



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office of the
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



II MEETING OF THE PAN AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA)

Washington D.C., United States of America, February 26, 2002

**FINAL REPORT ON THE II MEETING OF THE PAN AMERICAN COMMITTEE
FOR FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA), 2002**

FINAL REPORT

The II Meeting of the Pan American Committee for Food Safety (COPAIA), was held at the Headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization on February 26, 2002, in agreement with Resolution No. 3 put forward by the Inter American Meeting at the level of the Ministry of Public Health and Agriculture (RIMSA XII), which endorsed its creation and was convened by the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of the Meeting was unanimously formed as follows:

Chairman:	Dr. Fernando Gracia García Minister of Public Health PANAMÁ
First Vice-Chairman:	Mr. Jorge Escoto Marroquín Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food GUATEMALA
Second Vice-Chairman:	Dr. Frank Rivas Von Eichwald Director, Meat Industry Association VENEZUELA
Rapporteur:	Dr. Marcelo Azalim Associate Director, National Agency of Sanitary Surveillance BRAZIL

Dr. George Alleyne, Director of PAHO, acted as Secretary *ex – officio* of the Committee, and Dr. Claudio R. Almeida, Director of the Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ/PAHO), acted as Technical Secretary.

PARTICIPANTS

Committee Members (addresses can be found in Annex 1)

North American Subregion

Health Sector:	Mr. Ronald Burke, Director, Bureau of Food Regulatory, International and Interagency Affairs Health, Canada
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U.S. Department of Agriculture, United States of America

Producers Sector: Mr. Fabián Vásquez García, Responsible for Food Safety,
State Committee of Vegetable Sanitation, Guanajuato,
Mexico.

Consumers Sector: Dr. Ned Groth, Director, Technical and Public Policies
Service. Consumers Union, United States of America

English Caribbean Subregion

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Suriname

Agriculture Sector: Hon. Anthony P. Wood, Minister of Agriculture and Rural
Development, Barbados

Producers Sector: Dr. Joshua da Silva, Trawler Owners and Seafood Processors
Association, Guyana

Consumers Sector: Ms. Hazel Brown, Coordinator, Network of Non-
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Central American and Latin Caribbean Subregion

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Agriculture Sector: Mr. Jorge Rolando Escoto Marroquín, Minister of
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Producers Sector: Dr. Jorge Díaz Coto, President of the Meat Packaging
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Consumers Sector: Dr. Anaella Gómez Gómez, Consumers Defense Center, El
Salvador

Andean Subregion

Health Sector:	Dr. Pablo Aguilar, Director General of Environmental and Occupational Health and Disasters, Minister of Public Health and Welfare, Bolivia
Agriculture Sector:	Dr. Jaime Casabianca, Colombian Embassy in the United States of America
Producers Sector:	Dr. Frank Rivas, Director, Meat Producers Association, Venezuela
Consumers Sector:	Mrs. Isabel Muñoz, Representative of the Consumers Tribune, Ecuador.

Southern Cone Subregion

Health Sector:	Dr. Marcelo Azalim, National Agency of Sanitary Surveillance, Brazil
Agriculture Sector:	Mr. Carmelo Peralta, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Paraguay
Producers Sector:	Dr. Estela Tor, Technical Advisor for the Industrial Chamber of Uruguay
Consumers Sector:	Mr. José Vargas Niello, Director of Consumers Internationals, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

OBSERVERS

Representatives of International Organizations and Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations attended the meeting as observers (see Annex 2).

AGENDA

1. The agenda was unanimously approved
 - a. Presentation of the Report of the Special Work Group by Dr. Carlos Ameri, President of the Special Work Group.
 - b. Presentation of INPPAZ Action Plan at COPAIA
Dr. Claudio Almeida, INPPAZ, Dr. Enrique Pérez, INPPAZ

c. Conclusions and Recommendations

▫ SESSIONS

Three plenary sessions and a final session on conclusions and recommendations were held.

