

FINAL REPORT

The VI Meeting of the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COHEFA VI) was held at the Headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in Washington, D.C., United States of America, on 22 April 1997, as convened by the Director of PAHO.

OFFICERS

The following officers were elected by unanimous vote:

<i>Chairman:</i>	Mr. Juan Alfonso Borgognon Minister of Agriculture	Paraguay
<i>Vice Chairman:</i>	Mr. Antonio Eduardo Gómez Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Colombia
<i>Rapporteur:</i>	Mr. Olmedo Esquivel President, National Cattlemen's Association (ANAGAN)	Panama

Dr. David Brandling-Bennett, Deputy Director of PAHO, acted as Secretary ex officio of the meeting in place of Dr. George A. O. Alleyne, Director of PAHO, and Dr. Vicente M. Astudillo, Director of the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center, served as Technical Secretary.

PARTICIPANTS

Members of the Committee

For the Amazon Subregion, Dr. Enio Antonio Marques Pereira, National Secretary for the Defense of Agriculture, and Dr. João de Souza Meirelles, President of the National Beef Council of Brazil.

For the Andean Subregion, Mr. Antonio Eduardo Gómez, Minister of Agriculture of Colombia, and Dr. Medardo Lasso Pedroso, Representative of the Cattlemen's Federation of Ecuador.

For the Caribbean Subregion, the Hon. Timothy Harris, Minister of Lands, Housing, and Agriculture of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

For the Meso America Subregion, Ms. Vilma Hernández de Calderón, Vice Minister of Agriculture of El Salvador, and Mr. Olmedo Esquivel, President of the National Cattlemen's Association of Panama.

For the North America Subregion, Dr. Normal G. Willis, Executive Director of the National Center for Foreign Animal Diseases, Animal and Plant Health Directorate of Canada, and Mr. Dan Childs, National Cattlemen's Association of the United States of America.

For the Southern Cone Subregion, Mr. Juan Alfonso Borgognon, Minister of Agriculture of Paraguay, and Dr. Luciano Miguens, Rural Society of Argentina.

AGENDA

Opening of the Meeting

Election of the President, Vice President, and Rapporteur

Address by the Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Sir George Alleyne

Adoption of the Agenda and Program of Sessions

Report of the Secretariat of the Committee

Reports of the XXIII and XXIV Regular Meetings of the South American Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COSALFA)

Report on the Plan of Action of the Hemispheric Program for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

- Southern Cone Subregion

- Andean Subregion

- Amazon Subregion

- Disease-free Areas

General Discussion of the Plan of Action, with the Participation of Rural Producers, Technical Cooperation Agencies, and Financial Agencies

Report on the Outcome of the International Conference on Perspectives for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the Next Millennium and Its Impact on Food Security and Trade

Other Matters

Conclusions and Recommendations

Closing of the Meeting

SESSIONS

Two plenary sessions and one closing session were held.

First Plenary Session

Dr. Brandling-Bennett welcomed the participants to Washington, D.C., and to PAHO Headquarters, and announced that Dr. George A. O. Alleyne, Director of PAHO, would be arriving shortly. He then announced that Mr. Juan Alfonso Borgognon, Minister of Agriculture of Paraguay, had been nominated as Chairman of COHEFA VI and that the nomination had been seconded by El Salvador. Dr. Medardo Lasso Pedrosa proposed Mr. Antonio Eduardo Gómez, Minister of Agriculture of Colombia, as Vice Chairman, which was accepted. The representative of the private sector of Argentina, Dr. Miguens, proposed Mr. Olmedo Esquivel, President of the National Cattlemen's Association of Panama, as Rapporteur, which was seconded by Mr. Meirelles, of Brazil.

Item 3 was deferred pending the arrival of Dr. Alleyne, and item 4 was taken up. The Chairman urged the delegates to express their views on documents COHEFA6.1 and 6.2, which were approved without discussion.

Dr. Vicente M. Astudillo, Technical Secretary of COHEFA, cited the efforts made by Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay to organize systems for the surveillance of suspicions of the syndrome of vesicular diseases, which had given rise to the development of the differential diagnosis of foot-and-mouth disease in the laboratory.

He then referred to the PHEFA macroregions and their objectives and highlighted the regionalization work being done, citing the River Plate Basin Project as an example. He also mentioned that the latter project had integrated the activities under the national

programs in subregional projects. Co-management between the private and government sectors had had important beneficial repercussions and, thanks to the efforts made for intersectorality, sectors other than agriculture, including education, could be brought in. To close, Dr. Astudillo presented indicators of the waning and ultimate disappearance of the disease in the subregion.

