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**REPORT ON THE 9th MEETING OF THE HEMISPHERIC COMMITTEE
FOR THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE
(COHEFA 9)**

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1. The 9th Meeting of the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (COHEFA 9), convened by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB), was held at the Headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization on 22 April 2003.

Officers

<i>President:</i>	Dr. Darío Baumgarten	Minister of Agriculture, Paraguay
<i>Vice President:</i>	Dr. Pablo Roberto Girón	Vice Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition, Guatemala
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Dr. Andrés Borja	President of the Federation of Livestock Producers of Ecuador

2. Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Director of the PASB, served as Secretary *ex officio*, and Dr. Eduardo Correa Melo, Director of the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA), served as Technical Secretary.

Participants

3. The following people represented their respective regions:

Amazon Subregion:

4. Dr. Satyadeow Sawh, Minister of Agriculture of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, and Dr. José Agustín Campos, President of CONFAGAN—National Confederation of Farmers and Livestock Producers of Venezuela

Andean Area:

5. Dr. Alvaro J. Abisambra Abisambra, General Manager, Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and Dr. Andrés Borja Holguín, President of the Federation of Livestock Producers of Ecuador

The Caribbean:

6. Dr. Emerio Serrano—Director General of the Institute of Veterinary Medicine, IMV of Cuba, and Dr. Donald Keith Amiel, Manager Corporate Affairs, Caribbean Broiler Group of Jamaica.

Southern Cone:

7. Dr. Dario Baumgarten, Minister of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Paraguay, and Mr. Dardo Chiesa, President of the Confederation of Rural Associations of Buenos Aires and La Pampa, Argentina.

Central America:

8. Dr. Pablo Roberto Girón Muñoz, Vice Minister of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Nutrition, Guatemala

North America:

9. Dr. Gary Weber, Executive Director, National Cattlemen's Association, United States.

10. Also present were observers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and livestock producers.

Sessions

11. Two plenaries and a closing session were held.

Opening of the Meeting

12. The officers consisted of Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of PASB, Dr. Albino Belotto, Chief of the VPH Unit, and Dr. Eduardo Correa, Director of PANAFTOSA/PAHO, who opened the session, reminding the assembly that COHEFA has been meeting every two years since 1987. Next, Dr. Roses took the floor, expressing her satisfaction at participating in this important meeting, which included representatives from the public and private sectors of the countries of the Region, all working in the area of foot-and-mouth disease. Dr. Roses stressed the need for sweeping action, recalling the slogan, "Think globally and act locally." She called for joint activity, which has already been very successful-- for example, the elimination of poliomyelitis, smallpox, and more recently, measles in the Americas. This, despite the ease of communication and transportation that modern life offers. She restated her conviction that foot-and-mouth disease could be eradicated from the Hemisphere within a few years and ended by reaffirming that our objective is to improve the quality of life of our peoples.

Adoption of the Agenda

13. The work agenda submitted was accepted in its entirety.

Report of the Secretariat of the Committee

14. The report submitted by Dr. Eduardo Correa Melo, Director of PANAFTOSA, underscored that the recognition by the International Office of Epizootics (OIE – now the World Animal Health Organization) of areas free of foot-and-mouth disease, with and without vaccination, was a combined effort by the countries of the Region, after the epidemic in the Southern Cone in 2001 that began in Argentina. Dr. Correa cited the cooperation activities in several areas—for example, the strengthening of eradication plans and cooperation along national borders (River Plate Basin Agreement). He reported on the support received for strengthening the emergency response capacity. PANAFTOSA has created the Virtual Library to make all the scientific information available, linking up with other institutions in the area. Another activity was the audit of the Region's foot-and-mouth disease programs, with the preparation of manuals and evaluation procedures. The Expert Committee on Biosafety evaluated vaccine-producing laboratories in the Southern Cone and Amazon subregions. The genetic database containing reference strains and others obtained during emergencies was completed. PANAFTOSA participated in several ad hoc working groups, along with other agencies such as the OIE, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The surveys for the network of zoonosis reference laboratories are currently being evaluated (especially those on diagnosis and the production of biologicals for rabies), and the quality assurance plan is being implemented in the PANAFTOSA laboratory as part of the Center's strategic planning project. Several education and training activities were carried out, and projects are being negotiated with the IDB and FAO to obtain extrabudgetary resources. There has been no progress in the formation of a regional epidemiology committee, for lack of a professional in this field. The report was approved without comment.

Report on the Epidemiological Situation in the Countries, 2001-2002

15. Dr. Hugo Tamayo reported on the situation of the area free of foot-and-mouth disease, noting that this status was one of the successes achieved during the period. With respect to the Andean Area, a general reduction in the presence of foot-and-mouth disease in the subregion has been verified; Peru has not reported any cases of the disease for more than two years, and the sanitary outlook in Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela is favorable, while Ecuador is the country with the most cases. In contrast, there has been a significant rise in cases of vesicular stomatitis in the Region. Concerning the situation in the Southern Cone and Amazon and non-Amazon Brazil, Dr. Víctor Saraiva emphasized the countries' determination to quash the epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease in 2000 and

2001, and noted that, with PANAFTOSA support, they are making the necessary efforts to recover the disease-free status conferred on them by the OIE. The health situation in the Amazon subregion was considered favorable, with no reported cases of the disease in 2002. A project for northern South America is under way for the adoption of prevention measures in the area covered by the tripartite agreement among Brazil, Guyana, and Venezuela.

