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INITIATIVES ON FOOD SAFETY, FOOD SECURITY, AND TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES

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Initiatives on Food Security, Food Quality, Food Safety, and Transboundary Diseases

Summary

1. The present document summarizes the principal joint activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other international organizations for technical assistance in emerging areas such as food security, food quality, food safety, and the progressive control of transboundary diseases, while at the same time offering proposals on how the countries can participate. It describes the current state of undernutrition in the Americas and the progress made in the lines of action established at the World Food Summit. It discusses the operations of the FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety and lists the projects under the Special Program for Food Security, while describing the main work of the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, the implementation of the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases, and the launch of the FAO/OIE Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases. It summarizes the recommendations for promoting the competitiveness of rural producers to improve food security, for increasing the active participation of the countries in the basic work of Codex Alimentarius, and for strengthening veterinary and veterinary public health services to prevent the introduction of transboundary diseases in the countries of the Region.

Introduction

2. FAO leads the activities to eradicate hunger, offering its services to developed and developing countries alike. With 187 member countries and the European Union, it serves as a neutral forum where all the countries meet on an equal footing to negotiate agreements and discuss policies. It is also a source of knowledge and information. FAO helps developing countries and countries in transition to modernize and improve their livestock, forestry, and fishing activities to guarantee good nutrition for all. Since its founding in 1945, the organization has paid special attention to the development of rural areas, where 70% of the world's poor and hungry live.

3. FAO's mandate is to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations, and contribute to the growth of the world economy in order to achieve food security for all and guarantee regular access to good quality food that will enable people to live active, healthy lives.

4. The existence of hunger in a world of abundance is not only a moral scandal but is shortsighted from an economic standpoint: hungry people make poor workers; they learn little in school; they are vulnerable to disease; and they die young. Hunger is also

intergenerational, since undernourished mothers give birth to low birthweight babies with diminished potential for mental and physical activity. Individual productivity and the growth of entire nations are seriously compromised by widespread hunger. Eradicating hunger is therefore in the best interests of each country.

5. In light of this, in November 1996 FAO organized the World Food Summit (WFS), the first world gathering at the highest political level to focus exclusively on food security. The approval of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action renewed the international community's commitment to guaranteeing food for all. The Declaration articulates the ultimate goal and immediate objective: "We pledge our political will and our common and national commitment to achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015."

Comparative View of the Regions' Attainment of the WFS Objective

6. The latest global estimates indicate that 798 million people in the developing world were undernourished¹ in the biennium 1999-2001, a reduction of only 19 million since the biennium 1990-1992, the reference period used at the WFS. Thus, the average annual reduction since the Summit has only been 2.1 million, much lower than the numbers required to meet the WFS objective. This means that the progress must now be accelerated to 26 million per year, almost 12 times the current rate of reduction, if the objective is to be met.

7. However, some countries have made progress in reducing the number of undernourished. China alone managed to reduce its undernourished population by 58 million between 1990 and 1992. Indonesia, Viet Nam, Thailand, Ghana, Brazil, and Peru all achieved a reduction of 3 million or more, helping to offset the 76 million increase in 47 countries where progress has stalled. Nevertheless, if China and these six countries are left out of the equation, the number of undernourished people in the rest of the developing world has risen by 59 million since the WFS reference period.

8. Around 54 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean were undernourished during the period 1999-2001, as opposed to 59 million in 1990-1992. Within this context, only South America and the Caribbean have shown a decline in recent years, while Central America and Mexico have witnessed an increase in the number of people with nutritional deficits². This indicates that progress toward meeting

¹ Undernutrition: food intake insufficient to meet the energy requirements of people.

² In South America the figure fell from 42 million (1990-1992) to 33 million (2000-2002) undernourished people--that is, from 14% to 10% of the population; in the Caribbean, it fell from 7.8 to 6.7 million people, or 27% to 21%; in Central America, it rose from 5 to 7.4 million people, or 17% to 21%, and in

the objective of cutting the number of people afflicted by hunger in half is slow and that, if the current trend persists, the goal of the World Food Summit will not be attained in 2015 but in 2030.

