



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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LEVEL, ON HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE**

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**REPORT OF THE 3rd ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PAN AMERICAN
COMMISSION FOR FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA), 2003**

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The 3rd Ordinary Meeting of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA) was held at the headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization on April 23, 2003, as per the convocation issued by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB).

Officers

The following meeting officers were unanimously selected.

<i>President:</i>	Dr. Mohamed Rakied Khudabux Minister of Health of Surinam
<i>First Vice President:</i>	Dr. Darío Baumgarten Lavand Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Dr. Anaella Gomez Consumer Defense Office of El Salvador

Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of PASB, acted as the ex-officio Secretary of the Commission, and Dr. Claudio R. Almeida, Director of the Pan American Institute of Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ/PAHO), acted as the Technical Secretary.

Members of the Commission

North American Sub-region

Health Sector:	Mr. Ronald Burke, Director Bureau of Food Regulatory, International and Interagency Health Affairs Canada
Agriculture Sector:	Dr. Elsa Murano, Under Secretary of Food Safety U.S. Department of Agriculture, United States of America
Production Sector:	Fabián Vásquez García, in charge of Food Safety, State Committee of Vegetal Health of Guanajuato, Mexico.
Consumer Sector:	Dr. Ned Groth, Director, Technical and Public Policies Service, Consumers Union, United States of America

English Caribbean Sub-region

- Health Sector: Dr. Mohamed Rakied Khudabux, Ministro de Salud, Surinam
- Agriculture Sector: Hon. Anthony P. Wood, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Barbados. Declined to attend.
- Production Sector: Dr. Joshua da Silva, Association of Fishery Owners and Processors of Marine Products. Declined to attend.
- Consumer Sector: Ms. Hazel Brown, Coordinator, Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancements of Women, Trinidad.

Central America and Latin Caribbean Sub-region

- Health Sector: Dr. Fernando Gracia, Minister of Health, Panama. Declined to attend.
- Agriculture Sector: Dr. Pablo Roberto Girón, Deputy Minister of Livestock, Hydrobiological Resources and Food, Guatemala.
- Production Sector: Dr. Jorge Díaz Coto, President of the Association of Meat Packers of Honduras. Declined to attend.
- Consumer Sector: Dr. Anaella Gómez Gómez, Consumer Defense Office, El Salvador.

Andean Sub-region

- Health Sector: Dr. Oscar Arturo Larrain Sanchez, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Planning, Bolivia
- Agriculture Sector: Dr. Alvaro Abisambra, Manager of the Colombian Agricultural Institute
- Production Sector: Dr. Frank Rivas, Director of the Association of Meat Industrialists, Venezuela
- Consumer Sector: Mrs. Isabel Muñoz, Representative of the Consumer Forum, Ecuador.

Southern Cone Sub-region

Health Sector:	Dr. Marcelo Azalim, National Agency of Health Surveillance, Brazil.
Agriculture Sector:	Dr. Darío Baumgarten Lavand, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Paraguay.
Production Sector:	Dra. Estela Tor, Technical Adviser to the Chamber of Commerce of Uruguay. Declined to attend.
Consumer Sector:	Mr. José Vargas Niello, Director of Consumers International, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sessions

Inauguration:

The session participants selected Dr. Mohamed Rakied Khudabux, the Minister of Health of Suriname, as the president of the 3rd COPAIA Meeting. Dr. Darío Baumgarten Lavand, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay, was selected as the Vice President, and Dr. Anaella Gómez, a representative of the Center for Consumer Defense in El Salvador, was chosen as the Rapporteur.

Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, the Director of PASB, welcomed the participants and stated that COPAIA was an opportunity for the organization and other representatives of the public health field to hold discussions with all the sectors involved in the food chain. She said that food safety was a priority subject for PASB and that the goal was “to protect public health as much as possible, while interfering with trade as little as possible.”

She continued, saying that food safety was highly important to the human and economic development of the Region. Dr. Roses stressed that the impact globalization has on food safety has to be taken into account and cited the resolution of the cholera epidemic of 1991 as an example. She described how mobilization of the whole of society and social communication ended the seventh cholera pandemic in the hemisphere.

Dr. Roses stated that food safety should be guaranteed in both domestic and international markets, and that a closer relationship needs to be developed between the two. Thus, she suggested emphasizing food safety in industry, employing a risk-based approach and making use of efficient systems, such as HACCP. She added that joint

work between industry and legislation is needed in the countries, so that adequate progress can be made in the sector.

Dr. Roses pointed out that the role of the consumer should not be understood solely in economic terms because “only an informed and educated consumer can take on food safety responsibilities at home, where nearly 40% of foodborne diseases originate.”

According to Dr. Roses, COPAIA represents an enormous opportunity for sharing different perspectives, knowledge, and practices designed to promote the different capacities that guarantee people in the hemisphere access to safe food. “We need to work together to promote food safety and combat poverty, as a means of breaking the false dichotomy between food security and food safety and thus obtaining sustainable human and economic development. Achieving food safety in our part of the world also guarantees the democratic development of the hemisphere.”

Dr. Elsa Murano, the Under Secretary of Food Safety of the United States of America, highlighted the importance of working together and made reference to her government’s commitment to support strengthening the institutional capacities of the countries in the area of food safety, particularly through sustainable training programs. She also mentioned the need for food safety policies based on science and international reference sources, such as Codex Alimentarius.

