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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR PLANT AND ANIMAL HEALTH (OIRSA) RELATING TO THE WTO AGREEMENT ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES, FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2020

The following communication, received on 9 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of OIRSA.

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1 TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES RELATING TO AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND TRADE

1.1. The document "Guidelines for the prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic in agricultural production chains", which provides information on the spread of COVID-19 and the prevention of deaths from the disease in rural farming areas, was prepared and circulated.

1.2. A programme disseminating guidelines for the prevention of the COVID-19 pandemic in agricultural production chains, consisting of five animated videos based on the guidelines document, was developed and circulated.

1.3. Two virtual day-long phytosanitary events on plant health, consisting of eight working sessions, were organized in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

1.4. A virtual regional training workshop was held jointly with FAO on banana Fusarium wilt tropical race 4. The event consisted of four working sessions with 15 presentations from experts. The same workshop was also delivered in English and attended by Caribbean countries.

1.5. In Nicaragua, students from the Faculty of Agronomy at the National Agrarian University of Nicaragua visited the OIRSA Huanglongbing (HLB) project's healthy citrus plant production greenhouse to learn about matters such as fertilization, biosecurity measures, the characteristics of rootstocks and pruning management.

1.6. The online course "Locust management: towards a preventive approach", in which 1,061 people from 22 Latin American countries participated, was organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom. The course was run over seven weeks and consisted of four working modules that involved activities such as participating in forums, tasks and self-assessment.

1.7. Six webinar sessions were held on context and actions for the management of the Central American locust. These sessions were coordinated by the Guatemalan Chamber of Agriculture, the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDA) of Panama, the Central American Sugar Association (AICA) (sugarcane sector) and the State Phytosanitary Service (SFE) of Costa Rica, among other stakeholders.

1.8. In Panama, a national forum on the prevention and management of the Central American locust was organized in conjunction with MIDA. This consisted of two working sessions in which 200 people, primarily from Panama, participated.

1.9. The first virtual seminar on the tomato brown rugose fruit virus was jointly organized with the Sinaloa State Plant Health Committee (CESAVESIN) from Mexico and run by officials from CESAVESIN, AGROMIC, OIRSA and other institutions. Over 1,000 people from various countries in the Americas participated.

1.10. A virtual session on citrus fruits was organized, and led by Dr Mario Orozco from the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIAP) of Mexico. The session focused on experiences researching HLB-tolerant varieties, genetic improvement and Wood pocket disease, and was attended by around 400 people, mainly from countries in the OIRSA region.

1.11. The virtual day-long event on citrus fruits "Session I: biological control" was organized in conjunction with CESAVESIN, the Inter-American Group for Coordination on Plant Protection (GICSV), the Colombian Agricultural Institute (ICA) and the University of Caldas, among others. Presentations were given by experts from Mexico and Colombia to 400 participants from 18 Latin American countries.

1.12. A virtual day-long event on coffee, with a focus on plant health, was launched in Panama. The course, delivered jointly by OIRSA and the Guatemalan National Coffee Association (ANACAFE), is aimed at officials from the Panama Canal Authority and MIDA. Fifty people have registered to take part in the course, which consists of six virtual working sessions.

1.13. An online course on pest risk analysis in the area of plant health, in which 1,196 people participated, was organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom as part of the 2020 International Year of Plant Health celebrations.

1.14. Audiovisual material on good practices for safe food markets was produced in conjunction with the Pan American Center for Foot-and-Mouth Disease (PANAFTOSA) of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). The material was circulated in English and Spanish on the social media pages of PANAFTOSA – PAHO/WHO and OIRSA.

1.15. A webinar on safe food markets in the face of COVID-19 was jointly organized with PAHO, FAO and Consumers International.

1.16. Support was provided to the National Codex Alimentarius Committee (CONACODEX) of El Salvador for the production of videographic material to enhance knowledge and the importance of the Codex Alimentarius at the national and international level, as well as to raise awareness of the preventive sanitary measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.17. The self-managed course "Introduction to Food Safety" was organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom and successfully completed by a total of 1,114 participants.