Prevalence of Undernutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean

Region and Countries	Total Population			Number of Undernourished People			Proportion of Undernourished People in the Total Population		
	1990 1992	1995 1997	2000 2002	1990 1992	1995 1997	2000 2002	1990 1992	1995 1997	2000 2002
	<u>Millions</u>			<u>millions</u>			<u>%</u>		
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	443.3	482.6	521.2	59.5	54.6	53.0	13	11	10
North America	84.8	92.7	100.5	4.6	5.0	5.2	5	5	5
Central America	28.8	32.8	36.8	5.0	6.5	7.4	17	20	20
Caribbean	28.5	30.2	31.7	7.8	8.9	6.8	27	30	21
South America	301.2	326.9	352.2	42.1	34.2	33.6	14	11	10

FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety

9. Within this context, during the 2003 meeting on hunger seven years after the WFS, held pursuant to Article 6.7 of the Financial Rules and Regulations of FAO, the Director General established the FAO Trust Fund for Food Security and Food Safety and the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases, with an initial goal of US\$ 500 million. The FAO Trust Fund is a major source of demand-based financing. It complements the existing trust funds, which provide support for the essential components of the Organization's Field Program but have recently switched their focus to emergency operations--this, at the expense of projects that serve as catalysts for addressing the long-term structural needs of the poor in the basic sectors of employment creation and income generation.

10. This FAO Trust Fund is financed through voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. Its initial contributors were: the Community of SAHELO-Saharan States, the Government of Italy, the OPEC Fund for International Development, and Saudi Arabia. Its intervention areas are projects to help Member States begin to strengthen, step

Mexico, from 4.6 to 5.2 million, both roughly 5% of their population. FAO, *State of Food Insecurity in the World* (SOFI) 2004.

up, and expand their activities, primarily in the areas of food security, food quality, food safety, and transboundary animal diseases.

Food Security

Special Program for Food Security

11. The majority of low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) have viable sustainable means at their disposal to increase food availability. They are not taken advantage of, however, because of a series of constraints that prevent farmers from meeting their basic needs and seizing the opportunities that arise. Thus, FAO's Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) was adopted at the 106th Session of the Organization's Council in 1994. The Program works with farmers, livestock producers, and other stakeholders to identify and overcome these constraints, be they technical, economic, social, institutional, or political in nature.

12. Projects financed by the SPFS include small-scale pilot projects for water regulation, boosting crop yield, diversification of small-animal production, small-scale fishing and fish farming, analysis of social and economic problems, and technical assistance in policy-making. Technology transfer will be promoted, especially within the framework of a Southern-South cooperation plan, as an inexpensive way of achieving adequate development from a technological, ecological, and sociocultural standpoint. The following relevant activities have recently been carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean.

13. *Bolivia.* Through the SPFS, the country expects to demonstrate the potential of improved technologies available for increasing the yield of selected basic crops that the population grows for food; to encourage organization and participatory planning for the identification and mass use of these technologies in priority areas; to promote technical and financial support for livestock production; and to develop a training program that covers the different technical components required.

14. *Ecuador.* Furnishing assistance in food security in the country's lower Amazon jungle under the Food Security Program, the Government of Ecuador is implementing policies designed to fight poverty and food insecurity, which are the principal socioeconomic problems in that region. The Project will be executed in the provinces of Orellana and Sucumbíos in the eastern part of the country, as they are zones in the Amazon Region with the potential for livestock production.

15. *Guatemala and Honduras.* The SPFS focuses on increasing the food supply in agricultural systems with a high presence of rural poor. The objective is to help improve

food security in the intervention area, increasing food production and access to food by strengthening production systems with the use of sustainable technologies.

16. *Haiti.* The purpose of the SPFS, promoted by the Government with FAO cooperation, is to boost crop production and the profits of small livestock producers by disseminating information on techniques that they can use, especially in the areas of Laverdure, the plains of Artibonite, and Dubreuil, in the Cayes region.

17. *Mexico.* Since 2003, the SPFS has lent support to the Mexican government's execution of phase one of an intersecretarial program to reduce poverty in the 250 microregions with the greatest marginalization in the country. This is the context of the Project, whose objective is to reduce poverty and improve the sustainability of food security within 15 years. The areas covered are Michoacán, Aguascalientes, Jalisco, Yucatán, Guanajuato, and Puebla.

