

HEALTH INFORMATION CONCERNING FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

Statement by Paraguay at the Meeting of 29-30 October 2003

1. Paraguay, a landlocked developing country, has an economy largely based on agricultural and forestry production, and consequently products from those sectors account for a large share of its exports. In this context, Paraguay is making a considerable effort to integrate itself into the international trading system, developing programmes to control and eradicate diseases and to bring its products into line with the health and quality standards applicable to the international markets.

2. Just as this process was gradually taking shape, the country suffered a major setback in the form of two occurrences of foot-and-mouth disease, which meant that it was immediately cut off from its main markets for meat and meat products, and faced considerable economic losses.

3. The first case occurred in October 2002, and was duly communicated and discussed with the Members of this Committee.

4. The second case of foot-and-mouth disease occurred on 12 July 2003 in Pozo Hondo, Department of Boquerón, in an indigenous settlement some 2 kilometres from the border. As in the first case, the Paraguayan veterinary service proceeded in a fully transparent manner, acting in strict conformity with the OIE and the River Plate Basin Agreement and adopting the measures most suited to the country immediately after the disease was confirmed by a laboratory diagnosis, which identified types O and A foot-and-mouth disease viruses.

5. One of the main measures taken on this occasion was the sacrifice and total destruction of the animals: 95 bovines, 160 caprines, 60 ovines and 14 porcines. This was followed by other measures, such as an epidemiological surveillance of the area, transit control and a prohibition on the entire department of Boquerón, and in the perifocal area, emergency revaccination of the bovine herds and all animals of species susceptible to foot-and-mouth disease, and sero-epidemiological surveillance in all establishments in the area.

6. It should be stressed that the case occurred in a naturally isolated area, where animals are bred exclusively to feed the local inhabitants and there is no connection with the areas producing animals for slaughter and cold storage with a view to marketing the meat domestically and/or abroad. This made it easier to control the outbreak immediately. On 12 October 2003, after a precautionary period of 90 days, the indigenous settlers were given, entirely free of charge, a number of animals equal to the number slaughtered following the occurrence of the disease.

7. In response to this situation, Paraguay decided to give priority, through its health services, to recovering its sanitary status as a country free from foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination, by working intensively with all of the actors, the public sector and the different private organizations, producers and professionals with a view, *inter alia*, to:

- Forming animal health commissions at the national level, made up of representatives of public and private organizations;

- organizing supervised vaccination of all bovine animals twice a year;
- obtaining sworn declarations of animals held;
- ensuring cooperation and coordination with veterinary services in neighbouring countries.

8. During the first stage of vaccination, conducted from 1 to 30 June 2003, it was possible, working in this way, to achieve a high level of vaccination coverage and to establish with certainty the livestock population of Paraguay.

9. The second stage of vaccination will begin over the next few days in November. To that end, the veterinary service has set up a training programme for all those involved in the vaccination campaign (vaccinators, inspectors, technical coordinators) in the hope of significantly improving the working method and of achieving adequate vaccination coverage to enable Paraguay to definitively eradicate the disease and recover its status of "country free of foot-and-mouth disease with vaccination" which it had obtained recently, at great sacrifice and after persistent sanitary technical efforts by all of the national sectors involved.

10. Finally, the delegation of Paraguay participating in the meetings of this Committee appeals to the international community to show the cooperation and understanding needed to combat the disease effectively at the regional and international levels, and to refrain from adopting measures restricting trade in agricultural products beyond what is strictly necessary and provided for in the health codes, thus avoiding capricious para-tariff measures that cause prejudice to the vulnerable developing countries.
