the health of the population and the international food trade have led the countries to review their food protection policies and the measures adopted for the prevention and control of FBD.

In order to strengthen food protection, in 1986 PAHO/WHO launched the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection, whose development was consolidated with the creation of the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ) in 1991 to implement the regional program.

The problem of food safety was recently examined at the 105th Meeting of the WHO Executive Board, which adopted Resolution EB105.R16. This Resolution declared food safety a priority, issuing the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO.

The 29th Session of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming reviewed and analyzed the activities of INPPAZ up to 1996, while the 33rd Session considered those for the period 1997-1999.

This document presents for the consideration of the Directing Council the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection that will be implemented in the Americas to address country needs in this area as they relate to global health and economic problems.

2. Food Protection: Current Situation

2.1 *Epidemiological Aspects*

The prevention of FBD poses a challenge today for the Region, given the incidence of these diseases. WHO estimates the annual incidence of diarrhea in children under 5 at 1,500 million episodes and 3 million deaths, a significant percentage of which can be linked to the consumption of contaminated food, although the figure varies from country to country.

The data forwarded by the national surveillance systems to the Regional System for Epidemiological Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases, which is coordinated by INPPAZ, between 1995 and 1999 show a total of 3,577 outbreaks of foodborne disease, with 113,349 cases and 210 deaths up to December 1999.

Although the System, is in its initial stages and there is still a high percentage of underreporting, the figures indicate the magnitude of the FBD problem in the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Some FBD, while not new, are considered emerging diseases because they are occurring more frequently; several countries have experienced outbreaks revealing the shortcomings of the prevention and control programs.

For example, Canada, the United States, Japan, and the countries of the European Community and Latin America have had outbreaks of FBD caused by *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Escherichia coli O157:H7*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella*, and *Vibrio cholerae*, as well as parasites such as *Cyclospora cayetanensis*.

In Canada and the United States, investigations into outbreaks of FBD caused by *E. coli O157:H7* and *Listeria monocytogenes* have demonstrated their close association with food. These outbreaks have been aggravated by the growing number of immunocompromised people, the expansion of the food trade and the food industry, and changes in microorganisms and eating habits.

In the United States, in 1999 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collected and analyzed the data from numerous surveillance systems, estimating that 76 million cases of FBD occur annually in that country, with 325,000 hospital admissions and 5,020 deaths. Pathogens such as *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, and *Toxoplasma* are responsible for 1,500 deaths each year.

In the Caribbean countries, outbreaks are frequently associated with the consumption of seafood contaminated by marine toxins or pathogens such as *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*.

Other contaminants of a chemical nature, such as pesticides, heavy metals, additives, and veterinary drugs, can have repercussions that are not yet understood, leading to chronic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, and allergies in the population. An example of this type of problem was an accident in Belgium in which animal feed was contaminated with dioxin. This incident illustrated the speed with which food moves from country to country, with the potential for causing serious problems if timely control measures are not instituted.

2.2 *Social and Political Aspects*

With certain exceptions, the processing conditions of food for domestic consumption and food for export are markedly different in the countries of the Region. This demands a cooperation response consistent with the particular needs of each country.

Economic globalization and the subregional integration initiatives have led to a massive worldwide and subregional food trade. The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the final negotiations of the Uruguay Round, and its agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) have established a new world order for the food trade.

The situation with respect to food protection has given rise to initiatives such as the "Food Safety Initiative: From Farm to Table," launched by the President of the United States; the creation of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which integrates all sectors linked with animal and plant health and food into a single agency; and the creation of a specialized agency in the European Community.

2.3 *Economic Aspects*

According to figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the annual world food trade is an estimated US\$ 380,000 million. The United States imports \$12,000 million in food products from Latin America; Chilean fruit exports to the world amount to \$1,300 million; Mexico's agricultural exports are as high as \$ 4,000 million; and Argentina's, \$8,000 million.

According to World Bank figures, Brazil and Argentina figure among the 15 countries in the world with the highest volume of exports, with Australia, the United States, and New Zealand the largest exporters and Japan, the United States, and the countries of the European Community the principal importers.

In 1998, several million pounds of meat products had to be withdrawn from the United States market due to contamination with *E. coli* O157:H7.

The cholera epidemic represented more than \$700 million in losses for Peru, due to the interruption in fish and other seafood exports and the drop in the consumption of these products. Moreover, \$70 million were lost due to the shutdown of food processing plants and the fall-off in tourism.

