

**EXPERIENCES IN REGIONALIZATION:
FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

Communication from Colombia

The following communication, received on 5 December 2005, is being distributed at the request of the delegation of Colombia.

I. COLOMBIA'S CURRENT STATUS REGARDING FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

1. Colombia wishes to report to the international community through the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures its experiences in regionalization, particularly regarding foot and mouth disease (FMD), and the difficulties encountered:

- (a) **Free zone without vaccination:** In 1997, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) recognized the northern part of the Department of Chocó to be an FMD-free zone, a status that has been renewed annually by the OIE at its General Session.
- (b) **Free zone with vaccination:** In May 2001, the OIE recognized as FMD-free with vaccination Colombia's northern region, which includes many of the departments on the Atlantic Coast, part of the Department of Antioquia and seven municipalities in the north of the Department of Caldas.

2. In May 2003, the OIE recognized as FMD-free a new zone with vaccination covering most municipalities in the Departments of Antioquia, Bolivar, Cesar, North Santander and Santander.

3. In May 2005, two further regions were recognized as free with vaccination, bringing FMD-free coverage in Colombia up to 61 per cent.

General remarks:

- (a) Colombia has a bovine (including buffalo) population of 21,623,124 in 483,135 herds, 47 per cent of which are located in zones recognized as being FMD-free, with and without vaccination.
- (b) The country covers an area of 1,141,748 square kilometres, of which 669,342 constitute the area recognized as FMD-free.
- (c) The last outbreak of the disease in the country occurred in March 2005 in Bogotá, Capital District, on land belonging to the National University (not an OIE-recognised zone, and timely and effective measures were taken to avoid further outbreaks).

- (d) The vaccination coverage rates countrywide for the last four years have been as follows:

2002	92.7 per cent
2003	94 per cent
2004	94.2 per cent
2005	96 per cent

- (e) To control the movement of animals and animal products inside the country and at the border, the Animal Health Service has 101 control posts strategically located in accordance with the epidemiological status of the zones, movement patterns and production systems, at which compliance with established standards is verified.
- (f) In order to minimize the risk of introducing FMD through imports of live animals and animal products, the sanitary measures established in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the Andean Community rules and sanitary agreements with individual countries are applied.
- (g) Legislation has been adapted to requirements regarding FMD status and is consistent with OIE standards.

II. PROCEDURE FOR STATUS RECOGNITION BY THE UNITED STATES

4. In November 2003, Colombia filed an application for recognition. In September 2004, the United States notified to Colombia a number of problems and sought clarification on nine points, stating that, rather than recognizing the entire OIE zone, it was interested in the establishment of a smaller zone within the free zone for the purposes of trade in meat.

5. In response, Colombia drew up a new application proposing a smaller area as requested by the United States.

6. In April 2005, in the course of consultations held in Washington, Colombia enquired about its applications and the United States replied that they were still under study and that it would inform Colombia of its observations on the matter at a later date.

7. In May 2005, Colombia sent in additional documentation that had been requested and in November 2005 the United States officially sent its observations on the evaluation so far.

III. CONCLUSION

8. Colombia is investing heavily in the control and eradication of pests and diseases, particularly foot and mouth disease. The aim of such investment is to establish pest- or disease-free areas with a view to eliminating losses and, above all, gaining access to import markets for agricultural products. That being so, we find the current process for free zone recognition to be somewhat complex and a cause of unwarranted delay.

9. For Colombia, maintaining free or low-prevalence areas costs as much if not more than obtaining the status and basically depends on the degree of commercial benefit that the status affords producers. Consequently, uncertainty in free zone recognition for access to international markets puts the sustainability of pest- and disease-free areas at risk.