1.18. A guide on good food handling practices to ensure food safety and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic was produced and circulated (https://www.oirsa.org/contenido/2020/Gui%CC%81a%20de%20buenas%20practicas%20Inocuidad%20por%20COVID-19%20290520.pdf).

1.19. A guide on the use of chlorine to disinfect fresh fruit and vegetables for consumption and equipment and surfaces in establishments was produced and circulated.

1.20. Online training was provided to the public, private and academic sectors in the Dominican Republic on the following: (1) recommendations for competent authorities in order to prevent COVID-19 in the food chain; and (2) good food handling practices to ensure food safety and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (a guide for consumers).

1.21. A virtual forum on hygiene and biosecurity measures to prevent COVID-19 in livestock, aquaculture and fisheries production and ensure safety was held with the participation of 14 countries, including countries in the OIRSA region, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Colombia.

1.22. A virtual forum on recommendations for chlorine dosing for the disinfection of food and surfaces to prevent diseases, including COVID-19, was organized in conjunction with PANAFTOSA-PAHO/WHO.

1.23. A self-managed course on good aquaculture practices aboard small vessels and good manufacturing practices, in which 1,531 people participated, was organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom.

1.24. A course on food safety risk analysis, in which 2,291 people participated, was organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom.

1.25. OIRSA participated as a speaker/facilitator in the seminar on safety and biosecurity standards for the marketing of agricultural products (post COVID-19), which was organized by FAO and the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA).

1.26. An online PrepVet (veterinary preparation for managing disasters) course, developed by World Animal Protection (WAP), was organized and made available to OIRSA member countries on the WAP platform.

1.27. Four online training days, aimed at public and private veterinary services in the OIRSA region and beyond, were held on: biosecurity and epidemiological considerations in the face of COVID-19; experiences of the food industry and poultry, pig-farming and aquaculture sectors in the OIRSA region with regard to COVID-19; emerging diseases; and World Rabies Day.

1.28. Training days were organized for officials and domestic producers in Panama on the following matters: avian influenza, Newcastle disease, agricultural traceability, African swine fever, animal welfare, the agri-food industry in the COVID-19 era, and biosecurity in livestock production systems.

1.29. Information was compiled in OIRSA member countries with a view to jointly outlining and reorienting the new techniques being implemented in the region to diagnose bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), based on World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) international guidelines.

1.30. In Honduras, two on-site training sessions were held on agricultural traceability. They were attended by members of the police force and soldiers who collaborate in this area at movement checkpoints.

1.31. Six virtual day-long events to increase awareness of the national bovine traceability system were held in six departments in the Republic of Honduras.

1.32. Two online training courses on apicultural health and diagnostics were organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom, the first of which was attended by 2,783 people and the second by 388.

1.33. Two online training courses on epidemiological surveillance in shrimp farming were organized through the OIRSA virtual classroom.

1.34. OIRSA participated in the apiculture week webinar organized by the Ecuadorian Agency for Plant and Animal Health Regulation and Control (AGROCALIDAD), delivering a presentation on the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*).

1.35. A guide to biosecurity procedures and measures to be applied in apiaries and during honey extraction activities in response to COVID-19 was prepared and circulated in conjunction with the OIRSA Ad Hoc Group on Apicultural Health and Safety.

1.36. A document entitled "General biosecurity guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in rural areas" was prepared and circulated in conjunction with the Andean Community (CAN), the Standing Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP) and OIRSA.

1.37. A communiqué on the Asian giant hornet (*Vespa mandarinia*) in Canada and the United States, and a technical guide and infographic on this insect were prepared and circulated.

1.38. A draft regional strategy was drawn up to prevent and control *Vespa mandarinia*. Videos were produced on the preparation of shrimp and fish samples to be sent to laboratories.

1.39. Videos on how to put on and take off personal protective equipment (PPE) were translated into Spanish and released.

1.40. Modular audiovisual material was produced on necropsies in animals for bovine species, pigs and sheep. The videos will be available for public consultation once uploaded to the *Biblioteca OIRSA* (OIRSA Library) application.

