



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**XI INTER-AMERICAN MEETING, AT THE MINISTERIAL
LEVEL, ON ANIMAL HEALTH**

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**PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FOOD
PROTECTION AND ZOOSES (INPPAZ)**

**II MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE (STC)**

**PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU, REGIONAL OFFICE OF
THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

**PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR FOOD PROTECTION AND ZOOSES
(INPAZ/PAHO/WHO)**

II MEETING OF THE INPPAZ SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
Martínez, Argentina, 15-17 February 1999

1. Background information

The Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO, was established on 15 November 1991 under an agreement signed between the Pan American Health Organization/ Regional Office of the World Health Organization for the Americas (PAHO/WHO) and the Republic of Argentina, and entered into operation in January 1992. Article 7 of the Agreement established a Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) responsible for advising the Director of PAHO/WHO on the scientific and technical analysis and evaluation of the Institute's program, particularly on matters related to applied research and the dissemination of information.

Pursuant to these recommendations, the Director convened the Committee's First Meeting (STC-I), which took place from 9 to 11 March 1994, to examine the progress achieved in establishing the Institute and in the initial programming of its activities in the fields of food protection and the zoonoses, as proposed in the said recommendations.

Since that meeting new situations have evolved that point to the need to summon a second meeting of the STC. Among other circumstances, mention should be made of the Institute's progress in implementing its program, as well as the recommendations of the first STC and other advisory bodies, such as the International Coordination Council (ICC), the Programming Committee for Argentina (PCA) and the Inter-American Meeting on Animal Health, at the Ministerial Level (RIMSA).

At the same time, in 1996 the Director of PASB designated an External Evaluation Group of the Program on Veterinary Public Health that made recommendations on the orientation and priority to be awarded to the Institute's activities, which have been gradually put into effect. New strategic situations have arisen both in the region and the world in relation to food-borne emerging diseases, the strengthening of subregional integration initiatives, and the need to reinforce food protection programs.

In the face of such circumstances, technical cooperation should emphasize the introduction of new regulations and laws, the updating of inspection and control methods, the organization of epidemiological surveillance systems, the development of laboratory

networks with laboratory quality assurance, and the strengthening of social communication and health education at all levels of the food chain.

To comply with the recommendations of the Directing Bodies and the Advisory Groups and with due account of the above-mentioned circumstances, the Institute has prepared a strategic plan defining the short, medium and long-term goals and objectives to be achieved by the beginning of the next millennium, to be submitted for consideration by the Committee.

In view of the above, the Director of PASB has decided to convoke the II Meeting of the Committee for the purpose of examining, evaluating, and making recommendations on the activities carried out by the Institute, as well as on its Strategic Plan of Action for the forthcoming years.

Following the initiative of the Director of PASB/WHO, Dr. George Alleyne, the SFC was constituted as presented in the list of participants in Anex 1.

2. Inaugural session

The inaugural session was presided over by Dr. Argentino Luis Pico, Under Secretary of Health Policies and International Relations, in representation of the Minister of Health and Social Action of Argentina; Dr. Henri Jouval, Representative of PAHO/WHO in Argentina; Dr. Luis Barcos, Chairman, National Service of Food Quality and Agriculture, SENASA, in Representation of the Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Nutrition; Dr. Stephen Corber, Director, PAHO Division of Disease Prevention and Control, and Dr. Jaime Estupiñan, Director, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO, who welcomed the members of the Committee and special guests.

Speaking on behalf of the Government of Argentina, Dr. Argentino Luis Pico emphasized the commitment of that country to the Pan American Health Organization in regard to the establishment and maintenance of the INPPAZ, and underscored the Institute's significance for all the countries in the region. He then declared open the Committee's Second Meeting.

Dr. Henri Jouval invited the participants to elect the officers. Dr. Joao Carlos Meirelles was designated Chairman; Dr. Pablo Bazerque, Vice-chairman; and Dr. Lester Crawford, Rapporteur.

Dr. H. Jouval also submitted the agenda for consideration by the Committee, which was adopted as follows.