The Chairman submitted the Secretariat's report for consideration, and it was agreed to add Uruguay to point 4 on page 8, where only Chile was mentioned, as countries free of foot-and-mouth disease.

The session proceeded in the presence of Dr. Alleyne, who apologized for having been delayed by the work of the Organization and said that it was an honor to have the delegates assembled once again at PAHO headquarters after two years. He noted that Argentina and Paraguay expected shortly to acquire the status of countries free of foot-and-mouth disease in the forum of the OIE, together with the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina in Brazil, which have completed the requirements for presentation to that agency.

Dr. Alleyne credited those achievements to the firm and total support of the cattlemen, to the cooperation of PAHO through PANAFTOSA, and to the surveillance system, with epidemiological analysis and the characterization of ecosystems as the key to success. In addition, he expressed personal concern that the expected progress in the harmonious development of the Andean subregion as a whole had failed to materialize.

He referred to the role and importance of women in rural areas and noted that the changes that had taken place in the situation of foot-and-mouth disease had enabled the countries to access markets that had previously been restricted to export quotas. Globalization and the opening up of markets had generated advantages to the trade in cattle reared solely on natural pastures. He added that the Organization, through PANAFTOSA, was acting to stimulate family cattle-raising in producing municipalities, and that this work could generate the social capital that the countries need to promote development and improve health. He stressed that sometimes the program was well developed at the top, but made no room for participation at the local level. Dr. Alleyne wished the delegates a highly productive meeting that would make it possible to plan and implement cooperation with improved guidance.

Dr. Hernán Marín, of Colombia, then presented the reports of the XXIII and XXIV Meetings of COSALFA (Item 6); he read out the resolutions adopted in each of them. The reports were approved.

Following a 10-minute recess, the Meeting resumed with the presentation of the situation in the Southern Cone, by Dr. Francisco Muzio of Brazil, coordinator of the

project. Dr. Muzio described the Southern Cone subregion and its production characteristics, highlighting the history of the River Plate subregional project. He then referred to the highly favorable development of the situation of foot-and-mouth disease in the subregion, the successes achieved, and the international recognition accorded them, and noted that the last occurrence of the disease had been in May 1995 in the state of Paraná, in southern Brazil. He cited the shift in strategy to follow up and consolidate the gains made in prevention and the preparation of emergency responses, and referred to the joint efforts being made in this area by the public and private sectors. He alluded to the inclusion of an area of Bolivia in the River Plate Basin project as a strategy for the subregion's present epidemiological border.

In his presentation on the status of the subregional project of the Andean area, Dr. Hugo Tamayo, of Ecuador, pointed to institutional and financial limitations as determinants of the dynamics of execution of the project for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease in the subregion. He stressed the importance of the zonal subprojects, which had been defined with the epidemiological risk and subregional integration in mind.

Among the positive aspects identified in the period 1995-1996 he noted the significant reduction in the number of herds infected with vesicular diseases and foot-and-mouth disease, the absence of virus type C, and the maintenance of Chocó in Colombia as a disease-free area, and the departments of Arequipa, Moquegua, and Tacna in Peru, and Pando in Bolivia, as untouched areas. He closed with a reference to the need to strengthen sanitary programs centered on social participation, epidemiological surveillance systems, and the execution of local subprojects.

Mr. Antonio Eduardo Gómez, Minister of Agriculture of Colombia, explained that the outbreak in the Urabá region, which had been reported on in the presentation on the Andean area, happened 60 km away from the protection area. Prompt measures brought it under control and averted risk to the disease-free area of Colombia and the traditionally free areas. The Andean countries needed to move to practical action against the disease, and the attitudes of production sectors and government had to be redirected so that they would join their efforts and wills to build a culture for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease. The Minister proposed that, in the course of this meeting, room be made for a gathering of representatives of the public and private sectors in the subregion to set up a cooperative effort for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease in the subregion.

The Director of PAHO expressed full support for the idea, both of holding the gathering and for technical cooperation in support of its results.