A number of FBD outbreaks in Caribbean hotels have resulted in substantial economic losses in the sector owing to the decline in tourism.

2.4 Technical Aspects

FBD outbreaks in the United States and several European countries, particularly outbreaks caused by *E. coli* O157:H7, have led to the review and modernization of food protection programs, especially the inspection and control systems, with the conclusion that an efficient system must involve the entire chain of production, from the farm to the consumer.

As a result, all the attention has focused on the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points methodology, known by the acronym HACCP, good manufacturing practice (GMP), and standard operating procedures for cleaning and disinfection (SOPCD). These are preventive methods that cover all steps in a production process, identify the dangers and factors that lead to food contamination, and prescribe preventive measures to control them.

Since HACCP is a self-monitoring system, it has also facilitated a transition in the role of the State, transforming it from the entity responsible for control to the entity responsible for oversight of industry programs for self-monitoring.

The standards and codes of sanitary practice developed by the Joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission and the WHO consultations and working groups are an extremely important technical underpinning for the quality and safety of food for domestic consumption and export. For this reason the WTO has adopted the Codex standards as the reference for the international food trade.

3. The PAHO Response: Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection

Based on the initial mandate of the IV Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (IV RIMSA) and the 31st Directing Council of PAHO, held in 1985, and supported by the recommendations of the Inter-American Conference on Food Protection, PAHO launched the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection in 1986. The objectives of the Program, updated at the recommendation of the 29th session of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming are:

- to achieve a food supply that is safe, healthy, nourishing, pleasing, and economical;

- to reduce human morbidity and mortality from FBD.

The plan of action of the Regional Program has five components, namely: organization of national food protection programs; strengthening of analytical capacity; strengthening of inspection services; surveillance of foodborne diseases, and promotion of food protection through community participation.

The results obtained in recent years can be summarized as follows:

3.1 *Organization of National Programs*

PAHO has promoted the concept of integrated food protection programs in order to standardize the technical criteria for such programs and promote a transparent vision of sectoral policy in the field. This cooperation effort has led almost 60% of the countries to develop integrated program structures through the organization of national or local commissions. The countries have promoted and supported coordination between the public and private sector to create integrated programs. Argentina, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay already have legislation in place that establishes programs involving intersectoral participation.

An information system on food legislation was developed in collaboration with BIREME and delivered to all the countries to facilitate the updating of food regulations and contribute to their efforts to harmonize standards and promote the food trade. The legislation of Argentina and part of that of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, JUNAC and MERCOSUR are available. Argentina has already added its national legislation to the database and is implementing the system at the provincial level. The regional information is available on the INPPAZ website, at www.inppaz.org.ar, and cooperation is under way with Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay for the addition of their legislation.

In order to strengthen the Codex committees in the countries, meetings and workshops have been held for all the countries on how to organize the committees and on topics of interest in food protection, in collaboration with the FAO. In 1999 a workshop was held in Bogotá, Colombia, for the countries of the Andean Community.

PAHO is collaborating with the Chair of the Regional Committee of the Codex Alimentarius for Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to promote the strengthening of national committees in

the countries of the Region. In this regard, a workshop for the Caribbean countries was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and other subregional workshops have been programmed in support of this initiative.

3.2 *Strengthening of Analytical Capacity*

Cooperation in this component is geared to the organization of contaminant control programs through laboratory networks with quality assurance systems that complement epidemiological studies on contamination risks.

By late 1999, 39 laboratories in 19 countries were part of the Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL), created in 1997 to facilitate the harmonization of analytical methodologies and promote the concepts of equivalence and transparency, as well as information exchange. An Executive Committee was established for INFAL, with INPPAZ and FAO acting as the Joint Secretariat ex officio.

The plan of action includes the activities to procure financing, the registry and evaluation of all laboratories participating in the Network, promotion of the development of national laboratory networks, and the training of staff.

In order to strengthen the capacity to analyze microbial contaminants, a project to standardize the techniques for isolating and identifying certain emerging foodborne pathogens is under way in the laboratories of the Region, with scientific and technical support from the WHO Collaborating Center at the University of Missouri. The project, which places special emphasis on microbial contaminants such as *E. coli O157:H7*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Campilobacter jejuni*, and *Yersinia enterocolitica*, has offered courses for personnel from all the Latin American countries.

The training activities to support this initiative included instruction in rapid microbiology techniques for 80 laboratory workers from 24 countries in 1999, with the collaboration of the University of Kansas.