First Plenary Session

Dr. George Alleyne welcomed both the members of COPAIA and the observers highlighting the importance of their presence at the Meeting. The most important topics addressed by Dr. Alleyne's in his presentation were the following:

- The significance of the presence of the Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock and Public Health, as well as the Private Sector in the same forum as regards the food safety issue.
- The commitment of the Special Group in elaborating COPAIA terms of reference, particularly Dr. Carlos Ameri, at the opening of the present meeting,
- The importance of Dr. João Carlos de Souza Meirelles' suggestion and encouragement for the creation and implementation of the Pan American Committee for Food Safety.
- The rallying capacity of PAHO which, since it was created in 1902, has encouraged the coalition among the member countries. He talked about the two fundamental mainstays of the organization: the prevention of infectious diseases, and the critical use of information for the benefit of the health of the peoples of the Americas. The issue of food safety relies on both mainstays: food is a major vehicle for disease transmission and information is critical for disease prevention.
- The relationship between food and international trade. In particular, the way in which the globalized world has reduced the trade barriers and how important sanitary barriers have become. He also talked about the significance of the food and agriculture trade for the economies of the countries of the Americas, and explained why PAHO can not ignore this debate.
- The need for intersectorial cooperation for the development of food safety, both from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health as well as the active participation of consumers and producers, and also the need for technical cooperation from international organizations for the benefit of the countries.
- The importance of living in the age of technology, which is totally in keeping with PAHO second mainstay: information. PAHO has always been known to use information for the technical cooperation of the member countries. Data collection and its transformation into information supports the countries appropriate decision making. One of PAHO functions has been to transmit information which derives in knowledge. And we hope that COPAIA will be a similar system which collects data, transforms it into information, and provides each country with the knowledge necessary to support wise decision making in favor of the people's health and welfare. COPAIA will survive and flourish thanks to PAHO enthusiasm and because its members acknowledge the mutual need of promoting food safety in the

region. It will be viable as long as food safety and the need to generate a change among us are important in order for the food in our region to be innocuous in the broader sense of this word.

- COPAIA will survive if good policies deriving in good strategies are developed which should, in turn, become good guidelines for what should be done within the countries.
- PAHO expects COPAIA to generate a broader cooperation between the health and agriculture sectors, and between food consumers and food producers for the improvement of the health and the welfare of the peoples of our member countries.
- He highlighted that it was fortunate that the Americas had a Center specializing in Food Safety, INPPAZ, and thanked the government of the Argentine Republic for having established and for keeping this Center in operation all these years. Initially, the Center worked with zoonotic diseases and later on it incorporated food safety. A special committee designated during his administration recommended that it should devote itself exclusively to food safety.
- The recommendation of the Committee was visionary, since the issue has become increasingly relevant in the last five years and it is essential for PAHO to have a Center specializing in the subject.
- The Center is part of the Disease Prevention and Control Division, run by Dr. Stephen Corber. Besides, this Division has a Veterinary Public Health Program coordinated by Dr. Albino Belotto. Dr. Claudio Almeida is the Director of INPPAZ and we are all enthusiastic about the articulation of the concepts of food safety with the health and human development within the member countries.

Finally, he thanked those present for participating and hoped that everybody was as enthusiastic and committed as PAHO regarding the development of COPAIA so that the different sectors of the society could work together and the subject of food safety be included in the national agendas and be allotted the importance it deserves.

Second Plenary Section

Presentation of the Final Report of the Special Work Group, establishing the terms of reference (TOR) of COPAIA. Dr. Carlos Ameri, president of the special group, was in charge of this presentation.

During the debate following the presentation, the participants made important contributions which were incorporated to the paper presented by the Special Group, particularly the comments of the President of the Codex Alimentarius and those made by the representatives of the North America Subregion. The final drafting of the TOR, approved by COPAIA, is seen in Annex 3 of the present report.