Development of the Meeting

3. First working session

3.1. Strategic and programmatic orientations of PAHO/WHO

Dr. Stephen Corber informed the participants on the five strategic and programmatic orientations of PAHO/WHO, which had been established for the 1995-1998 quadrennium and continued to be in effect for the quadrennium 1999-2002: health in human development, health promotion and protection, environmental protection and development, development of health systems and services, and disease prevention and control. The priority line of action of the last orientation was the promotion of food protection, as well as the prevention, control, and eradication of the zoonoses and foot-and-mouth disease. The technical cooperation actions regarding this orientation are carried out by the Division of Disease Prevention and Control, of which the Program on Veterinary Public Health and the INPPAZ are a part.

Dr. Corber informed the Committee on the recommendations of the Governing Bodies and the Advisory Groups regarding the priority INPPAZ should give to its food protection activities, and the coordination it had already established with PANAFTOSA in what appertained to the progressive transfer to that Center of the INPPAZ activities in the field of the zoonoses.

Lastly, Dr. Corber requested to the members of the Committee their comments, observations, and recommendations on the activities carried out by the Institute, as well as on its Strategic Plan.

3.2. The need and importance of integrated programs of food protection, public health, and globalization

Dr. Yasmine Motarjemi presented the item: The need and importance of integrated programs of food protection, public health, and globalization. She described the numerous health problems caused by food-borne diseases and the factors that had a bearing on food safety and the appearance of FBD outbreaks. Some of such factors surpassed the means available to the health services for confronting them and as a result food safety had become a significant public health problem. Dr. Motarjemi referred to the changes in the approach to food inspection and protection and to the adoption of systems that combined the use of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and the Standard Sanitation Operational Procedures (SSOP) of disinfection with the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system, emphasizing that the concept of hazard analysis had strengthened the importance of food safety assurance systems based on scientific criteria.

After referring to the importance of adopting the new technologies for food protection and to the need for strengthening FBD surveillance activities, as well as to their economic significance, Dr. Motarjemi emphasized that food safety was an essential public health responsibility and indicated that the countries should assign it due priority within their health activities as an integral part of their policies on food and nutrition.

3.3. Report on the activities carried out by the INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO and its Strategic Plan of Action

Dr. Jaime Estupiñán referred to the response of PAHO/WHO to the countries through the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation on Food Protection, emphasizing among other results the development of the information system on food legislation, which was already being utilized by the countries; the creation of the Pan American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (RILAA); the performance of inter-laboratory tests on pesticide residues, and the training of laboratory workers in the diagnosis and identification of food emerging pathogens; the implementation of the regional system for the epidemiological surveillance of FBD with the participation of 24 countries; the massive training of staff members from all the countries in the application of the HACCP system, the GMP and the SSOP, and the preparation of a plan on social communication and health education in food.

Next, Dr. Estupiñán submitted for consideration by the Committee the INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO Strategic Plan for technical cooperation for the forthcoming years. In his presentation he emphasized the strategic postulates resulting from the joint evaluation by PAHO and the countries of the Program for Technical Cooperation on Food Protection; the Institute's experience on technical cooperation related to food safety and the information available worldwide, and the short, medium and long-term objectives, goals, lines of action and strategies of technical cooperation that the Institute would develop at the beginning of the next millennium. Finally, he pointed out the needs regarding the infrastructure and the resources required to carry out the plan.

3.4. Comments and observations by the members of the Committee

Special mention was made during the session of INPPAZ significant advances in the delivery of cooperation in food protection and in the field of the zoonoses, in compliance with the recommendations of the Governing and Advisory Bodies and other forums of PAHO/WHO. The Strategic Plan submitted for the forthcoming years represented a set of goals that were in agreement with the needs of the countries and that could be attained through the strategies already adopted if the Institute succeeded in ensuring the resources needed for implementing the plan, and if the intersectoral collaboration required for facilitating its fulfillment was made available. The establishment of priorities in accordance with the available resources was likewise considered necessary.

The committee found acceptable the gradual transfer of zoonosis activities from the INPPAZ to the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) and emphasized the need for PAHO/WHO to ensure the continuity of technical cooperation in the field of the zoonoses, so that that transition would not affect the requests for cooperation from the countries.

