

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

Report to the 42nd Meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
24 and 25 June 2008

The following communication, received on 20 June 2008, is being circulated at the request of OIRSA.

1. Specific support for production chains for agricultural products

1. The International Regional Committee for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), working together with the national sanitary and phytosanitary authorities and the private sector, has continued to implement sanitary and phytosanitary programmes in support of agri-food chains. Below is a progress report on these programmes.

Honduras

2. In support of the fisheries and aquaculture production chain, OIRSA has established a Health and Safety Committee for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Production Chain, made up of the following: the National Association of Aquaculture Producers of Honduras (ANDAH), packing plants, tilapia producers, the National Animal Health Secretariat (SENASA), and the Directorate-General of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DIGEPESCA). The Committee will receive support from OIRSA.

3. Five hundred certificates declaring herds free from brucellosis and tuberculosis have been issued in the city of La Ceiba under the health programme in support of the bovine chain.

4. The Porcine Technical Commission (COSIPORC), comprising representatives of the public sector, producers from commercial farms, academic circles, the College of Veterinary Surgeons, the meat industry, and importers of veterinary products, has been officially established under the health programme in support of the pig production chain. The Commission has been reviewing and producing guidelines for the programme for the prevention, control and eradication of classical swine fever.

5. For the second consecutive year, pigs have been vaccinated under the classical swine fever programme, covering 75 per cent of Honduran territory. Nine departments are on the way to achieving eradication of the disease.

Guatemala

6. The following activities have been conducted in support of the oriental and other vegetable production chain:

- Following meetings with the national authorities and representatives of the private sector, the National Agricultural Production Council (CONPRODA) and the Guatemalan Exporters' Association (AGEXPORT), the snow pea and potato production chains have been selected for implementation of various phytosanitary programmes;
- in order to improve conditions for the inspection of products and by-products of animal and plant origin, four cold storage facilities have been set up in Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala, in order to prevent disruption in the cold chain.

7. As regards the health programme in support of the pig production chain, it is important to note that no positive cases of classical swine fever have been reported this year. The programme is now reaching the stage of eradication with nationwide epidemiological surveillance. Serological monitoring has been under way throughout the country in order to substantiate the initial protocols, and the Guatemalan authorities are aiming for the country to be declared free from classical swine fever by early 2009.

El Salvador

8. As part of its work for the pig production chain, OIRSA is continuing to support activities under the classical swine fever prevention, control and eradication programme. It is important to note that the outbreak reported in February of this year in the department of San Miguel has been declared over and was officially notified as such to the OIE on 21 May 2008. The national authorities are meanwhile maintaining serological surveillance of pigs in commercial farms.

9. In support of the fisheries and aquaculture production chain, the fry nursery infrastructure (ponds and electricity) will undergo repairs. The building of a processing plant is also foreseen under the semi-intensive river shrimp farming and marketing project.

Nicaragua

10. The phytosanitary programme in support of the fruit and vegetable production chain consists of the following:

- Quarantine measures against *Thrips palmi* and phytosanitary surveillance of the pink bollworm (*Pectinophora gossypiella* Saunders) pest, which has been officially eradicated from the region thanks to joint efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAGFOR) and OIRSA;
- internal quarantine measures to prevent leprosis from spreading to the pest-free areas of Rivas and Río San Juan;
- fruit fly quarantine measures in the internal quarantine posts of San Antonio and El Tamarindo, located in the area established under the "free area" protocol to the north of Lake Xolotlán. OIRSA is part of the Fruit and Vegetable Development Commission for the area north of Lake Xolotlán.

11. OIRSA continues to assist the national authorities with the implementation of an animal traceability programme for the bovine production chain.

12. Under the health programme in support of the pig production chain, which is specifically aimed at prevention, control and eradication of classical swine fever, pigs having tested positive for the virus of the disease following blood sampling of the country's non-vaccinated pig population are being slaughtered, for which the producers are receiving compensation. The regional reference laboratory, based in Nicaragua, is conducting the tests.

Panama

13. In support of the citrus and other fruit production chain, OIRSA has requested help from USDA-APHIS in acquiring prime citrus, mango and papaya genetic material. Nine hundred plant buds should arrive in September 2008 for the production of planting material. With funds from the OIRSA programme in support of the fruit production chain, greenhouses will be equipped in Río Hato and in El Ejido (Azüero) for the citrus and the papaya and mango plants, respectively.

14. OIRSA is also working on standards relating to the certification of nurseries which are due to receive the genetic material produced in the El Ejido and Río Hato centres.

15. As part of the laboratory enhancement programmes, OIRSA is providing support for the refurbishment of two regional animal health laboratories in Chiriquí and Divisa.