The proposal of the Colombian Minister was seconded by Peru, Venezuela, and the representatives of the production sector in the Andean, Amazonian, and Southern Cone subregions. In his remarks the representative of the cattle producers in the Andean subregion solicited continental support for the countries in his region in view of the threat posed by the presence of foot-and-mouth disease to the aims of PHEFA. This claim was supported by the representatives of the production sectors in the Amazonian and Southern Cone subregions and by the Minister of Agriculture of Paraguay, who reiterated their decision to cooperate in the development of the programs in the Andean area.

The representative of Peru requested that consideration be given to the situation in her country's Amazonian region, where there was no foot-and-mouth disease, so that a disease-free area could be declared there in the future. She then referred to the frequent turnover of technical staff in the countries with every change of political administration, which always raised problems for international negotiations.

She was followed by Dr. Víctor Saraiva, who presented the situation of the Amazonian/Brazil subregional project and noted that, except for Brazil in its Amazonian region and Venezuela in the state of Bolivar, the national programs gave no priority to these areas. Several advances had been made during the period, such as a reduction in the number of foci and a steady spread of vaccination coverage to 82% of the cattle population. Public and private sector co-management covered 50% of the local offices in the region and 70% of the unused resources.

Future activities would have to be directed at strengthening regional and border programs to protect disease-free areas on the basis of veterinary care geared to the small producer and to the development of a surveillance system to search actively for and prevent the disease.

Referring to this presentation, the representative of Bolivia pointed out that the characteristics of the Beni region were such that it should be included in the project for the Amazonian subregion.

Dr. José Fernando Dora presented the report on the COPALIFA subregion of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Meso America, and Mexico, and commented on the principal actions carried out by the countries for the epidemiological surveillance and prevention of foot-and-mouth disease. He presented data on the incidence of vesicular stomatitis and cited the reduction in the number of infected herds in 1995 and their increase in 1996. He mentioned further the technical- and ministerial-level meetings of COPALIFA in 1996, in addition to a variety of activities for the purposes of PHEFA and of the resolutions of COHEFA V. He highlighted the work being done jointly with the other international technical cooperation agencies operating in the subregion, and especially with OIRSA and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Cuba mentioned and gave thanks for PANAFTOSA's support in implementation of its epidemiological information and surveillance system, with emphasis on the local level, to support the productive municipalities program for the establishment of food safety for the population. Family production had been restored, and rabbit hemorrhagic fever and a recrudescence of hog cholera had been eradicated. This work was being coordinated with the Ministry of Public Health.

Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Panama supported the presentation, the delegate of the latter country expressing appreciation for the diagnostic work that PANAFTOSA had done for the countries of the area from September 1994 to November 1996, during which time the Vesicular Diseases Diagnostic Laboratory (LADIVES) of Panama had been closed for renovations in connection with biosafety.

Dr. José G. Rodríguez presented the report on the English-speaking Caribbean. He first provided data on the subregion and on technical cooperation activities, which were designed to prevent the introduction of foot-and-mouth disease, mainly by staging mock operations, and indicated that the last such operation had been in November 1996 in Jamaica. He further mentioned the cooperation provided for revision of the emergency manuals on animal diseases of Guyana and Jamaica, and noted also that Antigua and Barbuda and Trinidad and Tobago had their own manuals and that the countries of the CARICOM area were engaged in unifying their prevention measures and manuals.

He reported that in the previous meeting of head veterinarians, held in Jamaica in November 1996, the countries had been urged to perform the studies required for the second phase of the risk analysis for the importation of meat from Argentina and Uruguay.

He mentioned that the countries had requested support in strengthening their surveillance systems and improving their laboratory diagnostic capabilities.

Dr. Astudillo then spoke of the joint operations of the Caribbean countries with the cooperation of international agencies such as IICA, OIRSA, PAHO, and the USDA.

Second Plenary Session

Item 8, a general discussion of the Plan of Action, opened with remarks by the representative of the production sector of the Andean subregion, who suggested the advisability of the government and private sectors of each country being represented in COHEFA.

The government representative of Grenada cited the risk of introduction of foot-and-mouth disease into his country in imported feeds and the lack of personnel and resources for sanitary prevention; he requested information on the procedure for recognition as a foot-and-mouth disease-free country. The government representative of Uruguay offered to inform him on those procedures. The delegate of Paraguay seconded the initiative of the representative of Ecuador on participation by producers in COHEFA.