4. Second working session

4.1. Report on the activities, evaluation, and projections of technical cooperation of the Regional Information System for the Epidemiological Surveillance of Food-borne Diseases in Latin America and the Caribbean

Dr. Norberto Morán presented the background, operational structure and results of the Regional System for the Epidemiological Surveillance of Food-borne Diseases, as well as the technical cooperation activities that had been carried out by the INPPAZ/PAHO to implement the system. He referred to the initial stages in 1995, when 19 countries began to send four-monthly standardized reports with the inclusion of data on the number of outbreaks and cases, the food involved in the outbreaks and the place of occurrence. As a result, during the period 1995-1998 as many as 3147 outbreaks, 102 842 cases and 219 deaths had been reported. He emphasized the importance of cooperation for the development of the system at the local level and considered it as the most effective approach in view of the operation of the system.

Following Dr. Morán's presentation, Dr. Albino Belotto reported on the evaluation of the system, which included the analysis of the collected data and of the system's operation, the frequency of the reports and the quality of the information based on the percentage of outbreaks in which the diagnosis, the food involved, and the place of occurrence were reported. With respect to the analysis of data, he emphasized that statistically reliable information was still not available due to the significant differences in their presentation. However, data on the trends regarding the agents and the food involved and the places of occurrence were available both at the country and the regional level and would be very useful for the decision-making process. Finally, Dr. Belotto submitted for consideration by the Committee a proposed plan of action, together with the strategies required for its implementation, which was aimed at strengthening and improving the operation of the system. The plan included the adjustments required in the information on the determinant factors of outbreaks; the strengthening of cooperation for the development of the system at the local level; training activities, and the methodology for evaluating the system.

4.2. Comments and observations by the members of the Committee

The implementation of the epidemiological surveillance system in a country should be structured in such a way as to avoid overlapping with the already existing activities. To this end, it was recommended to promote coordination among the different sectors involved, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishing, with their surveillance and food analysis sections; it was also considered advisable to disseminate the activities or the system through lectures and publications.

The training of communicators on general aspects as a support to FBD surveillance was essential in order that the messages on food protection could reach the homes where most of the outbreaks took place, as shown by the information generated through the system. The members pointed out that the communication process should cover all the age groups, including the youngest, and should be coherent with the prevention strategy.

The members pointed out the importance of systematization to eliminate the problems associated with the system, such as those related with the sources reporting the outbreaks, and the type of participation of the medical, epidemiological and sanitary regulation services; this would avoid the belated arrival of information and its slow flow within the countries.

Emphasis was given to the need for identifying the etiologic agents as a requirement for intervention actions, as well as to the need for an analysis laboratory network for the identification of the causative agents.

It was very important that the information collected by the system should be disseminated more rapidly, so that it would be useful in leading to action and not a mere statistical exercise. If possible, the utilization of electronic means should be promoted. Those generating the information would thus become aware that their work was useful and would be encouraged to continue reporting.

The training plan prepared for the focal points should likewise be addressed to the managers of the national systems and should also include the training of trainers. The members pointed out that the provision of training required the preparation of interdisciplinary teams composed of epidemiologists, inspectors, and laboratory personnel in order to increase the efficiency of the investigation of outbreaks.

It was suggested that the PAHO Regional Epidemiological Surveillance System should contribute the information on the outbreaks to the WHO database in Geneva, so that with data available from all the regions in the world it would be possible to strengthen and improve the response to all the countries.

The members pointed out that the program for FBD surveillance in the region was a good beginning and would be very useful for orienting activities for the prevention and control of new outbreaks, developing the methodology of risk analysis and identifying the impact on the population.

It was considered of interest to incorporate information that would make it possible to evaluate the degree of intervention in the outbreaks and thus confirm whether the regulatory actions had been really effective.

Some members recalled the importance of harmonization, and therefore indicated the need for PAHO and WHO to use the same protocol for the collection of information. To this end, the teaching and educational materials produced by the food protection units of both organizations should be taken into account.