1.41. OIRSA participated in the 2nd meeting of the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) Standing Group of Experts on African Swine Fever (ASF) for the Americas on risk factors for the introduction of ASF in the Americas Region. At this meeting, OIRSA presented the results of the ASF risk analysis study conducted in member countries.

1.42. OIRSA participated in the 11th online meeting of the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) of GF-TADs for the Americas, during which two standing groups of experts, one for avian influenza and the other for classical swine fever (CSF), were created. OIRSA assumed the leadership of the latter.

1.43. OIRSA participated in the 47th regular meeting of the South American Commission for the Fight Against Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COSALFA).

1.44. OIRSA participated in the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas, during which it presented the proposal of the Standing Group of Experts on CSF for the Americas, which it coordinates.

1.45. The risk analysis on the likelihood of the introduction, release, establishment and spread of African swine fever in the pig-farming sector in countries in the OIRSA region was concluded.

1.46. The pest risk analysis for weed seeds linked to the importation of large volumes of grain into OIRSA countries was concluded.

1.47. Plant health officials from the national authorities of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama were trained on the use of traceability systems and the Trazar-Agro platform's agricultural registration module.

1.48. The national authorities and private operators in Honduras were trained on the use of traceability and movement control systems for farmed shrimp.

1.49. Training was provided to private operators, movement inspectors and user support staff on the use and management of information for the control of animal movement in Honduras.

1.50. Animal health officials from the national authorities of Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Honduras were trained on the use of traceability systems and the Trazar-Agro platform's agricultural registration module.

1.51. Training was provided to animal health officials from the national authority of Honduras on the use of traceability systems and the Trazar-Agro platform's sanitary control module to support programmes combatting brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis.

1.52. Officials from the Livestock Producers Association (BLR) of Belize were trained on the use of traceability systems and the Trazar-Agro platform's agricultural registration and bovine traceability modules.

1.53. Support was provided during the drafting of plans to implement traceability systems for pigs in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

1.54. Support was provided during the drafting of plans to implement traceability systems for small ruminants in Guatemala.

1.55. Support was provided during the drafting of plans to implement tilapia chain traceability systems in Guatemala.

1.56. Technical support is being provided to the Nicaraguan Institute for Agricultural Protection and Health (IPSA) for the launch and implementation of the Trazar-Agro platform.

2 SUPPORT FOR THE HARMONIZATION AND EQUIVALENCE PROCESS

2.1. The 1st and 2nd virtual meetings of the Technical Group for the Revision of IPPC International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) were held, during which OIRSA officials and representatives from national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) in the region revised draft international standards via videoconference.

2.2. OIRSA has participated in meetings of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee (CONACODEX) of El Salvador, including in the Mirror Codex Alimentarius Committees, as well as in the 1st meeting of the Mirror Codex Committee on General Principles – CCGP 32 and the 1st virtual session of the Mirror Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods; General Principles – CCGP.

2.3. Technical and economic support was provided to El Salvador for the drafting and updating of the national plan for monitoring contaminant residues in milk and milk by-products.

2.4. Technical and economic support was provided to El Salvador for the drafting and updating of the national plan for monitoring contaminant residues in plant-based products.

2.5. A study entitled "Determining cadmium levels in cocoa beans (*Theobroma cacao*) in Central America and the Dominican Republic" was published.

2.6. An OIRSA chlorine dosing application was developed for both sodium hypochlorite (liquid chlorine) and calcium hypochlorite (granular chlorine). The application is available on Google Play Store.

2.7. The establishment of the regional baseline for aflatoxin residues in maize in countries in the OIRSA region was finalized.

2.8. OIRSA participated in the 43rd session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

2.9. The document entitled "Risk analysis on the likelihood of the entry, establishment and spread of African swine virus in the pig farming sector in countries in the OIRSA region" was published.

2.10. Seven working meetings of the National Veterinary Drug Committee of Guatemala were organized. The purpose of the meetings was to review comments made regarding the Central American Custom Union's Technical Regulation on veterinary drugs and related products.

2.11. Support was provided for the holding of seven meetings of the ordinary assembly of the anti-antimicrobial resistance network in order to outline strategies for the region.

