

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: Spanish

## FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE SITUATION

### Communication by Argentina<sup>1</sup>

The following communication, received on 26 June 2008, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Argentina.

#### I. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

1. Argentina is located in the southern and western hemispheres and occupies the most southern part of the South American continent. With a surface area of approximately 3,750,000 sq km, Argentina is the seventh largest country in the world and the fourth largest on the American Continent (after Canada, the United States and Brazil). Its total border area is 9,376 km, adjoining five neighbouring countries: Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay. The longest border is that with Chile (5,150 km), along the Andes mountain range.

Geographical Location of Argentina



2. In the field of animal health, in addition to being a member of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Argentina is a signatory to the Agreement establishing the Standing Veterinary

<sup>1</sup> The content of the charts is reproduced in Spanish only.

Committee (*Comité Veterinario Permanente*), alongside Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay. Argentina has also joined these countries, in signing the Agreement establishing the Southern Agricultural and Livestock Council (*Consejo Agropecuario del Sur – CAS*). Argentina is part of the MERCOSUR trade bloc.

3. At national level, the National Agri-food Health and Quality Service (*Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria – SENASA*)<sup>2</sup> is the agency entrusted with the execution of governmental animal health and plant protection policies. As its name suggests, SENASA is also responsible for ensuring agri-food hygiene, safety and quality. It also monitors imports and certifies exports of animal and plant products, by-products and derivatives, agri-food products, pharmacological and veterinary products, agrochemicals, fertilizers and soil amendments<sup>3</sup>.

4. SENASA is an autonomous body attached to the Executive Power through the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of the Ministry of the Economy. In line with the provisions on transparency set forth in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), SENASA serves as the national enquiry point.

## II. LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

5. The agriculture and livestock sector plays a fundamental role in the economy of the country; boneless beef being Argentina's most important exportable livestock product.

**Livestock inventories by species**

| SPECIES | Number of animals in millions |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| Bovine  | 57                            |
| Ovine   | 16                            |
| Caprine | 4                             |
| Equine  | 2                             |
| Porcine | 3                             |

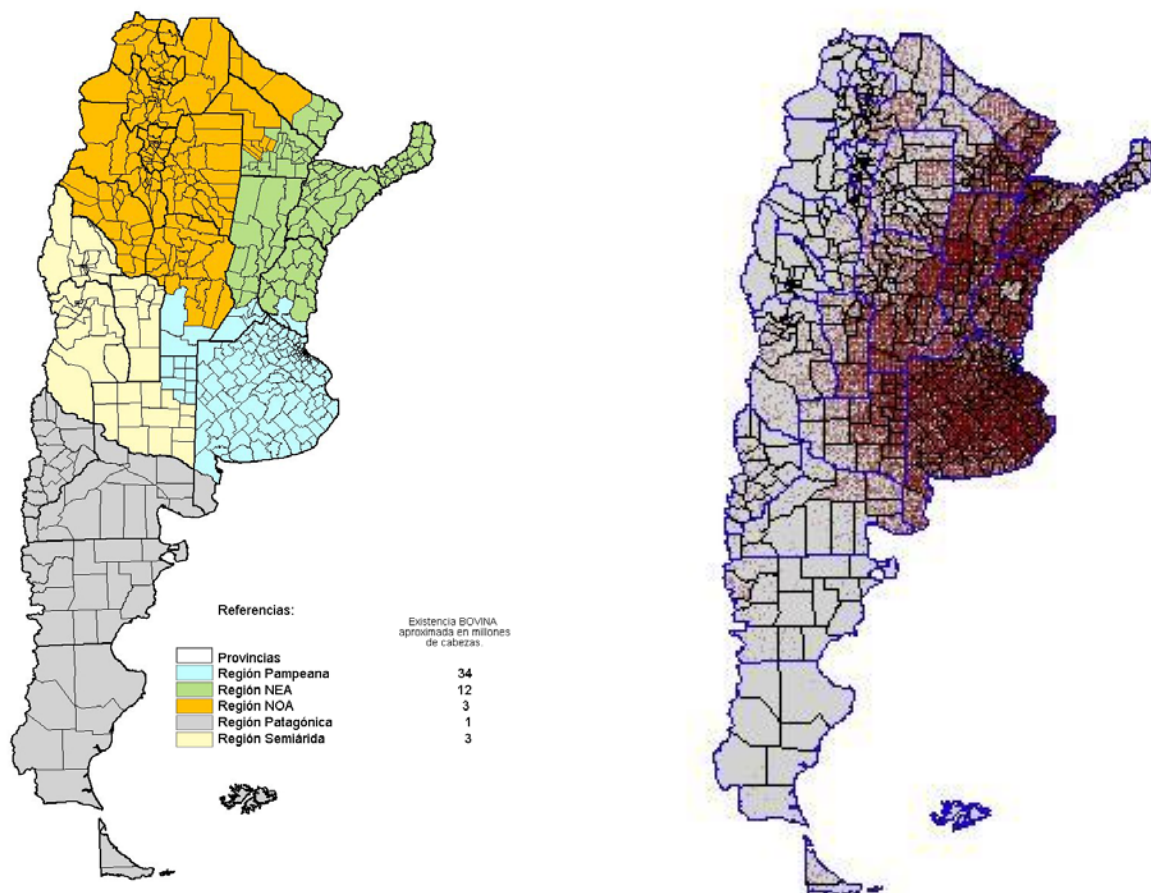
*Source:* Data supplied by the Health Management System (SGS), as at 31 March 2008.