It was pointed out that the response to an outbreak would always occur at the local level; it was therefore necessary to cooperate with the countries in order to strengthen the response at those levels. It was important that the officials at the local level were aware of the significance of the data they collected for the actions they themselves would undertake. It was also important to define which data should be collected, the use to which they would be put and for whom the information was intended. Training should teach how data should be collected so that they could be used effectively at the local levels. Briefly, priority should be given to helping the countries to make proper use of the data they themselves generated.

With the information provided by the regional system it was possible to pay attention to patterns and trends and to adopt long-term actions, as well as to alert the countries on the appearance of an emerging situation.

The difficulty of establishing a homogeneous system was recognized; mention was made in this respect of the Argentine Republic where each of its provinces collected the information in a different way. The members agreed that feedback was essential so that the system could continue to provide information. Finally, they pointed out the importance that systems, albeit simple, should not be discontinued.

Emphasis was placed on the need for an interdisciplinary team as a means of solving the outbreaks of FBD; on the importance of expanding the coverage of the system in every country to obtain a true image of the FBD problem in each of them and in the region as a whole and, lastly, on the incorporation into the system of the information on the risk factors associated with the presence of outbreaks.

The data incorporated into the system were providing guidelines for action. It had become apparent that 40% of the outbreaks occurred in the homes and such information indicated the advisability of orienting the recommendations towards establishing control measures, including on communication and education activities for the homes.

Lastly, the need for incorporating surveillance into the context of integrated food protection programs and food policies was underscored.

5. Third working session

5.1. Activities and projections of technical cooperation for updating the systems of food inspection and sanitary protection

Dr. Juan Cuéllar informed the members of the Committee on the cooperation activities carried out in the countries in the Region with the Institute's coordination for the modernization of food inspection and protection systems, particularly regarding the adoption of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system, the prerequisites of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and the Standardized Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOP). He emphasized the importance of the comprehensive approach to inspection systems, as well as the achievements in that field regarding the interaction of governments with the food production chain of the private sector. He pointed out that cooperation had been directed to the massive training of personnel and to the preparation and adoption of teaching materials. He also referred to the prospects of the INPPAZ cooperation in the matter, which would emphasize the incorporation of the HACCP, GMP, and SSOP giving priority to the food intended for domestic consumption and to the small and medium-sized industry.

5.2. Comments and recommendations by the members of the Committee

It was deemed necessary that the INPPAZ should continue to provide cooperation to the countries in strengthening the inspection and quality control services so that food

inspection in the Region could attain the levels that complied with the principles of equivalence and certification, as established by the international community in accordance with the orientations of the international regulatory organizations, such as the Codex Alimentarius and the ISO standards.

It was argued that, although the need for implementing the HACCP system was based mainly on the United States regulations that established the binding force of the system at the place of origin for the importation of food, the application of the HACCP system for food intended for domestic consumption was dependant on the strong belief of the countries in the benefits to be derived from that system as a tool for quality control and risk analysis, rather than as a solution of all problems.

The members of the Committee considered the need for evaluating the progress in the application and use of the HACCP as a basis for solving in the future the problems related to its implementation in small and medium-sized companies. Regarding the assurance of food quality from the production site to the home, it was remarked that progress in the application of the HACCP had been greater in the industrial sector, and concern was expressed as to the feasibility of its use in other segments of the food chain.

It was considered important to begin collecting information on the results of the application of the HACCP for the purpose of verifying its operation and identifying faults in its application in companies where problems of contamination persisted regardless of the use of the system . The reporting of reliable data on the advantages of the HACCP to prevent food contamination would be of great importance to convince the small entrepreneurs who were not motivated by export requirements, as well as to make available quantified data with which to demonstrate those advantages .

The importance of emphasizing the application of the GMP and SSOP as prerequisites for the implementation of the HACCP system was discussed. As an example to the point, the Committee noted its successful application in hospitals, which had been developed with the cooperation of PAHO/INPPAZ, and suggested that the same methodology be adopted in the schools and small businesses.

During the debate consideration was also given to the need for convincing the regulatory authorities of the countries of the importance of the agreement of food inspection legislation with the State's capacity to verify its compliance and with the production chain's capacity to apply the regulations established in the legislation.