With a view to disseminating knowledge and information about microbial resistance to antibiotics, a project was developed to conduct a study in this area, using specimens taken from human and animal subjects. At the same time, a joint international course on the testing of *Salmonella* for antimicrobial resistance was programmed with WHO, in which 18 countries of the Region participated.

With regard to chemical contaminants, 1996 marked the beginning of multi-laboratory analysis of chlorinated pesticide residues, an effort that involved 19 national laboratories in eight countries. This, combined with the development of a databank of pesticide reference standards, is satisfying the countries' needs with regard to laboratory quality assurance programs and also supplies critical reference standards and reagents unavailable in commercial catalogs. Thirty-six of these reference standards, which include families of chlorinated and phosphorated pesticides, have been distributed.

The countries are receiving direct support in developing programs for the detection of chemical contaminants. In 1996 a cooperation agreement was signed with the Agriculture and Livestock Service of Chile to develop a program for the detection of chemical residues in food. This led to the drafting of plans and directives for the control of chemical residues in meats, vegetables, and fruits; training for personnel in various aspects of food protection, and direct technical assistance for SAG programs.

3.3 *Strengthening of Inspection Services*

Given the current trend in food protection and control, the resources of this component have been oriented to cooperation with the countries for the adoption of good manufacturing practice (GMP), standard operating procedures for cleaning and disinfection (SOPCD), and the HACCP system through training, the dissemination of information, and direct technical assistance. Cooperation has been provided to all the countries of the Region, with greater emphasis on Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay to help them fulfill their commitments to meeting the international standards governing the food trade and tourism. As of July 1999, 946 people had received training.

Four courses on the inspection of red meats, chicken, and seafood, based on the HACCP methodology, were offered between 1996 and 1999 in the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, facilitating the training of 120 inspectors in this subregion.

A guide on the application of the HACCP system was prepared to support training programs and the dissemination of information about this new approach.

In response to the requests for technical cooperation to train personnel in the countries, courses to train instructors in HACCP were offered in collaboration with the International HACCP Alliance and the HACCP Seafood Alliance. Participating in this effort were three staff members from the Veterinary Public Health Program, who are the individuals responsible for organizing standardized courses in all the countries of the Region.

The II Pan American Meeting of National Services and Institutions for the Inspection and Quality Control of Seafood Products, was also held at INPPAZ, in coordination with FAO and INFOPECA. This meeting reviewed and updated the information on all aspects of the inspection of these products for the domestic market and on the utilization and auditing of HACCP in the fishing industry.

Given the change in approach involved in applying the HACCP system to guarantee food protection, training activities have been geared to strengthening the role of the State in the verification of HACCP plans. Based on the results of the FAO/WHO Consultation in Geneva in June 1998, a workshop for the Americas was held on this topic, prior to the meeting of the Regional Coordinating Committee of the Codex Alimentarius for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In order to integrate academia and institutionalize training in the countries in this area, support is being provided to the universities for the organization of training activities in food protection, with emphasis on the application of HACCP. Cooperation is under way with graduate programs at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, the University of San Marcos in Peru, the UNAM in Mexico, and the University of the West Indies in the English-speaking Caribbean.

3.4 *Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases*

To help orient national policies for the prevention and control of FBD, the countries have received assistance in integrating epidemiological surveillance of FBD into their national epidemiological surveillance systems. In addition, PAHO has been coordinating the Regional Information System for Epidemiological Surveillance of FBD, which compiles the information sent by the national systems mentioned above.

During the period 1995 to 1999, 22 countries sent information to the system, indicating 3,577 outbreaks, 113,349 cases, and 210 deaths.

The food associated with these outbreaks was identified in 2,540 of them (74.5%). Food of animal origin was responsible for the greatest number (1,457 outbreaks), accounting for 61.7% of the total.

The causative agent was identified in 1,939 outbreaks, with bacterial agents associated with 51.4% of them. *Salmonella spp* and *Staphylococcus aureus* were implicated in the majority of outbreaks.

Because they are just starting up, the countries' surveillance systems lack both the sensitivity necessary for detecting the etiologic agents and the specificity required for their precise identification.

In order to optimize the operations of the national epidemiological surveillance systems for FBD and obtain better information on outbreaks, in 1999 an evaluation meeting was held with the participating countries, and in late March 2000, there was an expert consultation to review the cooperation strategies in this component.

3.5 *Promotion of Food Protection through Community Participation*

In order to stimulate activities in this component, INPPAZ, in coordination with FAO, provided support for the Latin American Seminar on the Protection of Food Sold on the Street, held in 1994, and the Workshop on Integrating Consumer Interests in Food Production and Food Protection, held in Ecuador in 1996, to strengthen cooperation between consumers, producers, and official food protection agencies in a joint effort to guarantee food protection.