6. According to the different suitability variables, the most productive area is the Pampas, where intensive production of milk and meat is the predominant business activity, with a constant ingress of young cattle. It is followed by zones with semi-intensive and extensive farming activities (NEA, NOA) and the semi-arid region with lower stock density (and a larger number of simple commercial and subsistence farm holdings).

<sup>2</sup> Decree No. 815/99 of 26 July 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Decree No. 1585/96 of 19 December 1996.

### Distribution of cattle stock by region



1 dot = 1.000 Bovines

Total Bovine Stock 2007: 57.300.000

Data supplied by the Health Management System (SGS), as at 31.03.2008

Source: Health Management System – Field Coordination – National Directorate of Animal Health (DNSA) – SENASA

### III. HISTORY OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN ARGENTINA

7. Historically, the presence of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Argentina was related to two different ecosystems: a free zone (Patagonia) and an endemic zone (subject to a vaccination plan) with frequent occurrences until 1994.

8. The National Programme of Action to Combat Foot and Mouth Disease, adopted in 1993<sup>4</sup>, eradicated the disease and led to suspension of the vaccination programme in 1999; OIE recognition as an "FMD-free country without vaccination" was obtained in 2000.

9. The re-emergence of the disease in 2001 required the design and implementation of a new FMD Control and Eradication Plan, which is currently in place.

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<sup>4</sup> Law No. 24.305/93, the National FMD Law, and its Regulatory Decree No. 643/96, declared the eradication of the disease from the entire Argentine territory to be a matter of national interest and regulated the different aspects of the National Programme of Action to Combat Foot and Mouth Disease.

10. The effectiveness of the plan is attributable to the active participation of producers and other interested sectors in its design and implementation.

11. Regionalization criteria, standards and procedures developed and applied are in line with international guidelines set forth in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code ("Terrestrial Code"), particularly in Chapter 2.2.10 on Foot and Mouth Disease.

12. The Plan is based on the following strategies:

- Regionalization;
- Registration of Agricultural Producers;
- Strategic and Systematic Vaccination;
- Epidemiological Surveillance;
- Control of Animal Movements;
- Border Control;
- Planning and Control of Sanitary Emergencies;
- Training and Awareness Campaigns.

13. Actions taken within a suitable regulatory framework led to the following developments:

- In May 2002, the OIE recognized the Argentine territory located south of parallel 42°S as an "FMD-free zone without vaccination";
- In July 2003, the OIE recognized the Argentine territory located north of parallel 42°S as an "FMD-free zone with vaccination"; (two events in the border area with Bolivia and Paraguay – in 2003 and 2006, respectively – caused the provisional suspension of free status in the territory located north of parallel 42°S);
- In March 2007, free zone with vaccination status was restored to the territory that had lost that status, and in May 2007 free zone without vaccination status was extended up to Río Negro (see map).

14. As is shown by the outline given above, since 2002 the OIE has recognized two FMD-free zones in Argentina: one zone where vaccination is practised and another where vaccination is not practised. The two zones cover the entire Argentine territory. They are separated by sanitary barriers where risk mitigation measures provided for in Chapter 2.2.10 of the Terrestrial Code are applied.

15. An area of 15 kilometres extending from Argentina's northern border with Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia is temporarily excluded from the FMD-free zone with vaccination and made subject to intensive surveillance.