2.12. A working meeting was held with the Regional Technical Committee on Poultry Health (CTRSA) in order to develop proposals and outline regional guidelines based on those proposed by the OIE at the international level relating to avian influenza and the welfare of laying hens.

2.13. Support was provided to the Ministry of Agriculture of Panama for the establishment of strategies and a roadmap in order to fulfil the equivalence process for the opening of the bovine meat market to the United States.

2.14. As part of the project underway in Central American countries, Panama and the Dominican Republic for the accreditation of diagnostic tests for animal diseases (STDF/PG/495), diagnostic tests for aquatic and terrestrial animal diseases in five beneficiary laboratories have been accredited by accreditation bodies.

2.15. Support was provided to Guatemala and El Salvador through the Central American Customs Union to develop import requirements for shrimp, tilapia and other hydrobiological organisms.

2.16. 215,000 individual identification devices and 325 ear tag applicators were purchased for Belize and Guatemala through the Regional Traceability Fund.

2.17. Technical support was provided to the Interinstitutional Committee for Salvadoran Technical Regulation (RTS) No. 65.05.02:19 on the registration and identification system for livestock and aquaculture traceability. Participants included the private sector, academia, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) officials and the Salvadoran Technical Regulation Agency (OSARTEC).

3 PREVENTION, CONTROL AND ERADICATION ACTIVITIES (PROGRAMMES OR CAMPAIGNS)

3.1. Five working meetings were held with plant health directors from member countries. The purpose of these meetings was to set phytosanitary priorities in response to COVID-19, mainly within the framework of sharing experiences of the work of NPPOs and the coordination of activities as a region.

3.2. Eleven specialized groups have been set up to manage the pandemic. These specialized regional groups monitor phytosanitary priorities, draw up specific plans for phytosanitary care during the pandemic, share experiences and establish regional cooperation systems.

3.3. In El Salvador, an emergency was declared due to the presence of HLB in citrus fruit. OIRSA, together with MAG and FAO, has carried out work to contain and confine the pest in areas where it has been reported. Emergency funds from OIRSA and FAO were also made available.

3.4. A regional phytosanitary alert was issued for the Central American locust (*Schistocerca piceifrons piceifrons* Walker). This was supported by specialist scientists, who are predicting that, due to environmental conditions and the biological cycles of this species, there is a high risk of locust outbreaks between 2020 and 2022.

3.5. In order to support the swift action to address and control locust outbreaks in the region, OIRSA activated the phytosanitary task force for the prevention and control of locusts, which is composed of specialists from across the region. Financial support was also provided for the immediate purchase of equipment, materials and inputs.

3.6. OIRSA provided every member country with a strain of the fungus *Metarhizium anisopliae* acridum for the biological control of locusts, donated by the Mexican National Agri-Food Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA). It did so to build domestic capacity in the laboratories of ministries of agriculture, with a view to providing environmentally friendly control options.

3.7. Five kits were purchased and distributed for the diagnosis of bovine paralytic rabies in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

3.8. Pursuant to the Agreement between OIRSA and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock of Guatemala (MAGA), technical, administrative and financial support was provided to implement the national programme for the progressive control of bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis.

3.9. Kit was purchased for the diagnosis of bovine brucellosis in El Salvador, under the national programme for the progressive control of the disease.

3.10. The research project "Molecular characterization of the rabies virus in animal and human outbreaks in countries in the OIRSA region" was approved and will be implemented in the coming years together with the University of Glasgow in Scotland.

3.11. Support was provided to the National Agriculture and Food Health Service (SENASA) of Honduras to purchase kits for the diagnosis of equine infectious anaemia, in cooperation with the laboratory in El Salvador.

3.12. Technical and financial support was provided to Honduras and El Salvador through the research project on mollusc mortality in the Gulf of Fonseca.

4 STRENGTHENING OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN ORDER TO FACILITATE TRADE

4.1. The course "HACCP and its pre-requisite programmes" was delivered to national safety officials from countries in the OIRSA region. Twenty-seven national officials from countries in the region were accredited by the International HACCP Alliance (IHA).

