

INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF CHILE IN POULTRY PRODUCTS  
(Sanitary measures relating to salmonella)

Statement Made by Chile at the Meeting  
of 8-9 October 1996

Chile has been distinguished by its implementation of long-term sanitary policies involving a major investment of human and financial resources, so that it is now free of the principal agricultural pests and diseases that restrict international trade.

Its trade policies in the various sectors have been aimed at preventing trade barriers that are raised by applying measures which are unjustified and, accordingly, have no scientific basis.

As everyone is aware, Chile has eradicated foot-and-mouth disease and has been free of it since 1981. Nevertheless, it has kept up dynamic trade with countries that are on the foot-and-mouth circuit, implementing risk-management policies for meat imports, unlike other countries on the non-FDM circuit which continue to follow no-risk criteria.

In the specific case of poultry imports, Chile has been consistent with this attitude.

As far as imports of poultry meat are concerned, the current sanitary requirements came into force in March 1992.

The import requirements are dynamic in character, in view of the varying conditions regarding pathogens present in animals and products. Hence, it is not surprising that these requirements should be constantly brought into line with the new realities of sanitary situations in the exporting and importing countries.

The change in the sanitary requirements for poultry products was due to the excellent production and sanitary standards of the Chilean poultry industry achieved in recent years to meet exigent export markets in Latin America, Europe and Asia.

Chilean sanitary requirements, as far as salmonella is concerned, are similar to the requirements imposed on our exports of equivalent products on international markets. Chile exports under such conditions to Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Argentina.

At the present time, about 3,000 salmonella serovarieties have been identified around the world and of these 300 are pathogenic for poultry and for other animals.

In Chile, the number of pathogenic serovarieties, both for animals and for people, is very low and not more than 10 of them affect poultry.

To minimize the probability of bringing in the pathogenic salmonella varieties that do not exist in Chile but do exist in the United States and other countries producing poultry meat, the Chilean import

requirement establishes that it is compulsory to take samples for salmonella in consignments of raw poultry meat imported into Chile.

Since it is a sample, this does not mean the consignment as a whole is negative and it cannot therefore be maintained that, in formulating the requirement, use has been made of the zero risk, criterion or complete absence of salmonella in meat.

Compliance with the rule is not a discriminatory requirement for the United States, since it applies to all countries exporting such products to Chile.

It is important to emphasize that there is a marked difference in the prevalence of salmonellas observed in the United States and those that occur in Chile. Accordingly, our country is entitled to adopt the necessary sanitary measures to protect the human or animal health, by means more specially of risk assessment and determination of the appropriate level of sanitary protection. The prevalence of diseases is especially important in risk assessment.

The requirements are not discriminatory for foreign producers, since the Agricultural and Stockbreeding Service, the official sanitary service, has for export purposes an officially supervised poultry flock programme (PABCO) which rigorously applies an epidemiological monitoring method. Ninety-seven per cent of Chilean production of broilers comes from these flocks.

A system of risk analysis and critical control points has been implemented at abattoirs for poultry for the domestic and the export markets. One of the critical control points is precisely the monitoring of salmonella. This is done at every previously established inspection stage, in keeping with the risk analysis.

In short, the situation of the United States poultry industry is one of epidemiological risk, with high prevalence of poultry-specific salmonellas and zoonotic diseases transmissible from poultry to man. This requires Chile to adopt preventive measures for imports of poultry meat products from that country.

In future, a way of safeguarding the sanitary quality of imports of such products from the United States might be through irradiated products. They could be imported in keeping with the rules of the chapter on irradiated food of the new Food Sanitary Regulations prepared by the Chilean Ministry of Health, which is now in the process of issuing them.

It should be emphasized that the measures imposed by Chile on imports of poultry meat products from the United States are neither discriminatory nor technically unjustified and they are in keeping with the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement. Chile is entitled to adopt sanitary measures scientifically based on risk analysis studies in order to protect human, animal or plant life or health, as laid down in the Agreement itself.

Lastly, we are mindful of the efforts of the United States in the Department of Agriculture's elaboration of a plan to reduce salmonella, chiefly by risk assessment at critical control points in United States abattoirs. In this context, the major establishments would take 18 months to meet the guidelines, middle-sized establishments would take 30 months and the smaller ones 42 months.

In another connection, with reference to the same product, the United States has recognized that Chile is a country free of Newcastle disease, which is of importance in the international system. Chile is thus prepared to fulfil the appropriate sanitary conditions for export to that country. However, proceedings were instituted in the United States by poultry producers, who requested the same inspection procedures for an exporting country as those used by the United States. Finally, after seven years,

the result of the proceedings was that equivalent procedures could be used. This occurred more than a year ago, when our country requested entry into that market. At the time, the United States said that, before studying Chile's request, it should look into requests by other countries.

In any event, it is necessary to clarify that we are not including this last point as a matter for consultation, since it had to be requested with due notice and the purpose is simply to point to procedures.

In the general context, and consistent with what has been said in this document about sanitary developments in countries and new technologies to obtain innocuous foods (irradiation), Chile stands ready to continue bilateral technical talks with the United States to increase mutual trade under this heading.