Map showing Argentina's situation regarding FMD according to  
OIE



Epidemiology Directorate, DNSA – SENASA

#### IV. FMD-FREE ZONE WITHOUT VACCINATION

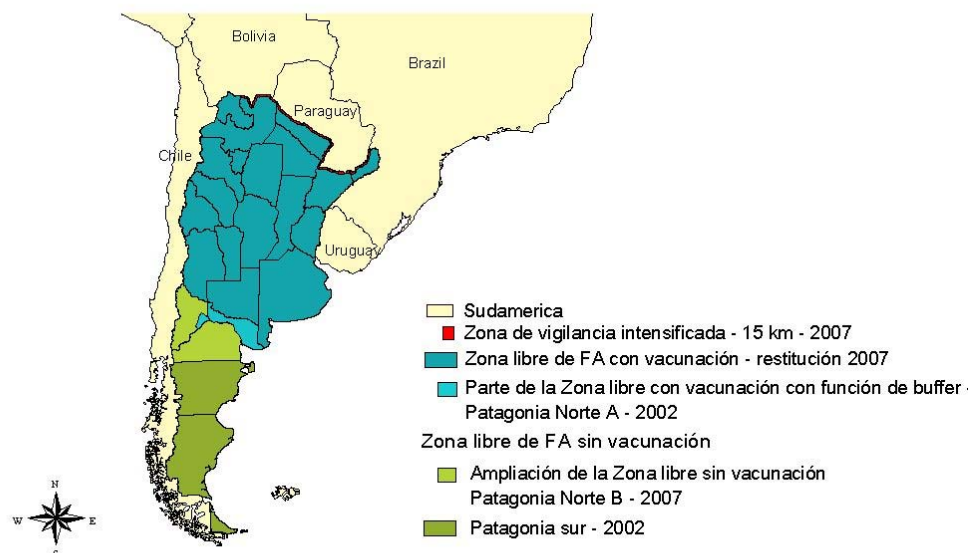
16. The "free zone without vaccination" comprises most of the territory of the provinces of Río Negro and Neuquén, and the provinces of Chubut, Santa Cruz, Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and Southern Atlantic Islands (Patagonia) in their entirety.

17. The provinces of Patagonia are characterized by sheep breeding for the production of meat and wool, with particular emphasis on full-cycle extensive ranching. In the Patagonia region, cattle rearing is limited to extensive/extractive breeding areas, with low animal density, in the Andean mountain and pre-mountain range, to the west in the area bordering Chile.

18. Epidemiological indicators suggest that the zone is an ecosystem **NATURALLY FREE OF FMD**, with low contact rate among susceptible animals and limited forage production. At the same time, the likelihood of the virus spreading from infected regions outside country limits into the Argentine territory is negligible because of the distances involved, movement patterns, regulatory support and the natural and artificial barriers created to prevent its entry.

19. The "free zone without vaccination" is separated from the "free zone with vaccination" by the Barrancas river (a natural barrier), the Río Negro river and part of the free zone with vaccination that serves as a buffer zone known as "Patagonia North A", in addition to a system of sanitary barriers. (See map).

### Chronological detail of recognition of FMD-free zones



Epidemiology Directorate, DNSA – SENASA

## V. FMD-FREE ZONE WITH VACCINATION

20. The "FMD-free zone with vaccination" covers over 95 per cent of the national cattle stock due to the quality of the pastures used for cattle farming.

21. In the "free zone with vaccination", periodic and systematic vaccination is practised, in two annual campaigns, on 100 per cent of the bovine and bubaline stock. Each vaccination campaign covers all age categories. In areas included in the northern border subprojects, vaccination is practised on all susceptible species.

22. Susceptible species other than cattle are vaccinated only when required by strategic or emergency situations.

23. Movements of cattle within areas where vaccination is practised are not authorized unless animals have been vaccinated at least twice at intervals of not more than 180 days. To meet this requirement, strategic vaccinations are performed during the vaccination campaign and between each campaign, as appropriate.

24. To date, 14 vaccination campaigns have taken place and the 15th campaign is under way. An average of 60,438,022 vaccine doses were used during the last two vaccination campaigns in 2007.

25. Producers and other interested sectors participate in the National FMD Eradication Plan through the FMD National Committee (CONALFA), Provincial Animal Health Boards (COPROSAs) and Local Sanitary Bodies and/or Zonal Committees.

26. Besides being the Technical Reference Point for the Local Vaccination Plan, SENASA's local veterinarian also performs follow-up and monitoring of vaccination campaigns at local level and is directly responsible for auditing, controlling and overseeing the Local Plan<sup>5</sup>.
27. SENASA's Epidemiology Directorate, through its "Follow-up and Development System for Vaccination Campaigns", assesses the execution of local plans and performance of local sanitary bodies in order to implement corrective measures, where necessary.
28. Strategic vaccination is carried out in emergency situations – peri-focal areas, containment cordons in border areas, etc. – as well as for purposes of outward movement and under the Border Safeguard Framework Project.
29. The implementation of control plans, the adoption of the regulatory framework and the work carried out jointly with the different sections of the production chain have enabled Argentina, to date, to continue securing recognition of FMD free sanitary status for both zones.