4.2. A workshop on risk-based inspection and sampling was delivered virtually to the Dominican Republic, as part of which a training day was organized and the country's models for risk-based inspection and chemical residue monitoring programmes reviewed and adjusted.

4.3. Support was provided to the State Phytosanitary Service (SFE) of Costa Rica to revise the model for estimating the risk-based sample size for monitoring pesticide residues.

4.4. Support was provided, through the National Swine Technical Commissions of Guatemala and Panama, to update the information required by the OIE so that this information may be incorporated into the dossier on classical swine fever (CSF), as well as to continue the process of both countries being internationally recognized as free from this disease.

4.5. In conjunction with the public and private sectors in Panama, support was provided to implement and improve swine and poultry traceability in the country through the Trazar-Agro system developed by OIRSA.

4.6. A meeting was organized with the National Council on Traceability of Honduras (CONART), which is composed of institutions from the country's productive sector, the National Interinstitutional Security Force (FUSINA), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) and OIRSA, to discuss and address the implementation of the single guide on sanitary movement and control (GUIASA).

4.7. In Honduras, four movement control points have been established in the southern part of the country for farmed shrimp (March 2020), bovine animals and pigs (October 2020).

4.8. From June to September, OIRSA actively participated as an observer in the monthly meetings of CONART, the aim of which is to achieve consensus in the productive sectors regarding traceability, market access and aquaculture and livestock movement.

4.9. Instruments have been developed to build the capacity of national institutions to export bovine livestock to other markets, with a particular focus on bovine livestock exported by Guatemala to Mexico.

5 STRATEGIC ALLIANCES FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH AND TRADE

5.1. A memorandum of understanding was signed between FAO and OIRSA as a strategic alliance for the strengthening of agricultural health and food safety services.

5.2. A phytosanitary task force on *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *cubense* tropical race 4 (Foc TR4), composed of experts from FAO, the National Banana Corporation of Costa Rica (CORBANA), the ICA, the Plant Health Research Institute of Cuba (INISAV), Bioversity-CIAT, SENASICA and OIRSA, was established to provide technical and scientific support to the phytosanitary authorities of member countries in relation to the exclusion, prevention, containment and phytosanitary management of the pest.

5.3. Experts visited from Chinese Taipei with a view to learning about and assessing *in situ* potential international cooperation projects to prevent the introduction of Foc TR4, as well as possible work streams in projects to be developed jointly.

5.4. An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Honduras to carry out the second phase of HLB pest prevention in citrus fruits. The spraying and technical assistance process in citrus fruit farms will continue in the main centres of production in this country.

5.5. A cooperation agreement was signed with the Central American Sugar Association (AICA) to coordinate actions to prevent the Central American locust. This agreement sets out actions such as prompt communication between sugarcane growers and the public sector, standardizing investigation and sampling methodologies, and implementing a technological platform for quick reports.

5.6. OIRSA participated in the 2nd meeting of regional phytosanitary protection organizations, during which progress was made in coordinating plant protection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.7. OIRSA participated in the virtual regional workshop of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) 2020 for Latin America, during which the continent's positions were discussed with regard to the convention on phytosanitary measures and the revision of international standards.

5.8. Two virtual sessions of the Technical Group on *fusariosis* Foc TR4 in musaceae were organized within the framework of the Inter-American Group for Coordination on Plant Protection (GICSV), with the aim of coordinating the continent's work to prevent or contain the pest and pooling efforts to build technical capacities.

5.9. Joint projects with PANAFTOSA-PAHO/WHO were developed, including a project to improve food safety laboratories belonging to ministries of agriculture and livestock and ministries of health.

5.10. Together with the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) of the University of Maryland (United States), a joint course with OIRSA was organized to train trainers from the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA).

5.11. OIRSA coordinated and participated in a virtual meeting with 60 tilapia producers from Honduras in order to develop a workshop in which a draft sanitary programme for monitoring tilapia lake virus will be designed and production and exportation of this product strengthened.

5.12. The Agreement on Technical Cooperation with SENASA of Honduras was signed to develop an electronic registration management system for agricultural establishments, drugs, pesticides and other products for agricultural use, as part of the Trazar system.