INPPAZ has set up a website, www.inppaz.org.ar, for wide dissemination of the available information on food protection. Also, the INPPAZ virtual library is being developed with information for different levels of the community.

4. Strategic and Programmatic Orientation for PAHO Technical Cooperation in Food Protection

The planning of PAHO technical cooperation strategies in food protection involves the formulation of general activities grounded in the five strategic approaches mentioned earlier, adhering to PAHO's programming and evaluation system, AMPES, which includes the biennial program budget (BPB) and the semiannual work plan (PTS).

Given the rapid developments and dynamic changes in food protection in recent years, the Regional Program on Food Protection has different advisory bodies at the political and technical level. INPPAZ has three advisory bodies, the International Coordination Council (ICC), the Scientific and Technical Committee (CCT), and the Program Committee for Argentina. The functions of these entities are to advise the Director of the Organization concerning the orientation of the priorities and strategies of action of the Institute as a scientific and technical center of excellence in the Americas in food-related matters; periodically

evaluate its activities; and ensure compliance with the basic agreement between PAHO and the Government of Argentina that established the Institute.

At the policy level, RIMSA, which the Director of PAHO convenes every two years with the participation of Ministers of Agriculture and some Ministers of Health of the Organization's Member States, analyzes the program budget for technical cooperation in veterinary public health, which includes the areas of food protection, foot-and-mouth disease, and other zoonoses. Its recommendations and the mandates of the Governing Bodies of PAHO serve as the foundation for the plans of action for PAHO technical cooperation in food protection.

5. Strategic Plan of Action

5.1 *Strategic Foundations of the Plan*

The strategic plan described in this document has been formulated in response to the recommendations of the Governing Bodies that PAHO technical cooperation in food protection consider the available information on the regional and global foodborne disease situation, the previous years' experience in executing the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation, and the technical orientations issued by the advisory bodies of INPPAZ. The following strategic postulates constitute the basis for the plan:

- The protection of food to ensure its safety and quality is a key issue of the utmost national, regional, and global importance because of its impact on public health and international trade.
- To address the problems in food protection, fundamental advances in food inspection and protection methodologies have been developed that employ preventive approaches targeting the entire chain of production.
- The countries must modernize their food protection programs to reduce the risk of disease for the population and facilitate international trade.
- In order to promote equity in health, it will be necessary to stress technical cooperation to improve food protection in the medium- and small-scale food industries—industries that generally produce a high proportion of the food for domestic consumption and need to improve sanitary conditions in their processing plants.

- To attend to the export sector, private mechanisms for technical assistance have been developed, and several international technical cooperation agencies, such as the FAO, IICA, and the International Office of Epizootics (IOE), as well as bilateral agencies, are collaborating to modernize regulations, inspection systems, quality control, etc.
- The expansion in communications technology is facilitating the programs for training, capacity development, education, and mass communication.
- The available information on cases of FBD indicates that they occur most frequently in the home, which implies the need for a broad campaign to promote public awareness and health education.
- All the countries of the Region are in a phase marked by State reform and cutbacks in government services, with a trend toward the privatization of certain government services.
- With technical cooperation from PAHO and other international organizations, some countries already have basic the infrastructure in place for integrated food protection programs.
- PAHO has played a very important part in the activities aimed at compliance with the programming orientation of disease prevention. However, in the future its activities must encourage the political resolve in the countries to develop programs to modify the FBD situation.
- PAHO has an extensive infrastructure in the Region consisting of its Representative Offices, Pan American Centers, technical programs, and specialized human resources in the countries. These, together with adequate intra- and interprogrammatic cooperation and the WHO Food Safety Programme, can strengthen technical cooperation in food protection.
- There is an infrastructure of WHO Collaborating Centers and international and national organizations working in food protection that can potentially be utilized through coordinated activities and partnerships to strengthen technical cooperation among countries.

5.2 Execution of the Regional Program

The PAHO/WHO Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Protection is executed by its specialized Center, the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ), in coordination with the Program on Veterinary Public Health and Representative Offices in the countries. The mission of this Center has been defined as follows:

To provide the member countries of PAHO, as well as their integration initiatives, with technical cooperation for the solution of problems related to food safety and the prevention and control of foodborne diseases.