The Committee estimated that identifying contamination risks in the implementation of the HACCP system in the food production chain was not enough; it was also necessary to have available the means and resources required for eliminating those risks. The Committee recommended the investigation and promotion of alternative means to eliminate the risks of contamination, for example, food preservation technologies such as refrigeration, pasteurization, cooking, vacuum methods and, more recently, irradiation.

The Committee considered that for the purpose of strengthening food inspection services, the INPPAZ/PAHO should consolidate its leadership in the Region in training activities.

In order to support the countries in the technical preparation for the Codex Alimentarius meetings, it was recommended that prior to those meetings the INPPAZ/PAHO should promote workshops for the purpose of harmonizing and consolidating the positions of those countries in the defense of their interests.

Lastly, the need for creating a regional advisory forum on food quality and safety that would be responsible for suggesting technical and political guidelines to be implemented by the countries within the framework of the PAHO/WHO Regional Plan for Technical Cooperation Food Protection was discussed.

6. Fourth working session

6.1. Technical cooperation activities and projections for the strengthening of the analytical services and the establishment of laboratory networks for the detection of microbiological and chemical contaminants in food

The item was presented by Mr. J. Torroba, who referred to the activities carried out by the Institute in fulfillment of the recommendations of the STC I regarding chemical contaminants, which he summarized thus:

- Inter-laboratory tests for organochlorine pesticides, with the participation of 15 laboratories in 10 countries.

- Promotion and advisory services for the establishment of the Inter-American Food Analysis Laboratories, RILAA. The network has an Executive Committee and INPAZ/PAHO and FAO serve as ex officio Secretariat. A plan of action was prepared that included the registration and survey of the laboratories, the mobilization of resources from the IDB and other entities, the training of officials, and the advancement of laboratory quality assurance.

- Direct advisory services to Chile for the control of residues of animal and plant origin; to Peru for the installation of a residue laboratory, and to Argentina for the detection and evaluation of lead residues in canned food.

- Training of 62 officials from 13 countries in the region in various subjects related to contaminants

- Supply of standards to 26 laboratories.

Mr. Torroba ended his presentation describing the activities that could be carried out in support of the development of the laboratory network; the activities related to the verification of the regulatory and normative aspects of inspection; inter-laboratory testing, and the methodology for risk analysis.

Dr. Lieven Uytterhaegen referred to the activities carried out in the area of microbiological contaminants, in particular, the training in the diagnosis of emerging pathogens provided to 39 officials from 13 countries, as well the training in rapid methods, biosafety, and hygienic food protection. He informed the Committee on the development of the IOE-PAHO project for the harmonization of the registration of drugs and the control of residues in food, which had a bearing on the problem of the resistance to antimicrobial agents.

With respect to the proposal regarding the plan of action for microbiology, Dr. Uytterhaegen referred to the support provided to the laboratory networks and to the regulatory and normative aspects; to the development of FBD surveillance and of a project regarding the resistance to antimicrobial agents and, lastly, to the support for incorporating the methodology for microbiological risk assessment.

6.2. Comments and recommendations by the members of the Committee

The existence of a core laboratory group responsible for supporting the countries in their efforts to incorporate applied analysis methodologies, coordinate or carry out inter-laboratory tests, coordinate research, and supply reference reagents and standards was essential for the provision of technical cooperation.

The Committee considered that the INPPAZ/PAHO actions in favor of the operation of the RILAA were highly significant and would enable the Institute to establish a more direct contact with the services of the countries and to identify their real needs for technical cooperation.

However, the magnitude and the cost of the project would make it necessary to mobilize resources from the countries and other sources to guarantee its operation.

In this respect, account should be taken of the experience of similar networks operating in Europe, as well as of the sampling methodologies developed by WHO. The work should be carried out within the context of the Codex Alimentarius and other organizations, such as the AOAC.

The contribution of the INPPAZ in the field of inter-laboratory tests was considered invaluable to correct the differences frequently found in the results obtained by the laboratories, even in some developed countries. It would be important to contribute that information to the Codex Committee on Analytical Methods and Sampling. The advantage of the INPPAZ/PAHO was its neutral character that excluded any restriction for the shipment of samples and tests results.

