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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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DECLARATION BY THE OFFICE INTERNATIONAL DES EPIZOOTIES

Meeting of 29-30 March 1995

1. By letter of 8 March 1995, the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) was invited to attend the first meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The OIE wishes to thank the WTO for this invitation, which should allow the collaboration on matters of animal health in international trade developed over a number of years between the OIE and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to be continued.

2. Among the items included on the agenda for this meeting, two are of particular interest to the OIE, namely risk assessment and technical assistance.

3. From 1990, the OIE began work on the assessment of health risks, especially those relating to foot-and-mouth disease, in response to a request to this effect made by the Chairman of the GATT Negotiating Group on Agriculture in a letter dated 3 April 1990.

4. This work was undertaken on the initiative of the OIE International Animal Health Code Commission and Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Other Epizooties Commission and through numerous meetings of expert groups, with OIE Member Countries providing contributions and comments.

5. This made it possible to define the recommendations on import risk analysis, which were then included in *the International Animal Health Code* (the Code) after having been adopted by the OIE International Committee (general assembly of representatives of the Member Countries) in May 1993. In addition to a number of general considerations, in particular relating to the aims of risk analysis, the presentation of results, and the procedure for dispute settlement within the OIE, these guidelines state that import risk analysis may involve the following:

- risk assessment, which may be followed by risk management and risk communication;
- evaluation of Veterinary Services;
- zoning and regionalisation of countries.

Each of these aspects has been developed in specific chapters of the Code, which are too lengthy and detailed to include here. It is, however, worth noting that, on the subject of evaluation of Veterinary Services, guidelines accompanied by a model questionnaire have been published in an issue of the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review*, details of which are given below.

6. In May 1994, the OIE International Committee decided to add a fourth chapter following on from those dealing with the aforementioned aspects, to provide the Code with recommendations on epidemiological surveillance and monitoring of animal health.

7. In parallel with the development and adoption of recommendations on import risk analysis, modifications and additions are made annually to the Code on specific diseases. The chapter on foot-and-

mouth disease (FMD) is being substantially revised, a task which has yet to be completed since new proposals on this subject will be submitted to the OIE International Committee by the International Animal Health Code Commission in May 1995. The measures relating to the principal commodities likely to be traded internationally (live animals, semen, embryos, meat and milk products) have already been revised, to take into account the latest scientific research, whether commodities originate from an FMD free country or a country infected with the disease.

8. The concept of zoning has also been included in this chapter, which now specifies the conditions under which a zone where vaccination against the disease is not practised may be recognised as FMD free. Next May, the OIE International Committee is likely to adopt measures relating to the recognition of FMD free zones where vaccination is practised.

9. The *Manual of Standards for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines (the Manual)*, published in 1992, should be mentioned here since it provides an essential adjunct to the *Code* for international trade. The *Manual* provides a detailed description of the standardised methods to be used for diagnostic tests and the production and control of biological products (principally vaccines) referred to in the *Code* for verifying the health status of animals before they are exported. Several standardised methods recommended in the *Manual* can be implemented using international reference reagents placed at the disposal of OIE Member Countries by the Office's Reference Laboratories.

10. To complete this short overview of the work undertaken by the OIE during and since the Uruguay Round of negotiations it is also important to note that new areas for discussion have recently emerged. These areas concern:

- OIE recognition of the existence of countries and zones free from specific animal diseases (FMD, rinderpest, etc.);
- the development of a system for the categorisation of such diseases that is more objective than that currently in use, in order to determine, with the aid of clearly defined criteria, whether a given disease should be considered to represent a danger in international trade and, if so, the scale of the danger;
- the harmonisation of principles of certification, accreditation of veterinary diagnostic laboratories and mutual recognition of the results of these analyses;
- the international harmonisation of minimum conditions for veterinary drug registration;
- the adoption of a *Code* and a *Manual* specific to aquatic animals (fish, molluscs and crustaceans).

11. The OIE has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate the use of import risk analysis methods by Member Countries. The most important of these are:

- the publication of a special issue of the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review* (vol. 12, No 14) in December 1993, dealing with risk analysis, animal health and trade. This issue also contains the guidelines already referred to on the evaluation of Veterinary Services;
- the organisation, in association with other partners, of a symposium in Arlington, Virginia (United States of America) in December 1994, entitled "Assessment of Risks for Veterinary Biological Products: Next Step towards Harmonisation";

- the organisation of a seminar, to be held at OIE Headquarters in May 1995, on risk analysis, animal health and trade in association with the Agriculture and Commodities Division of the WTO, and with the aid of a grant from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- the organisation of an international conference on the prevention of diseases of aquatic animals in international trade to be held at OIE Headquarters in June 1995.

12. It will also be noted that the OIE maintains contacts with the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention, and exchanges information with them on their respective work on risk analysis. The OIE has, in particular, been represented at the Eighth Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Food (Washington, D.C., United States of America) that included on its agenda the implementation of risk analysis methods, the Third Session of the Codex Committee on Import and Export Food Inspection and Certification Systems (Canberra, Australia, 27 February-3 March 1995) and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultation on the Application of Risk Analysis to Food Standards Issues (Geneva, Switzerland, 13-17 March 1995).

13. This link between international organisations is essential to avoid differences in approach to risk analysis principles arising in the different areas covered by the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.

14. With regard to technical assistance, the OIE is continuing to implement its training and information programmes on veterinary drugs. These are conducted through seminars and workshops relating to veterinary drug legislation and regulations at the national and regional level. The most recent were held in Bamako (Mali), Rabat (Morocco), Bogota (Colombia), Bogor (Indonesia) and Harare (Zimbabwe). They are very important for a number of developing countries which are obliged to import the major part of the veterinary drugs needed for the control of animal diseases in the national livestock populations.

15. In order to strengthen the capacity of its Member Countries to exercise effective quality control of locally produced or imported veterinary drugs, the OIE Collaborating Centre in Fougères (France) has conducted a number of audits of control laboratories in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Two practical courses on the control of veterinary drug residues will be organised by OIE Collaborating Centres, one in South Africa and the other in Malaysia.

16. Also in the field of technical assistance to developing countries, the OIE has organised courses on the administration and management of Veterinary Services aimed at French-speaking countries, one in France (1991) and the other in Africa (1994). These courses are designed to inform Chief Veterinary Officers on changes in the veterinary profession, both in the public and private sectors, especially within the context of structural adjustments and the liberalisation of world trade.

17. Lastly, the OIE wishes to emphasise its satisfaction at participating in the WTO regional seminars on the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (Bangkok, Thailand, November 1994, and Mexico City, Mexico, May 1995).