16. Responding to a query from the President, it was reported that recognition of the Chiquitania, in Bolivia, as disease-free with vaccination is in progress, and it was pointed out that trivalent vaccine is used, not bivalent vaccine as indicated in the report.

17. The Official Delegate from Colombia, Dr. A. Abisambra, commented that the increase in the number of cases of vesicular stomatitis should be viewed as an indicator of the success of the epidemiological surveillance system, rather than as a troubling situation. Furthermore, he noted that the more than two-year absence of reported cases of *Virus A* foot-and-mouth disease in the country is significant.

18. The Delegate from Ecuador's livestock sector, Dr. Laso, reported that the epidemic in that country primarily affected the areas where small producers predominate and was brought under control by the end of the year. This situation had a positive side: it boosted vaccination coverage rates to 95%. Dr. Laso noted that the cooperative program with APHIS made it possible to rehabilitate the livestock marketing centers, improve the epidemiological surveillance system, control the movements of livestock, slaughterhouses, and dairy plants. Finally, he stated that the program audits should be expanded to other countries outside the Southern Cone.

19. The Official Delegate from Argentina, Dr. Bernardo Cané, voiced his concern over imports to the Hemisphere of animals from countries with exotic diseases, requesting information on whether Venezuela had actually brought in animals from another hemisphere. Seconded by other delegates, he requested that PANAFTOSA find out and assess the risks associated with these imports, disseminating this information to the Member States.

20. Mr. Campos, the Delegate from the productive sector of Venezuela, acknowledged the low coverage achieved in the last period, stating that this was caused by the country's recent domestic political problems. Concerning the importation of livestock from countries with exotic diseases, he declared that Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to comply with all resolutions adopted by the specialized forums.

21. Dr. Recaredo Ugarte, Official Delegate from Uruguay, underscored the importance of systematic vaccination in the Uruguayan program, as well as epidemiological surveillance activities, which have a very high cost-benefit ratio, generating confidence in the country and enabling Uruguay to increase its exports.

22. Finally, the Official Delegate from Chile, Dr. Rojas, called for analyzing the foot-and-mouth disease situation in the Hemisphere in greater depth, employing a historical approach to explain what happened, especially during the period 2001-2002, and help to establish more effective eradication or control mechanisms.

Report on the Regular Meetings of COSALFA XXIX and XXX

23. The Official Delegate from Brazil, Dr. João Cavalléro, presented the report of the XXIX Meeting and the Delegate from Chile, Dr. Hernán Rojas, presented the report of the XXX Meeting. The reports and their respective resolutions were furnished to the participants.

Plan of Action of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (PHEFA), 2003-2009

24. Dr. Víctor Saraiva presented a detailed progress report on PHEFA's Plan of Action for the period 2003-2009. He indicated that the plans of action of the subregional projects in the Southern Cone and the Andean Area are about to end, while those of Amazon and non-Amazon Brazil are about to begin. He noted the lack of a program for the prevention of foot-and-mouth disease in the subregional projects of North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. In this regard, the Official Delegate from Cuba offered PANAFTOSA his country's collaboration in developing the prevention program for the disease-free area.

Other Matters

25. Dr. João Carlos Meirelles, Secretary of Science and Technology of São Paulo, Brazil, emphasized the importance of strengthening the global vision of foot-and-mouth disease in the Americas; of reinforcing a permanent, hemispheric system for audits and certification of the foot-and-mouth disease situation. For this purpose, he suggested that PAHO organize a hemispheric meeting, with the assistance of international cooperation agencies, to review the proposal for eradicating foot-and-mouth disease in the Hemisphere, adapting it to shorter periods, a more integrated vision, and cooperation with solidarity. It was suggested that this proposal, supported by the delegates from Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela, be submitted for the consideration of RIMSA. The Official Delegate from Argentina spoke and praised the support for the intervention of Dr. Meirelles, pointing out the need to adapt the role of PANAFTOSA to the new

international situation, to raise awareness among countries free of foot-and-mouth disease, particularly the United States of America, about the risk of introducing the disease into its territories, with serious hemispheric and extrahemispheric consequences in the social, economic, and political sphere. He offered his country as an alternative to the United States as the headquarters for the hemispheric meeting.

26. At the request of the Official Delegate from Argentina, PANAFTOSA will convene a special meeting of the Technical Committee of the River Plate Basin within the next 30 days to review the Project's Plan of Action.

Closing Ceremony

27. The closing ceremony was presided over by Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of the PASB, who commented on the heavy workload of the Commission and the positive results of the discussions. She emphasized, in the meantime, that any new mandates emanating from the resolutions should be weighed in terms of the financial commitments that they will entail, and she asked the delegates and observers to search for mechanisms to cover the cost of these activities.