Emphasis should be given to the cooperation for laboratory quality assurance programs.

7. Fifth working session

7.1. Activities and projections of technical cooperation in social communication and health education for community involvement in food protection programs

Dr. Gustavo Delgado submitted the proposed work plan, pointing out that the INPPAZ education and communication unit should interact with the other program areas of PAHO; use the materials developed by the Organization, such as the series of spots prepared for dissemination campaigns; produce an institutional videotape on the INPPAZ; disseminate educational material through satellite television networks; conduct training seminars for communicators, and create a data bank on communicators and the educational means and materials available in the Region of the Americas.

Among other activities, Dr. Delgado mentioned the establishment of the Pan American Day of Food Protection, as well as the institution of an award to the best journalistic work on subjects related to food safety.

To complement the above statement, Mr. Marcelo D'Agostino referred to the INPPAZ/PAHO achievements in electronic communication, such as the web page in Internet, the information system on food regulations, and the Institute's virtual library in food protection and the zoonoses.

7.2. Comments and recommendations by the members of the Committee

The INPPAZ/PAHO should collect the necessary data in order to be informed on and make known the various types of community involvement that were predominant in the countries in the region. It should also gather information on examples of communication that had influenced or modified the attitudes of the population towards food safety. Emphasis was placed on the need for two different sets of communication strategies, one for emergencies or disasters and the other for normal situations, and as well as for a "prescription book" of procedures concerning communication for food handling in both situations.

Technical cooperation activities should be sustained on the development of a basic approach to communication with the use of well-known methodologies and strategies. The INPPAZ/PAHO would consequently require a specialized advisory group. On the basis of this approach, cooperation should be provided to the countries to identify the target audience of such campaigns; the educational activities should also be evaluated.

Continuing education procedures for health professionals should be set up.

The members of the Committee insisted on the idea of the production of a videotape on the food protection activities being carried out by the INPPAZ/PAHO for massive dissemination.

The communication strategy should be continuous and cover the different decision-making levels, as well as the local level in the case of those responsible for notifying the outbreaks of FBD.

The Committee pointed out that the specific mission of the INPPAZ/PAHO should consist of promoting in the countries in the region the need for implementing a specific communication procedure in food protection. It was also mentioned that the work should be promoted jointly with the private sector.

Reference was made to the social communication program in animal health prepared by PAHO in Central America some time ago and to the manuals on health education developed during the course of the PROASA project. The Committee estimated that they could also be taken into account, after being duly adapted for the implementation of the social communication program in food protection.

8. Sixth working session

During the sixth session, the members of the Committee met in different working groups for the purpose of discussing and drawing up their conclusions and recommendations.

The items under discussion for their inclusion in the recommendations were: Strategic Plan of the INPPAZ PAHO/WHO, Epidemiological Surveillance of Food-borne Diseases, Analytical Laboratory Services, Inspection and Control Services, and Social Communication and Education.

9. Closing session

The closing session was presided over by Dr. Joao Carlos de Souza Meirelles; Dr. Pablo Bazquerque (Vice-chairman), Dr. Lester Crawford (Rapporteur), Dr. Stephen Corber, Director PAHO Division of Disease Prevention and Control, and Dr. Jaime Estupiñán, Director INPPAZ/PAHO.

Dr. Meirelles asked the Rapporteur, Dr. L. Crawford, to read the recommendations proposed during the course of the meeting which, after consideration by the members of the Committee, were approved unanimously.

Note: Dr. Aníbal Franco in his capacity as observer was not in agreement with the last paragraph of recommendation 3 referring to the name of the Institute.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

The Scientific and Technical Committee submitted to the consideration of the Director of PASB/WHO the following conclusions and recommendations:

Strategic Plan

1. The Committee took note of the important achievements in the transition of PAHO/WHO-INPPAZ to a food protection center since the first meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee in 1994. Notable among those achievements had been the training activities, food-borne disease surveillance, and cooperative programs carried out

throughout the region. While progress still had to be made, the strategic plan apparently represented a reasonable set of goals that were both positive and achievable. The intersectorial collaboration and cooperation were bringing INPAZZ the kind of recognition that would facilitate those next steps. The Committee congratulated the staff and leadership of the INPAZZ in coordination with the Program on Veterinary Public Health and the PAHO field staff on the progress made during the last five years.

