

able and that trained counselors, including former smokers, would be required. It was felt that technical expertise from external sources would be helpful in setting up the programs.

While the proposed guidelines for action plans were not meant to be definitive, it was hoped that they and the workshop as a whole would provide a point of departure for the delegates to encourage their governments and nongovernmental organizations in their countries to give serious thought to the severe and increasing impact of tobacco on health and to take steps to reduce tobacco smoking.

Source: Pan American Health Organization; Smoking Control, Third Subregional Workshop, Caribbean Area; Technical Paper Series; Washington, D.C., 1988.

PAHO SPONSORS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND NUTRITION SURVEILLANCE IN THE AMERICAS

The Food and Nutrition Program of PAHO has organized a conference on food and nutrition surveillance systems in the Region, to be held in Mexico City from 5 to 9 September 1988. Participants at the conference will review the current status of these systems in the Region, examine the needs of users of the information they provide, and explore how greater awareness and support can be generated among users.

The need for international food and nutrition surveillance was first affirmed at the World Food Conference held in Rome in 1974. One of the resolutions approved on that occasion recommended the establishment by WHO, FAO, and UNICEF of a global surveillance system to monitor food and nutrition conditions among disadvantaged population groups, with the goal of providing rapid and ongoing evaluation of all factors that influence food consumption patterns and nutritional status in these groups. With the support of those international organizations and other bilateral agencies, food and nutrition surveillance has made steady progress in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1977, and systems are now operating in about 25 countries. However, while many systems have developed successfully from a technical viewpoint, not all have been able to ensure that the information they gather is regularly used in decision-making.

The PAHO Food and Nutrition Program is strongly committed to cooperate with the Member Governments in advancing the effective use of food and nutrition data by national and sectoral planners and program managers. The upcoming conference is a manifestation of this commitment.

The conference will be attended by 40 to 50 invited participants from the countries, as well as representatives of international, bilateral, and nongovernmental technical assistance agencies. PAHO will be responsible for inviting and financing half of the participants, and it is anticipated that the technical assistance agencies will fund the remainder through their local or regional offices.

Concepts that will be discussed include the costs of malnutrition (in terms of medical and social services expenses as well as its effects on growth and development in children and work productivity in adults); the feasibility, availability, validity, accuracy, timeliness, and reliability of nutrition indicators; and the usefulness of such indicators for measuring the social and economic performance of populations and for planning, policy formulation, and program implementation. In addition, participants from selected countries will be asked to present reports on the organization and operation of their nutrition surveillance systems and on how surveillance information has been used to arrive at specific decisions at the national, sectoral, or local level in response to food emergencies and to plan, evaluate, and supervise food and nutrition programs.

After the plenary sessions, work group sessions will be held in which the participants will discuss identifying the needs of system users, ensuring access to the systems by decision-makers at all levels, and monitoring compliance and evaluating the efficiency of the systems. PAHO and other participating agencies will present information on the regional availability of technical cooperation, training programs for computerized data analysis, and other technical, managerial, and operational aspects of surveillance, as well as research facilities. The FAO/WHO/UNICEF Food and Nutrition Surveillance Program and other regional and international systems will also be described.

The final report will be an important product of this meeting. It will be based on the formal presentations, open discussions, and work group findings, and will be summarized in a subsequent number of the *Bulletin of PAHO*.