

**MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY
AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES
24 AND 25 JUNE 2008**

Statement by Paraguay

The following communication, received on 12 June 2008, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Paraguay.

I. ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS

A. BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY – COUNTRY STATUS

1. Since 1996, Paraguay's National Animal Quality and Health Service (SENACSA) has been carrying out epidemiological surveillance activities under the National Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Prevention Programme. This programme strictly complies with the guidelines established by specific international bodies dealing with animal health, which chiefly encompass active epidemiological surveillance, laboratory analysis, information systems and training.

2. The programme initially enabled Paraguay to be classified as a Geographical Risk 1 Country (by the Scientific Committee of the European Union), meaning that the probability of the disease being present in domestic livestock is minimal.

3. It is important to note that at the 72nd General Session of the OIE held in May this year, Paraguay was classified as a country "with a negligible BSE risk in accordance with Chapter 2.3.13. of the Terrestrial Code", a status that it shares with only nine countries worldwide.

B. FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

4. Paraguay's health status with regard to foot-and-mouth disease is satisfactory. In accordance with the recommendations of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases and the International Committee of the OIE, Paraguay continues to be certified as a "country with a foot-and-mouth disease free zone with vaccination".

5. The non-certified area of the country is a "high surveillance zone" that includes a strip of land approximately 15 kilometres wide on either side of the border with neighbouring countries, thus affecting specific areas of Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay. Joint activities are being carried out in these areas with a view to reducing the risk of the foot-and-mouth virus entering and spreading into other areas.

II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION

A. REGIONAL SEMINAR ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

6. Paraguay hosted the Regional Seminar on the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures for the Southern Cone Countries, which took place from 22 to 24 April 2008. This seminar was organized by the WTO in conjunction with the Inter-American Development Bank/Institute for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean (IADB/INTAL) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). The seminar was attended by 49 experts from five countries – Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay – in addition to Paraguay and was based on the SPS Agreement and its importance in international trade and on harmonization stemming from the three reference bodies: the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the Codex Alimentarius. The seminar was also attended by experts from the WTO, IADB, IICA, the Standing Veterinary Committee of the South (SVC), the Southern Cone Plant Protection Committee (COSAVE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

B. WORKSHOP ON GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

7. The Government of Paraguay, through the National Plant and Seed Quality and Health Service (SENAVE) and the Investment and Export Network (REDIEX), organized a course entitled "Implementers of Good Agricultural Practices". Its objective was to train highly specialized professionals and create a critical mass trained to provide advice on the implementation of good agricultural practices in the various regions of the country, in accordance with current requirements for the domestic and international trade in food products. The course was given by instructors from Argentina's National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA).

C. COOPERATION WITH AGCI – SAG – IICA

8. SENAVE and SENACSA, the IICA, the Chilean Agency for International Cooperation (AGCI) and the Chilean Agricultural and Livestock Service (SAG) have engaged in horizontal cooperation, thus allowing experts from both SENAVE and SENACSA to receive training and share experiences in sanitary, phytosanitary and seed-related matters.

D. EUROPEAN UNION – MERCOSUR SPS PROJECT

9. The first results of the activity entitled "Strengthening MERCOSUR institutions relating to the SPS negotiations" were implemented within the framework of this project; a study tour to the European Union was organized for MERCOSUR officials, during which training was provided in carrying out audits and in negotiating skills.

10. The topics were centred on inspection-related issues with a view to the implementation of European Union regulations on trade in products of animal and plant origin, and specifically testing and certification requirements for laboratories and the accreditation system.

E. CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COURSE

11. On 10 and 11 June, a course entitled "The Codex Alimentarius Regulatory Process and You" was held in Paraguay using videoconference technology. Twenty-four experts from the public and private sectors attended the course to discuss the importance of the Codex Alimentarius for public health and access to international food markets, to promote understanding of the Codex regulatory system and to ensure closer cooperation between the Codex focal point and the National Technical Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The course was transmitted from Costa Rica,

with the simultaneous presence of experts from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, who shared their experiences in respect of benefits to consumer health and the international food trade.