## **VI. OTHER STRATEGIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

### **A. EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE**

30. Systematic serological sampling is performed annually under the FMD Surveillance System, to detect FMD virus circulation in the susceptible species and estimate the level of immunity conferred through vaccination of the bovine/bubaline population. Sampling is performed in zones with and without vaccination, in accordance with the recommendations contained in Appendix 3.8.7 of the OIE Terrestrial Code. It takes the form of randomized, probabilistic and stratified initial sampling, with follow-up of positive cases. For design purposes, the country is divided into zones according to production characteristics, and a design based on specific hypotheses is applied in each zone.
31. In addition to annual systematic sampling, targeted surveys are performed in risk areas, such as the zone comprised in the Northern Border Subproject, or in other areas with specific characteristics or of particular interest from the epidemiological standpoint.
32. Sampling for 2007 showed lack of viral activity in the entire territory and an adequate immunity level in the susceptible species. This was in line with the high rate of vaccine coverage achieved, which was sufficient to prevent the spread of FMD virus.
33. Sectors related to livestock production and health are part of the National System of Epidemiological Surveillance<sup>6</sup>, adopted in 1996. This includes agricultural producers, private practitioners (veterinarians and agronomists), livestock consignees, slaughterhouses, livestock transporters, the veterinary products industry, etc., who are required to inform SENASA of the occurrence of any symptoms compatible with FMD.

### **B. MOVEMENT CONTROLS**

34. The following documentation is required to move animals to any destination and for any purpose:
- Animal Transit Document (DTA), issued by SENASA-authorized offices and regulated by SENASA Resolution No. 848/98.

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<sup>5</sup> SENASA Resolution No. 33/02.

<sup>6</sup> SENASA Resolution No. 234/96.

- Transport Certificate (*guía de traslado*), issued by the competent authority of each province, provided a DTA has previously been submitted.
- Transport Washing and Disinfection Certificate, issued at SENASA-approved washing facilities.

35. Records of all owners, holdings, and livestock populations within a given jurisdiction are kept at each SENASA Local Office. Records are updated after each vaccination campaign (in areas subject to systematic vaccination) and every time animals are moved in or out of a holding.

36. Sanitary enforcement activities involve controls and inspections at strategic points, consisting in:

- Checking of documents:
- monitoring of animal identification, category, breed, sex, species, marking, number, etc;
- clinical inspection to check health status of animals.

37. The producer must use the appropriate DTA to report the arrival of an animal or herd of animals at the local office of the place of destination. Any animal or herd of animals that is moved without the appropriate DTA is subject to immediate sanitary slaughter, pursuant to current regulations.

#### C. INTENSIVE SURVEILLANCE ZONE

38. Since 2004, Argentina has developed a Border Safeguard Framework Project for the implementation of "Border North A" border programmes in the provinces of Jujuy, Salta and Formosa, in areas adjoining Bolivia and Paraguay; and "Border North B" programmes in the provinces of Chaco, Corrientes and Misiones, in areas adjoining Paraguay and Brazil.

39. This Project, with its two Programmes, provides for specific and differential strategies as regards the rest of the country, such as vaccination of all susceptible species and strengthening of control structures in the border zone.

#### D. REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

40. The goals of the MERCOSUR Action Plan for FMD Free Status (PAMA), approved through Decision No. 25/2005 of the Common Market Council, are the following:

- (a) To support the eradication of FMD at the level of MERCOSUR and Associate States and contribute to the structuring and operation of a sound, subregional veterinary system that serves to maintain the epidemiological status achieved;
- (b) to contribute to the development of regional livestock for placement in the international market and strengthen the sanitary bodies to prevent the occurrence of other exotic diseases having similar economic impact.

41. The project consists of the following components: (i) action in areas with persistence of FMD and structural and operational weaknesses; (ii) bi- or tri-national border projects; (iii) system of diagnostic laboratories and vaccine control; (iv) strengthening of national surveillance systems;



(v) production of vaccines under biosecurity conditions; (vi) stronger action at local level; (vii) technical audits; (viii) prevention systems in FMD-free areas; and (ix) training, technical assistance and communication.

42. The project is implemented by the MERCOSUR Committee for FMD Free Status, through the MERCOSUR Secretariat; each country has in turn created a local executive subunit responsible for the activities to be carried out in each country.

#### E. LABORATORY

43. In Argentina, laboratory diagnosis of FMD is carried out at the SENASA Central Laboratory – National Reference Laboratory (NRL) – located in Martinez, Province of Buenos Aires, which is the only approved laboratory.

44. The reference laboratory applies good laboratory practices and ISO/IEC standard 17025/IRAM 301 (accreditation for analytical trials) with the aim of facilitating mutual recognition agreements.<sup>7</sup>

45. During the 76th General Session of the OIE International Committee, held in Paris from 25 to 30 May 2008, the SENASA laboratory was recognized as a reference laboratory for FMD.

46. The SENASA laboratory has thus received six reference laboratory accreditations from the international organization OIE; in addition to FMD, they relate to brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, paratuberculosis, leptospirosis and bee diseases.

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<sup>7</sup> Resolution No. 55/03 of 21 March 2003.