In order to carry out its mission, INPPAZ receives technical orientation from the Program of Veterinary Public Health, support from the Representative Offices in the countries, the other Pan-American Centers of PAHO, and interprogrammatic actions. In addition, the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers, other international organizations, and consortia of national institutions promote partnerships to support the fulfillment of Institute's mission, stressing the principle of Pan-Americanism and the use of the countries' technical resources, which have been trained largely by PAHO.

5.3 Strategies

The main technical cooperation strategies are:

- utilization of PAHO's strategic approaches for setting standards; disseminating information, training human resources, coordinating research, and providing direct technical assistance;
- increasing technical cooperation potential by utilizing the network of PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers, the consortia of institutions specializing in food protection, and partnerships with international and binational technical cooperation agencies;
- utilization of the findings and orientations of the WHO Advisory Groups and Expert Groups and the Codex to cooperate with the countries in laying a scientific foundation for the standards and procedures of food protection services in the countries;
- mobilization of the community to encourage its participation as an agent of change;

- promotion of technical cooperation among countries and Pan-Americanism.

5.4 *Short- and Medium-term Objectives and Goals*

For the short and medium term, which includes the biennium 2000-2001, technical cooperation to the countries will be based on the five components of the Regional Program, as programmed in PAHO's programming and evaluation system (AMPES).

- *Cooperation with the countries in the organization of national and local food protection programs and in the establishment of coordination mechanisms and regional and subregional program evaluation.*

Priority activities in this component: intersectoral coordination, strengthening of the Codex, control of quality and equivalence, and support for mutual recognition.

- *Cooperation with the countries in reviewing and strengthening analytical systems for the detection and monitoring of microbial and chemical contaminants.*

Priority activities in this component: organization of laboratory networks, harmonization of methods, international reference, and risk assessment.

The contaminants monitored will include microbial agents and chemicals such as pesticides, heavy metals, and veterinary drug residues. The monitoring mechanisms employed will be those recommended by *Codex Alimentarius* and specialized groups of WHO and FAO, such as the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues, and the Global Environment Monitoring System/Food Contamination Monitoring and Assessment Program (GEMS/Food).

- *Cooperation with the countries for the review and modernization of methodologies for food inspection and control.*

Priority activities in this component: focus on domestic consumption and on small and medium-size industry, on the adoption of HACCP, GMP, SOPCD, evaluation, and inspection for the domestic and export markets. Cooperation will be provided to the

countries to ensure that food inspection and control covers vulnerable groups, including indigenous and marginalized populations.

- *Cooperation with the countries for the organization of national information systems and epidemiological surveillance of foodborne diseases.*

Priority activities in this component: increased efficiency at the local level, consideration of risk factors, active surveillance, and linkage of the Regional System with other international surveillance networks.

- *Promotion of food protection through community participation.*

Priority activities in this component: the design of educational programs and campaigns for food protection that target the various levels of the community, with emphasis on households; improvements in food sold on the street; and the dissemination of information to protect the consumer.

5.5 Long-term Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of the strategic plan is to define what PAHO must do to fulfill the strategic postulates and be ready for the new millennium. To this end, PAHO will have the following objectives and goals for the year 2004 (Annex A).

- (a) PAHO will be recognized in the Region as the principal technical cooperation agency and the main source of information and training in food protection, since it is recognized that preventing FBD is fundamentally a public health issue.
- (b) PAHO will have increased its technical cooperation potential through interprogrammatic coordination and partnerships with other international, binational, and national technical cooperation organizations, and it will serve as an international reference in food protection.
- (c) PAHO will have developed its capacity to cooperate with the countries in developing health education and communication programs in food protection to enlist the participation of the community, principally consumers, food processors, and food handlers.
- (d) INPPAZ will have fully developed its infrastructure and human resources in order to offer the countries technical cooperation in food protection.

- (e) PAHO will develop and execute binational technical cooperation plans adapted to the needs of the countries.
- (f) INPPAZ will have a stable financial situation and will be able to execute its programming on a continuing basis.

PAHO has obvious comparative advantages over other cooperation agencies working in the field of food safety. It has Representative Offices and technical staff in every country and can count on the support of other Pan-American Centers and the WHO Collaborating Centers; it possesses considerable capacity to mobilize the countries' technical resources, many of whom have been trained by the Organization, and in this way can promote technical cooperation among countries in the Region. PAHO is therefore in a position to offer technical assistance to other WHO Regional Offices regarding strategies for the delivery of technical cooperation in food protection.