2. The Committee would like to encourage the formation of a Regional Commission on Food Protection in which the PAHO/WHO-INPAZZ would act as *ex officio* secretariat. The Commission should have specialized subcommittees encompassing the political, technical and regional levels, as necessary. The Commission should have as one of its objectives the strengthening of the food safety science basis for the Americas. Likewise it should devote itself to fostering the application of solid scientific principles in every stage of the human food production chain. Perhaps most importantly the Commission should be the instrument for facilitating the fundamental involvement of the PAHO member countries in the Codex Alimentarius procedures and in other professional, commercial and regulatory organizations that operate at a world level. This should be accomplished with the technical cooperation of PAHO/WHO -INPPAZ.

3. The Committee respectfully proposed that the Strategic Plan be designated as the PAHO Plan of Action for Regional Technical Cooperation in Food Protection. It furthermore suggested that INPPAZ should henceforth be known as the Pan American Institute for Food Protection.

Epidemiological surveillance

The INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO should:

4. Continue rendering technical cooperation to the countries for the evaluation of the national food-borne disease surveillance systems and the strengthening of the surveillance systems at the local level.

5. Promote the dissemination, use, and feedback of the data collected at all levels of the surveillance system, as well as by the regulatory authorities and other related institutions. PAHO-WHO INPPAZ should deliver to the countries of the Region detailed epidemiological reports on important specific outbreaks.

6. Include in the quarterly reports information on the factors leading to the occurrence of food-borne disease (FBD) outbreaks.

7. Include in the Regional FBD Epidemiological Surveillance System the data collected on cases of FBD from other sources, such as national surveillance systems and the PAHO regional system.

8. Continue to provide technical cooperation to the countries on training and the development of the surveillance systems infrastructure, in accordance with the plan of action resulting from the evaluation of the Regional FBD Epidemiological Surveillance System.

Food inspection and protection systems

The INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO should:

9. In collaboration with other international organizations and the countries, promote the organization of an Inter-American Conference on food safety whose main objectives would be the analysis of changes throughout the world, the technological development, the new approaches to food inspection and control, and the mass communication and educational programs aimed at increasing community involvement. The fundamental purpose of the Conference would be to promote the involvement of the countries in the field of food protection.

10. Establish mechanisms to foster the activities of the Codex Commission in the countries, as well as the activities that facilitate the incorporation of the concept of equivalence in inspection and control systems.

11. Establish the necessary infrastructure to enable the INPPAZ to become a regional center for training in inspection and control systems.

12. Organize in INPPAZ a database with the results of the application of the HACCP system to help to orient the needs concerning technical cooperation and to demonstrate the benefits of the system to the interested parties.

13. Promote and develop strategies on technical cooperation for the application of food safety systems and its implementation at all the levels of the food chain.

14. Emphasize in its technical cooperation the training aspects on HACCP, GMP and SSOP and on the utilization of appropriate technologies to enhance food safety.

Analytical services

The INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO should:

15. Focus on a core laboratory in order to carry out basic laboratory activities and coordinate laboratory activities with PAHO/WHO collaborative centers and other centers of excellence in the region and provide support to the Inter-American Network of Food Laboratories.

16. Focus on laboratory activities in order to uphold the INPPAZ technical cooperation programs related to the epidemiological surveillance of food-borne diseases and support regulatory activities, with special emphasis on laboratory quality assurance and training.

17. Coordinate inter-laboratory proficiency testing activities for microbiological and chemical contaminants.

Considerations

(A) The transition of the non-enteric zoonoses should be concluded as fast as possible so that the food laboratory sector could allocate all its resources only to food protection..

(B) The laboratory staff posts should be completed as specified in the strategic plan, and human resources from member countries should be mobilized in order to strengthen the core laboratory staff.

Mass communication and health education

The INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO should:

18. Develop its ability to provide technical cooperation in mass communication and education, which should include inter country communication (the web page on regulations, for example) and the training of health professionals and the public..