The representative of the private sector in Brazil referred to the COSALFA XXIV resolution on PANAFTOSA and INPPAZ proposing their conversion into a reference center for animal health in the Americas and a reference center on food protection, respectively, as recommended by the External Advisory Group of the Director of PAHO. He added that he regarded COHEFA as the proper venue from which to submit this recommendation to RIMSA with the support of all the countries in the Region of the Americas.

The meeting then took up item 9, the report of the International Conference on Perspectives for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the next Millennium and its Impact on Food Safety and Trade, which had been held in Brasilia in June 1996 under the auspices of the IOE-FAO and PAHO.

That meeting had been attended by the President of the Republic of Brazil and ministers of agriculture of the countries in the Region, and had enjoyed the support of the Government and the private sector of Brazil, which had facilitated the holding of the meeting.

The meeting had closed with the Declaration of Brasilia, which carries with it an enhanced commitment to the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease on the continent, particularly in the Andean and Amazonian subregions.

The delegate of the private sector of Brazil noted the policy decision for eradication in the country and apologized for the absence of the Minister of Agriculture owing to *force majeure*. On behalf of PAHO, Dr. Astudillo then thanked the Government of Brazil for its excellent organization of that international conference.

When Item 10 came up, on other matters, the delegate of the production sector of Panama called attention to the risks posed to his country's borders by episodes of foot-and-mouth disease in neighboring Colombia associated with the flow of migrants to Panama. He asked for workshops to be held similar to the one scheduled for Costa Rica.

Dr. Astudillo pointed out that both Colombia and Costa Rica were receiving advisory services from PANAFTOSA in implementation of the computerized surveillance system for application at the local level.

Three resolutions were then presented, concerning, respectively, the strengthening of measures to accomplish the purposes of PHEFA, support for changes in the mandates of PANAFTOSA and INPPAZ in accordance with the recommendations of the External Working Group to advise the Director on evaluation of the Veterinary Public Health Program, and conversion of COHEFA into a meeting attended by representatives of both the public and private sectors of all the countries of the Americas.

The last-mentioned of these resolutions, dealing with changes in the statutes of COHEFA, would have to be submitted for consultation to the legal counsel of PAHO.

Closing Session

In the closing session the Director of PAHO thanked the delegates for their presence and reiterated his willingness to go on supporting the efforts of the countries to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease in the framework of PHEFA.

The President of COHEFA VI recalled his remarks in opening the meeting, characterizing the challenge of changing the sanitary situation on the continent in regard to foot-and-mouth disease, for which his country could be taken as an example, and he asked all those present, representatives of both the public and private sectors, to take up this challenge and eradicate the disease as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked the participants for their contributions to the success of the meeting and declared the meeting closed.

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION I

THE VI MEETING OF THE HEMISPHERIC COMMITTEE FOR THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE,

Considering:

That considerable gains have been made toward elimination of foot-and-mouth disease from the Region of the Americas with the creation of new disease-free areas throughout the Southern Cone subregion, which encompasses the cattle industries of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay and the southern states of Brazil;

That the dynamics of the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease has been extended to the Amazonian subregion, and especially to central Brazil, where the cattle herd is the largest on the continent;

That this entire process has created in South America a large area of 6.3 million km² free at least of the clinical disease, with about 140 million head of cattle, 1.5 million herds, including the largest sheep and swine herds, and that this livestock mass is the continent's most valuable economic asset in the export market;

That a factor of great importance in this development has been the eradication measures taken by the countries under subregional agreements in which PANAFTOSA has been an active participant, among them the River Plate Basin Agreement, whose splendid results have been translated into economic advantages through the opening up of markets;

That in the Andean subregion the national and subregional foot-and-mouth eradication programs need to be made more dynamic to produce results more rapidly in their systems of field sanitary care and epidemiological surveillance, to strengthen social participation in them;

That in the epidemiological border zones, as in those of Bolivia with adjacent countries and regions that have been freed of foot-and-mouth disease, measures under subregional and associated border agreements must be strengthened to incorporate new disease-free areas and not compromise the results already achieved;

That one of the most important factors in the successes scored in the elimination of foot-and-mouth disease from the Southern Cone subregion and those in progress in central Brazil is the firm participation of a variety of social actors involved either in meat production and processing or in trade and services, especially when this community mobilization can be accomplished at the local level, with the assumption of specific commitments in the programming, conduct, and evaluation of eradication activities; and

That the XXIII and XXIV regular meetings of COSALFA approved resolutions of great importance for the Hemispheric Plan for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PHEFA),

RESOLVES:

1. To commend the Secretariat for its dedication and effective support to attainment of the goals of PHEFA.

2. To urge the countries that have not yet succeeded in eliminating foot-and-mouth disease to hasten to catch up with the progress already made by other countries in the hemisphere.
3. To congratulate the countries of the Southern Cone subregion, and especially those of the River Plate Basin Agreement, for the important results obtained and to ask their government authorities and the heads of the private entities involved to consolidate those efforts and put into effect as soon as possible effective prevention plans to secure the gains made and improve the possibilities for access to new international markets.
4. To collaborate with requiring countries that need it, through PANAFTOSA (PAHO/WHO), in the processes for international recognition of the sanitary situation achieved.
5. To encourage the cattlemen's associations, the sectors of industrial processing, trade and specific services, and the community as a whole, to participate locally and jointly in measures to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease, thereby strengthening specific sanitary measures and epidemiological surveillance, and making themselves active players in the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease, especially in the Andean subregion.
6. To promote at the Hemispheric level support by private and government sectors for the components of the Andean subregion project.
7. To support, through PANAFTOSA and drawing on the appeal of PHEFA, every initiative in the area of family producers to arrive at more diversified sanitary measures that will enable these small producers to improve their production capacity, their diets, sources of employment, and income, and thereby to improve their standard of living.
8. To endorse the resolutions of the XXIII and XXIV Regular Meetings of COSALFA and recommend their approval by RIMSA X.
9. To reinforce the border agreements in the Andean and Amazonian subregions to make them into programs with set goals, in order to energize and accelerate the elimination of the disease from the Hemisphere.
10. To continue, in the disease-free area, specific prevention and training measures supported by strong epidemiological surveillance systems in which the community participates through local committees to maintain the disease-free status of countries in this area.

RESOLUTION II

THE VI MEETING OF THE HEMISPHERIC COMMITTEE FOR THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE,

Considering:

The demonstrated capacity of PANAFTOSA to rally political will as evidenced in the progress being made in the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease;

That PANAFTOSA has demonstrated high technical capacity in the provision of technical cooperation to the countries, which has made it possible to program and properly execute measures for the prevention, control, and eradication of foot-and-mouth disease;

That PANAFTOSA has promoted the effective integration of producers in the planning of programs;

The adverse economic and social impact of foot-and-mouth disease and other diseases of animals, some of which are also dangers to public health;

The recommendations that emerged from COSALFA XXIII and XXIV and those of the External Advisory Group appointed by the Director of PAHO on expansion of the functions of the Program of Veterinary Public Health;

The active participation of INPPAZ in supporting the countries in their programs of food protection and surveillance of foodborne diseases; and

The increasing importance of food quality and the preponderant role to be played by INPPAZ,

RESOLVES:

1. To accept in toto the recommendations of COSALFA XIII and XXIV and of the External Advisory Group for expansion of the operational sphere of PANAFTOSA to include collaboration in the search for solutions to the problems generated in the economic and social fields by the presence in some countries of foot-and-mouth disease and other animal diseases that impair not just public health, but the productivity of and trade in products of animal origin as well, which will make it a continental reference center in animal health.

2. To recommend to the PAHO Administration that it modify the mandate of INPPAZ to make it a continental reference center on foods, in keeping with the needs of the countries in the Region to face the challenges of a globalizing economy.

RESOLUTION III

THE VI MEETING OF THE HEMISPHERIC COMMITTEE FOR THE ERADICATION OF FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE,

Considering:

The importance of COHEFA as a factor in the integration of the Americas and of the private and government sectors;

That, in face of the changes being seen in the sanitary situation and of the great need to consider jointly subjects such as those under discussion in the present forum, the present constitution of COHEFA requires a revision of the procedures for membership on the Committee; and

That integration of the production sector into the official sector in this and other international forums has produced concrete results in the form of agreements and accomplishments,

RESOLVES:

To submit to RIMSA the request of COHEFA for consideration of the inclusion of all the countries, with two representatives from each, one from the government sector and one from the private sector.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, those named below have signed the present Final Report in the English and Spanish languages.

DONE in Washington, D.C., United States of America, on this twenty-second day of April, nineteen hundred and ninety-seven.

Juan Alfonso Borgognon
President of COHEFA VI
Minister of Agriculture and Livestock
Paraguay

George A. O. Alleyne
Secretary ex officio
Director
Pan American Health Organization