Dominican Republic

16. In support of the oriental and other vegetable production chain, the following activities have been carried out:

- Working sessions to organize the cluster and elect the Steering Committee (of which OIRSA is a member);
- financial and technical support for the courses on (a) nursery plant production and (b) traceability and safety;
- printing of 1,000 copies of the guide on phytosanitary and good agricultural practices.

17. The following activities have been conducted under the phytosanitary programme in support of the fruit chain:

- Printing of 1,000 copies of the schedule of agricultural tasks in mango production;
- financial and technical support during field days held (a) in San de la Maguana and (b) at the experimental farm of the Dominican Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (IDIAF): Mango cluster;
- huanglongbing (citrus greening) prevention programme meetings: Citrus cluster.

2. Training, technical assistance and dissemination activities relating to agricultural health and trade

18. In Nicaragua, OIRSA assisted with the seminar in support of the definition and implementation of a bovine traceability system and delivered a presentation on traceability.

19. In Guatemala, OIRSA took part in the Fifth Central American and Caribbean Congress on Apicultural Integration and Modernization, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAG).

20. In Honduras, a training programme for 200 producers from milk collection and refrigeration centres in the departments of Atlántida, Colón and Yoro focused on good hygiene practices in milk production, sanitary programmes in farms, safety requirements, good management practices (GMP), and sanitation standard operating procedures (SSOP).

21. To help the national authorities in Nicaragua, OIRSA has taken part in the diagnostic and evaluation process for dairy product and fisheries product inspection services.

22. In La Antigua, Guatemala, the regional seminar on economic evaluation of animal health projects, conducted in coordination with the Spanish International Development Cooperation Agency, aimed to raise awareness of the importance of economic analysis and risk assessment in respect of animal diseases at local, national and regional levels in raising project funds from the government, financing institutions and cooperating countries. The participants discussed a number of obstacles to Central American integration in the health sphere, such as budget constraints, the poor state of public veterinary infrastructure, and the absence of a common regional outlook. As a result, potential areas of national and regional action as well as international cooperation in promoting regional integration were identified.

23. El Salvador hosted the regional seminar/workshop on poultry product risk assessment, which was attended by poultry experts from the private and public sectors and led to the establishment of the Regional Risk Assessment Sub-Commission.

24. In Mexico, two seminars on biosafety in live poultry markets were conducted in coordination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure preparedness against the highly pathogenic H5N2 Asian strain of avian influenza virus.

25. In El Salvador, a regional technical panel convened to discuss the current use of phosphine in quarantine treatments and options for the replacement of methyl bromide. Participants included officials from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama.

3. Support for the regional harmonization process

26. On behalf of the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), quarantine procedures at regional level (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) have been compiled with a view to proposing a harmonized handbook on quarantine procedures for use by import control posts on the outskirts of the Central American Customs Union.

27. The guidelines on avian influenza, Newcastle disease, laryngotracheitis and pullorum-typhoid disease, which also regulate regional poultry production, have been revised and updated for submission to and approval by the International Regional Committee for Plant and Animal Health (CIRSA), made up of the Ministers and Secretaries of the OIRSA member countries.

28. The Technical Committee comprising countries where classical swine fever is endemic met in El Salvador to draw up the health status-based country action programme and review the legitimacy of trade restrictions imposed following the appearance of foci in a country having reached the eradication phase.

29. The Special Session of the CIRSA Technical Commission was held in Nicaragua, where, *inter alia*, agreements were reached on mutual recognition of countries free from classical swine fever

and regional positions were determined for the purposes of trade negotiations and international forums.

4. Transparency of information

30. Distribution of the monthly Regional Epidemiological Bulletin, which contains information on the incidence of animal diseases in OIRSA member countries, has continued in order to promote transparency in epidemiological information and surveillance.

5. Strengthening of national institutions in order to facilitate trade

31. The Costa Rican handbook on good agricultural practices has been revised at the request of the Costa Rican authorities.

32. In Honduras, the handbook on animal quarantine procedures applied by the country's quarantine system (Animal and Plant Health Protection Service (SEPA-OIRSA)) has been revised and updated.

33. In cooperation with the Costa Rican authorities, comments have been issued on the handbook on good agricultural practices.

34. The Department of International Treaties at the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs has received support for technical assessments and expert opinions concerning texts such as the Convention on Facilitation of Maritime Traffic (FAL, 1965).

6. Strengthening of inter-institutional relations with other international bodies

35. In France, the General Session of the OIE saw the signing of a memorandum of understanding between OIRSA and the OIE on the establishment, management and operation of the OIRSA-WAHIS regional animal health information system.

36. At the sub-regional workshop on SPS-related technical cooperation in Central America, held in Guatemala under the auspices of the WTO, the IDB and the Guatemalan Government, OIRSA outlined its cooperation activities in progress or scheduled for implementation in response to country requirements and priorities, as identified in the regional status study on Central American sanitary and phytosanitary issues. OIRSA has pledged to continue supporting its member countries as regards sanitary and phytosanitary measures.