Dr. Joao Carlos de Souza Meirelles, Secretary of Science, Technology, and Economic Development of the State of São Paulo, Brazil, stated that the role of COPAIA as an instrument for harmonizing food safety in the Americas and said that INPPAZ could be viewed as a reference center for food safety in the world. He mentioned the commitment made by three universities in the State of São Paulo to support food safety training. The institutions that will take part in the project are: the University of São Paulo, the University of Campinas, and the University of the State of São Paulo.

He stressed the need for strengthening the capacity of countries to carry out risk analyses and to develop quality information systems.

INPPAZ Report on the recommendations of the 2nd COPAIA Meeting

The Director of INPPAZ, Dr. Claudio Almeida, spoke about what has been being done since February 2002 when the 2nd COPAIA Meeting was held. He reviewed the terms of reference approved at that meeting, its purposes and objectives, formation of the Commission, and the organization of meetings. He stated that food safety should be addressed at all points of the food chain and should be based on scientific evidence, as well as on the important role consumers play in this area. He recommended avoiding the duplication of effort in technical cooperation and encouraging technical cooperation

among countries, instead of only at the agency level. He said that countries should play a more active role in the Codex Alimentarius, not only by attending meetings, but also through the internal discussion of normative proposals.

Dr. Almeida stated that the strategic action lines of INPPAZ have focused on establishing a Master's program to train food safety program managers. To this end, strategic alliances have been established with universities in Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, the English Caribbean, the United States, and Argentina. It is hoped that universities in the Region will continue providing mentors, so that there will be a small number of students per mentor, thus favoring communication. He described the modules comprising this course and stressed that the objective is to achieve a critical mass of people capable of managing food safety programs. Students do not need to be linked with any university to earn the Master's degree.

Dr. Almeida also touched on management of the Codex Alimentarius and the role of PASB as the Regional Secretariat. He then commented on the evaluation of the perceptions member countries have of the Codex Alimentarius and on the fiduciary fund to foster the participation of developing countries.

Evaluation of food safety systems

The general objective of the presentation was to describe how food safety systems are organized in terms of their institutional structure, analyzing sets of variables in five frameworks of work:

- Food laws and regulations;
- Management of food regulation;
- Inspection services;
- Monitoring foods and epidemiological data; and
- Information, education, communication, and training.

Groups were defined according to differences in the progress they have made in the various aspects being considered, forming the basis for orienting technical cooperation to the needs of the countries.

Discussion

Representatives from Trinidad and Tobago (consumers), Paraguay (agriculture), CODEX, United States (consumers), Chile (consumers), Venezuela (producers), Ecuador

(consumers), Canada (health), CARICOM and WHO took part in the discussion following the presentations, making mention of the following goals:

- Implement a strategy for identifying leadership capacities in countries to promote the COPAIA action lines;
- Develop participatory processes at the national level, promoting the COPAIA model to reinforce the work of the CODES National Committees;
- Consolidate the process for forming intersectoral national commissions on food safety;
- Strengthen municipal bodies so that they take part in food safety initiatives and actions;
- Spur the development of communication strategies geared toward consumers and incorporating their participation, taking into account the characteristics of risk;
- Develop national capacities involving all the sectors to improve the impact on food safety;
- Stimulate political commitment to develop national food safety policies;
- Harmonize and strengthen the food safety regulatory framework in the countries; and
- Initiate the distance INPPAZ's Master's program in food safety management in association with academic institutions in the Region.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Considering,

1. that the food safety systems described by the member states during the meeting stressed the need to strengthen regulatory frameworks, control and inspection systems, and the internalization of international standards;
2. that the leadership role of the different actors and sectors in food safety systems need to be strengthened at the local, national, and subregional levels;
3. that capacities for managing food safety programs need to be strengthened in the member countries;

4. that strengthening the articulation of technical cooperation agencies is important in food safety;
5. that food safety necessitates analyzing the dangers from production to consumption;
6. that food safety should be based on coordination, cooperation with the public sector (agriculture, health) and with the private sector (producers, industry, and consumers);
7. that providing healthy food is a shared responsibility from the provider of inputs to the consumer, thus defining a new area of action in food safety;
8. that international trade necessitates food safety; and
9. that there is a strong link between food safety and tourism;

RESOLVES:

1. to recommend that RIMSA

Request countries to:

- (a) to support the professional Master's program for managers of food safety programs;
- (b) to participate in the evaluation of food safety systems to set up a framework of options to improve interinstitutional coordination and of the social actors involved;
- (c) to encourage their governments to develop a national food safety policy with the participation of all sectors;
- (d) to promote the formation of intersectoral food safety commissions;
- (e) to play a more active role in the Codex Alimentarius and to make use of the FAO/WHO fiduciary fund created for this purpose and to have countries contribute to this fund, as they are able;
- (f) to encourage their governments to work in coordination and incorporate the active participation of all sectors of the food chain in the design, promotion, and implementation of educational and informational campaigns;
- (g) to promote accessibility to their legislation on food to facilitate consultation, analysis, and possibly harmonization;

(h) to facilitate and promote cooperation among countries;

Request the Director of PASB to:

1. channel the offers of regional universities to collaborate on food safety training programs;
2. create a working group with the participation of other international organizations and sectors interested in improving the means for evaluating food safety systems;
3. encourage technical cooperation in:
 - (a) institutional strengthening of different sectors involved in the actions of food safety systems;
 - (b) strengthening the abilities of countries to analyze risks;
 - (c) developing food safety information and surveillance systems; and
 - (d) strengthening local (municipalities) capacities in food safety.

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