Other relevant aspects of the discussion were the following:

- The representatives of consumers of the Southern Cone Subregion congratulated both PAHO and the members of the special work group on the initiative of COPAIA. They emphasized the necessity of incorporating the subject of research and development for food safety in the future, of developing policies for sanitary

inspection, and they remarked the importance of improving the consumers' trust in food.

- The representative of the Agriculture Sector of the Central America and Latin Caribbean Subregion supported the goal of COPAIA. He also remarked the importance of establishing different strategies for food safety at each level of the food and agriculture chain, particularly in the primary sector and towards small producers. Furthermore, he stressed the need to strengthen certain key processes generated by the international agreements such as traceability and risk assessment. Finally, the representative echoed PAHO Director's words and suggested the need of strategic alliances among international organizations of technical cooperation, especially in Central America with OIRSA and IICA.
- The representative of consumers of the English Caribbean Subregion suggested incorporating the subject of gender and cultural aspects regarding food safety. She highlighted the importance of including the subject in the agendas of the local governments. Finally, she pointed out the use of communication as an important strategy for the work of COPAIA.
- The representative of the English Caribbean producers talked about the importance of complying with the regulations, particularly regarding the use of GMP and HACCP. He suggested using education and training as a strategy for technical cooperation.
- The representative of consumers of the North America Subregion backed the TOR presented for COPAIA. He suggested future topics, such as effective participation in the Codex and Risk Assessment.
- The representative of the Health Sector for the North America Subregion commented upon the need to relate COPAIA with the conclusions of the I Global Forum on Food Safety and recommended the establishment of a mechanism to facilitate the communication among the members of COPAIA.
- The representative of CARICOM indicated the importance of associating the topics discussed at COPAIA with the initiative of the Caribbean regarding Food Safety, as well as the need of implementing a Plan of Action relating all the Subregions.
- The representative of producers of the Andean Subregion expressed the producers' interest in participating and highlighted four mainstays to improve the work relating to food safety: consideration of social and political aspects, economic aspects, education and propagation.
- The representative of OIRSA underlined the importance of consumers in food safety and described the program OIRSA is developing for Food Safety. He also expressed OIRSA's intention of working in collaboration with PAHO.

Third Plenary Section

The third plenary session began with the presentation of INPPAZ about its strategic lines of action within the framework of COPAIA. Dr. Almeida introduced the main five strategic actions, namely:

1- **Food safety policies**, based on promoting the organization of food safety programs as a fundamental activity of public health. With that aim, INPPAZ specifically fosters the modernization of food inspection services for local consumption, encourages the updating and harmonization of food legislation in the countries, promotes the development of FBD epidemiological surveillance systems, and reviews and evaluates the progress of the countries regarding food safety. Finally, it recommends strategies directed towards equity in the inspection of food for both for domestic consumption and for international trade and enlarges the administration capacity by training new managers in Food Safety.

2- **Orientation towards food inspection programs**, by means of specific activities which promote the analysis of food inspection programs and suggest lines of political and strategic orientation in order to improve the coverage/efficacy of such programs.

3- **Intersectorial coordination**: INPPAZ carries out activities to reinforce articulated actions between the sectors involved in food regulation and inspection and strengthens the role of the consumer towards food safety.

4- **Strategic alliances**: actions are directed towards strengthening the role of INPPAZ as a technical reference organization for Food Safety by establishing alliances with national, international, binational organizations, and economic blocs.

5- **Codex Alimentarius**: INPPAZ promotes the commitment and participation in the Codex Alimentarius by encouraging the adoption of national policies to support National Committees and Contact Points and by designing strategies to support the participation of the countries in the Codex.

Finally, Dr. Pérez presented the training program INPPAZ will launch this year to train managers in food safety. This is a specialized distance course aimed towards developing the participants' managerial abilities to lead and manage the processes of the food safety systems, the skills to design and implement policies and strengthen the methodological and technological bases of food safety. In conclusion, it is intended to organize a worldwide collaboration network.