Resolution

28. The delegates adopted two resolutions, as described below:

RESOLUTION N° 1

THE 9th MEETING OF THE HEMISPHERIC COMMITTEE FOR THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

Considering:

The emergence of foot-and-mouth disease in the Southern Cone in 2000-2001 and the prompt response to control the disease in the affected areas, which highlighted the need for strengthening joint, coordinated activities among the countries of the Region, in addition to the prevention activities of the national programs;

The programmatic reorientation of the Plan of Action 2003-2009 of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (PHEFA), which heavily emphasizes the local level and consensus-building in border areas of the Southern Cone, Andean Area, Amazon, and disease-free areas and highlights the urgent need for its implementation by the Member States;

The potential for the introduction of the foot-and-mouth disease virus into disease-free countries and areas of the Hemisphere, either through trade and cultural relations or acts of bioterrorism;

The need to strengthen regional capacity for routine and emergency diagnosis, under conditions of biosafety;

The importance of private-sector participation in maintaining national programs for the eradication of the disease;

The positive impact of the areas/countries free of foot-and-mouth disease in South America, and the prospect of adding new areas in the short term;

The need to strengthen the audits of the national foot-and-mouth disease programs coordinated by PANAFTOSA, as well as the audits of laboratory biosafety, pursuant to the mandate of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Southern Cone, and to expand these audits to other areas or regions;

The urgency of revitalizing coordination agencies in the disease-free regions of Central America, North America, and the Caribbean;

The current project to import buffalo to Venezuela and the concern among the member countries that these animals may come from areas with diseases exotic to the region;

The problems stemming from the difficulties that the company selected is having in delivering the I-ELISA 3ABC and EITB kits;

The express request of Argentina that Committee of the River Plate Basin Agreement meet as soon as possible;

Chile's request that PANAFTOSA intensify the epidemiological analysis of the health situation of the member countries using a historical approach and that the analyses be used to guide decisions about the lines of action to develop in the future;

RESOLVES:

1. That PANAFTOSA, in conjunction with the countries of the Region, should prepare prevention and contingency plans to prevent the introduction of the agent and its transmission in disease-free areas or countries, whether as a result of trade/cultural relations or acts of bioterrorism.

2. That the Member States make the necessary adjustments to their programs to include the activities for the period 2003-2009, especially the border components and the component corresponding to vaccination plans and strengthening the local level in the Southern Cone and Andean Area, and to entrust PANAFTOSA with the responsibility of quickly drawing up the plan of action for the Amazon subregion and the disease-free area of the Hemisphere.
3. That the PASB should make the pertinent efforts to establish the P3+ laboratory at PANAFTOSA, which will serve as support in dealing with emergencies, boosting response capacity; it should also consider evaluating Brazil's offer to set aside specific space in the Pedro Leopoldo Laboratory.
4. That the private sector of the subregions comprising PHEFA increase their participation in the national and subregional programs, thereby increasing the sustainability of program activities and contributing to the financing of regional technical cooperation programs
5. That PANAFTOSA provide continuity to, strengthen, and expand audits of the programs for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease and biosafety in laboratories, with the collaboration of other international agencies.
6. That the Member States of the subregions of the Hemisphere that are free of foot-and-mouth disease revive subregional coordination entities such as COPALIFA
7. That PANAFTOSA consult the health authorities of Venezuela about projects to import buffalo and determine the potential risk of the introduction of exotic diseases
8. That the Secretariat *ex officio* of the Committee of the River Plate Basin convene a special meeting next June at a venue to be defined.
9. That PANAFTOSA meet the countries' needs with regard to I-ELISA 3ABC and EITB diagnostic kits, until other laboratories can produce them efficiently.
10. That PANAFTOSA develop and apply a methodology for epidemiological analysis based on the historical background and phylogenetic relationships of the strains circulating in South America, to find an explanation for the latest outbreaks and recommend prevention and control measures to avert new emergencies.
11. That PANAFTOSA, working jointly with the countries, epidemiologically characterize the at-risk areas of South America in 2003 and make the maximum effort in the areas of the Region considered strategic.

12. That the resolutions of COSALFA XXIX and XXX be endorsed.

RESOLUTION N° 2

Considering the proposal of Brazil, supported by all the countries represented, given the urgent need for a high-level policy decision that makes a commitment to coordinated participation among the countries, the different agents in the livestock production chain, multilateral cooperation agencies, and related industries, aimed at hemispheric action for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease,

RESOLVES:

1. That, as soon as possible, the PASB form an organizing committee to convene a Hemispheric Conference on the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease approximately one year from now, with the participation of all the agents in the livestock and agricultural production chain, public and private agencies in the countries, and multilateral, technical cooperation, and financing agencies at the regional and global level. This conference will attempt to establish a policy at the highest level and secure a regional commitment to solidarity and cooperation among the countries and institutions involved to achieve the eradication of the disease. The United States is proposed as the headquarters.
2. That the multilateral agencies harmonize their activities, especially in regard to financing, to ensure that the resources used are disbursed with the hemispheric objective of eradicating foot-and-mouth disease.

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