19. Maintain and expand the PAHO/WHO-INPPAZ web page.

20. Appoint a consultative group with expertise in communication. This group would:
-train INPPAZ professionals in the general principles of social communication.
-advise on educational programs in member countries.
-advise on the coordination of educational programs.

21. In joint action with the consultation group, select a food safety problem to be targeted with effective communication in order to solve it and demonstrate the effectiveness of a social communication program. Health and economic indicators should be included.

22. Increase the food safety expertise among health professionals. This could be accomplished through training programs and the review of educational material.

23. Video conferences could be used to provide information.

24. For the communications process it was suggested to make use of the available infrastructure at the local level.

In witness whereof, the Final Report, in the Spanish language, is signed by the Chairman of the Scientific and technical Committee and by the Secretary ex officio,.

DONE in Martínez, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, on this seventeenth day of February of the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.

The Secretary will deposit the original text in the files of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and will send copies thereof to the Member Governments of the Organization.

Dr. Joao Carlos de Sousa Meirelles
STC Chairman

Dr. Jaime Estupiñán
Director INPPAZ
STC Secretary *ex officio*

Anex 1

Members of the Committee

Following the initiative of the Director of PASB/WHO, Dr. George Alleyne, the
STC was constituted as follows:

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AGENDA

Day 1: Monday, 15 February 1999

09:00–09:30 **Opening of the Meeting**

- 09:30–10:00** 1. Election of the Chairman, Vice-chairman, and Rapporteur
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Purpose of the Meeting

First Working Session

10:00–10:30 4. Strategic and programmatic orientations of the Pan American Health Organization.
Dr Stephen Corber, Director, Division of Disease Prevention and Control, PAHO/WHO.

10:30–11:00 5. The need and importance of Integrated Programs on Food Protection, Public Health, and Globalization.
Dr. Yasmine Motarjemi, Food Safety Program/WHO

11:00–11:15 Coffee

11:15–12:00 6. Report on the activities carried out by the INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO and its Strategic Plan of Action.
Dr. Jaime Estupiñán, Director INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO

12:00–13:00 7. Comments and recommendations by the members of the Committee.

13:00 - 14:00 Luncheon

Second Working Session

14:00–15:00 8. Report on the operation and evaluation, and the technical cooperation projections of the Regional Information System for the Epidemiological Surveillance of the Foodborne Diseases in Latin America and the Caribbean. (RISES-FBD).
Dr. Albino Belotto, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO
Dr. Norberto Morán, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO

- 15:00–15:15 Coffee
- 15:15–17:00 9. Comments and recommendations by the members of the
Committee

Day 2: Tuesday, 16 February 1999

Third Working Session

- 09:00–09:30 10. Activities and technical cooperation projections for updating the
Systems of Food Inspection and Sanitary Control.
Dr. Juan Cuéllar, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO
- 09:30–10:30 11. Comments and recommendations by the members of the
Committee
- 10:30–10:45 Coffee

Fourth Working Session

- 10:45–11:45 12. Activities and technical cooperation projections for the
strengthening of analytical services and the establishment of
laboratory networks for the detection of microbiological and
chemical contaminants in food
Mr. Jorge Torroba, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO
Dr. Lieven Uytterhaegen, INPPAZ/PAHO/WHO
- 11:45 - 13:00 13. Comments and recommendations by the members of the
Committee
- 13:00–14:00 Luncheon

Fifth Working Session

- 14:00–14:30 14. Activities and technical cooperation projections in social
communication and health education for community involvement in
food protection programs.
Dr. Gustavo Delgado, PAHO/Uruguay
- 14:30–15:30 15. Comments and recommendations by the members of the
Committee.

15:30–15:45 Coffee
15:45–17:00 (Continued)

Day 3: Wednesday, 17 February 1999

Sixth Working Session

09:00–12:00 16. Working groups
13:00–14:00 Luncheon
14:00–16:00 17. Preparation of the report and recommendations of the Committee
Visits to the Laboratory and the Information Center
16:00 18. Reading and approval of the final report

Closing session