The participants made the following questions and comments after INPPAZ presentation:

- The representative of the Agricultural Sector of the Andean Subregion talked about the causes of foodborne diseases.
- The representative of the consumers of the Central America Subregion described the need of strengthening the research through INPPAZ as well as the regulatory aspects.
- The observer of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), congratulated INPPAZ for its initiative in training managers, which complements the initiative of training leaders in the food safety issue, sponsored by the alliance IICA-CERES-FORUM-USDA-CFIA-PAHO. Moreover, he presented the collaboration initiatives of CFIA with CARICOM and CFIA with NAFTA and MERCOSUR, in equivalence.

- The representative of IICA raised the question of the scope of the recommendations of COPAIA.
- The representative of the Public Health Sector of the North America Subregion emphasized the need of striving towards harmonization of laws, although he considered this was a difficult task.
- PAHO's Director clearly defined the role of COPAIA as the entity defining the food safety policies and indicating the strategic lines for INPPAZ.

CONCLUSIONS Y RECOMMENDATIONS

Two recommendations were discussed and approved.

Recommendation No.1.

Considering,

1. that on May 3, 2001, in the fourth session of RIMS/A 12 the Pan American Committee for Food Safety was approved;
2. that in the above mentioned session PAHO's Director received the recommendation to convene a work group to define the terms of reference and the working framework of the committee;
3. that the work group met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on July 25-26, 2001;
4. that the work group submitted the result of its work for discussion at the second ordinary meeting of COPAIA;

it is resolved:

1. to approve COPAIA's working framework and terms of reference included in the paper Final Report of the Special Work Group, created by PAHO's Director, incorporating the corresponding amendments agreed upon during the subsequent meetings on the issue.
2. that the final text of the terms of reference will be added to COPAIA's web page (Intranet.inppaz.org.ar/copaia/e/ehome.htm) as of March 15, 2002.

Recommendation No. 2

Considering:

- 1) that food safety is presently influenced by several factors, among which epidemiological, technological, environmental, and social aspects are the most important, according to the resolutions of WHO and PAHO (OMS EB/105-10; OPS, CD42/10);
- 2) that the consumers have new demands arising from their concern about the effects the absence of food safety has on their health;
- 3) that there are new demands from international inspection systems for food control generated by market globalization;
- 4) that the countries need to face this situation with a new approach to improve food safety programs and public health and to facilitate food trade.
- 5) that food safety programs should involve the entire food and agriculture chain, from the consumables supplier to the food consumer;
- 6) that, in order to accomplish all this, it is necessary to reinforce the institutions relating to food safety, their laws and regulations as well as the technological aspects;

it is resolved:

- 1) to record the action plan presented by INPPAZ at this meeting for the implementation of food safety programs throughout the entire food chain.
- 2) to advise PAHO to consider the recommendations suggested during this meeting regarding the plan of action.

To conclude, the Director of PAHO closed the meeting with these final comments:

- He explained that the role of COPAIA is broader than the role of INPPAZ as technical cooperation Center and that the function of INPPAZ is to carry out actions according to COPAIA's indications.
- He quoted Dr. João de Souza Meirelles, from the Caribbean delegation, and referred to Recommendation No.2 of this meeting, both asked for the reinforcement of INPPAZ. He stated that the Organization, within the frame of its budgetary limitations, is doing its best to provide INPPAZ with the necessary infrastructure to allow its fluid functioning in order to provide the member countries with updated and efficient technical cooperation regarding food safety.
- Likewise, he remarked that the organization is open to suggestions to improve INPPAZ's efficiency.
- Regarding the recommendation No. 2, he mentioned that it is appropriate that the Ministers of Agriculture and Public Health, together with RIMSA, but not COPAIA, advise the Directing Bodies of the Organization. This does not mean that PAHO is not considering their recommendations; on the contrary, he repeated it would have been useless to hold the meeting if the recommendations emerging from it were ignored.
- He closed the meeting and thanked all the participants for their presence and work during that day.

Annex 1

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