Annexes

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAHO REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN FOOD PROTECTION

Objective A

- Assist the countries in improving their surveillance systems for foodborne diseases, coordinate the regional system, and disseminate epidemiological information on FBD.
- Develop databases on food protection with up-to-date scientific and technical information and develop a virtual library through the INPPAZ website.
- Develop training programs and distance learning courses on topics related to food protection, for official human resources and the community at large.
- Participate as a consultative agency at meetings on food protection.
- Conduct campaigns to promote requests for PAHO cooperation in food protection.

Objective B

- Complete the database on food protection programs around the world and in the Region able to provide technical cooperation in food protection.
- Negotiate partnerships with other technical cooperation agencies (AOAC, CDC, EU, FAO, FDA, IICA, ILSI, IOE, USDA).
- Promote interprogrammatic coordination.
- Identify national and regional entities that can carry out reference activities in food protection and promote the organization of consortia to provide technical cooperation.

Objective C

- Establish a permanent advisory group on strategies for conducting regional communication and education activities in food protection.
- Identify specialized entities and experts in communication and health education.
- Train staff at INPPAZ and in the countries in the basic principles of mass communication and health education applied to food protection.
- Organize a mass communication and health education unit in INPPAZ.
- Develop a database on mass communication and health education programs for food protection programs.
- Cooperate to develop demonstration areas in the countries for mass communication and health education campaigns.

Objective D

- Appoint the needed staff to the INPPAZ roster.
- Develop a program for human resources development.
- Participate in technical and scientific events.
- Coordinate research projects on food protection with centers of excellence and universities.

Objective E

- Utilize the PAHO planning system (AMPES).
- Engage in ongoing consultations with the country institutions involved in food protection programs.
- Promote and create a regional commission on food protection to serve as an agency for evaluating national programs and for consultation.

- Give priority in technical cooperation to the medium-size and small-scale food industry.

Objective F

- Promote agreements with the countries for extrabudgetary food protection projects that mobilize additional resources to strengthen technical cooperation.
- Develop and negotiate projects with financial agencies and food industry that can finance training and research.



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



42nd DIRECTING COUNCIL
52nd SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., 25–29 September 2000

CD42/10 (Eng.)
Annex B

RESOLUTION

CE126.R7

FOOD PROTECTION

THE 126th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Having considered Document CE126/12, which describes the problems of food protection throughout the world and in the Region of the Americas in particular and the action that the Pan American Health Organization is taking to cooperate technically with the countries to establish food protection programs; and

Taking into account that the 33rd Session of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming analyzed the situation and was in agreement with the technical cooperation activities that the Organization is carrying out,

RESOLVES:

To recommend to the Directing Council that it adopt a resolution in the following terms:

THE 42nd DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having analyzed the report on food protection in the Americas (Document CD42/____), which describes the current problems deriving from foodborne diseases and the action that the Pan American Health Organization is taking to assist the countries in solving these problems through technical cooperation to organize food protection programs;

Taking into account that the Fifty-third World Health Assembly adopted Resolution WHA53.15 on food safety, emphasizing the importance of this topic as an essential public health activity;

Considering that, according to the reports prepared by the Pan American Health Organization through the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ), a significant number of outbreaks of foodborne disease have been observed, with a high number of cases and deaths from this cause; and

Bearing in mind that international trade poses a high risk for outbreaks of foodborne disease unless technical action is taken to prevent food contamination,

RESOLVES:

1. To urge Member States to:
 - (a) organize food protection programs as an essential public health function, promoting active coordination among the health and agriculture sectors and industry;
 - (b) update and modernize their food inspection and protection systems, taking into account the Codex Alimentarius standards and the sanitary measures contained in the Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards;
 - (c) consider, when implementing food safety measures, food for both domestic consumption and the export market, as well as medium and small enterprises;
 - (d) strengthen the surveillance systems for foodborne diseases so that the information obtained can be used to orient measures for the prevention and control of these diseases;
 - (e) encourage the active participation of producers, food processors, food handlers, and consumers through communication and health education programs;

- (f) provide the necessary resources for the development of food protection programs.
2. To thank the Government of Argentina for its continued support for the maintenance and operation of INPPAZ, and to urge the rest of the countries to contribute to its financing.
 3. To request that the Director:
 - (a) continue with the development and execution of the strategic plan on food protection;
 - (b) explore the need for a regional commission on food protection to deal with matters related to the development of regional policies in this area;
 - (c) establish mechanisms for coordination with other international technical cooperation agencies to offer the pertinent technical cooperation to the countries, avoid duplication of efforts, and make better use of resources.

(Sixth meeting, 28 June 2000)