

INFORMATION ON THE OUTBREAKS OF A/H1N1 HUMAN INFLUENZA VIRUS

Communication from Brazil

The following communication, received on 12 May 2009, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Brazil.

1. The Government of Brazil confirmed on 7 May 2009, four (4) cases of the new influenza virus named A/H1N1 in the country: two patients in the state of São Paulo, one in Rio de Janeiro and another in Minas Gerais. All patients were infected abroad. They were immediately isolated in Brazilian hospitals. Since the outbreak of avian influenza, some years ago, that did not reach Brazil, the Government has developed its own Preparation Plan for a Pandemic Influenza, which was put into practice since the WHO notified the first case of influenza A/H1N1.

2. Swine meat and by-products in the country are entirely produced and processed under an integrated system, which reduces the risks of contamination and spread of the virus. There is no epidemiological link between human infection by A/H1N1 and swine farms. The Government has adopted additional measures so as to prevent any contamination of Brazilian animal and meat production establishments, such as: the enforcement of surveillance procedures concerning farm biosecurity; the intensification of inspection visits to production plants; the implementation of clinical inspection of farm workers who are in contact with swine herds; and the restriction of access to production facilities. Due to those measures, the Brazilian Government can ensure all Members that it is completely safe to consume swine products certified by the Brazilian Inspection System of Animal Origin Products.

3. Brazil is highly concerned with the recent restrictions to international trade adopted by some countries due to the A/H1N1 epidemic outbreak.

4. As soon as the first case of influenza A/H1N1 was announced, there was a series of misunderstandings concerning the new virus, which was incorrectly related to swine influenza. Although international organizations promptly recommended that Governments refrain from adopting restrictive measures, imports of swine meat and by-products were prohibited or limited by some countries.

5. Since then, the international community has confirmed that there is no evidence that the A/H1N1 virus is transmitted by food and that, consequently, there is no justification for imposing restrictions on the trade of swine products. Additionally, it could not be proved that the outbreak of this new type of human virus was derived from influenza in pig herds. Furthermore, on 7 May 2009, FAO, WHO and OIE released a joint document stating that influenza viruses are not known to be transmissible to people through the consumption of processed pork or other foods derived from pigs.

Heat treatments commonly used in cooking meat will readily inactivate any viruses potentially present in raw products.

6. So as to fulfill their obligations under the SPS Agreement, Brazil deems it necessary that those Members which imposed sanitary restrictions related to influenza A/H1N1, immediately notify them to the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Taking into account the provisions of Article 5.7 of the SPS Agreement, those Members that consider the scientific evidence presented by relevant international organizations insufficient must present additional scientific information to justify the imposition of trade restrictions and review their measures accordingly within a reasonable period of time.