18. *Venezuela.* The purpose of the SPFS is to strengthen the Ministries of Agriculture and Trade in order to transform and diversify small producers' livestock production, thereby improving food security in rural and urban areas. The project consists of: south-south cooperation between Venezuela and Cuba, the intensification of livestock production, and a national agricultural information system.

Food Safety and Food Quality

19. One of FAO's tasks is to maintain and improve the quality of food in the international, regional, and national sphere. It promotes the development and enforcement of country regulations consistent with international standards, especially those of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. At the same time, it provides technical assistance for capacity building in national and local monitoring systems and programs to guarantee the quality and safety of food throughout the food chain.

20. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was created by FAO and WHO in 1963 to develop food standards, regulations, and other related instruments such as codes of practice under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program. The Program's main activities are to protect the health of consumers, ensure clear trade practices, and promote the coordination of all food standards adopted by governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Global Activities

21. In February 2003, FAO/WHO set up a Project and Trust Fund to strengthen participation in the Codex. The goal was to increase the participation of developing countries and countries in transition in the basic work of the Codex Alimentarius

Commission. Thanks to the generosity of several donors, the minimum threshold of US\$ 500,000 was reached in early March 2004, permitting the Fund to become fully operational.

22. In October 2003, FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) held a joint workshop in Vienna, Austria, entitled “Strengthening Capacity for Implementing Codex Standards, Guidelines and Recommended International Codes of Practice for Control of the Use of Veterinary Drugs.”

23. FAO participated in several events related to good agricultural practices and food safety--in particular, a conference in Rome on the safety of animal feed, organized with the International Feed Industry Federation (IFIF) in October 2004, and an International Symposium on Dairy Safety and Hygiene in South Africa, organized with the International Dairy Federation (IDF) and held in March 2004.

Latin America and the Caribbean

24. FAO and PAHO’s Pan American Institute for Food Protection (INPPAZ), the Caribbean Epidemiology Center, and the Caribbean Community offered an interinstitutional Regional Workshop for Strengthening and Coordination of Foodborne Disease Surveillance to Strengthen Food Safety Programs in the Caribbean. The workshop was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in June 2004.

25. In September 2002, FAO launched a regional project that ended in December 2004, aimed at supporting the efforts of the national Codex committees and applying Codex standards in the Andean countries. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela participated in the project, whose main objectives were to strengthen the national Codex committees, develop a national and subregional training program, and promote the harmonization of national Codex standards.

26. October 2003 marked the beginning an FAO regional project to promote the development and proper management of South American camelids in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru. The project, which is scheduled to conclude in June 2005, also promotes the control of sarcocystiosis (*Sarcocystis lamacanis* and *S. aucheniae*) and regional capacity building in food quality and food safety in South America. One of its main components is the development of inexpensive camelid meat products under proper sanitary conditions and the promotion of their consumption.

27. The Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL), whose secretariat *ex officio* is INPPAZ, and the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean are conducting a survey of laboratories. The second INFAL Assembly was held in Cancun, Mexico, in June 2003. At the meeting, some modifications of the

regulations were approved, the members of the Executive Committee were elected, and the evaluation of the laboratory survey and results of the interlaboratory tests were presented, together with the Action Plan 2003-2005.

28. The Latin American Network of Food Data Systems (LATINFOODS) continued updating the Food Composition Table for Use in Latin America, distributing it on a CD-ROM. At the 13th Latin American Society of Nutrition Congress, FAO/LATINFOODS held a workshop on the importance of food composition for food security and the food trade. FAO/LATINFOODS also held a meeting, in which the regional work plan on food composition was adopted.

Transboundary Diseases

29. Transboundary diseases are diseases that have an economic, commercial, and/or basic impact on food security in a group of countries and can easily spread to other countries and reach epidemic proportions. Controlling and eliminating these diseases requires cooperation among countries. Transboundary diseases can also have an adverse impact on food safety for consumers worldwide, as can plagues of locusts and other migratory pests capable of traveling long distances and threatening crops hundreds or thousands of miles from their point of origin.

EMPRES

30. Through the Emergency Prevention System for Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES), created by the 106th Session of its Council, FAO is currently taking a new approach to this age-old problem, emphasizing alerts, swift reaction, and the development of research networks to ensure that the most effective environmentally friendly methods are used. The program is specially designed to upgrade existing surveillance systems and intensify efforts in affected countries.

31. On a global scale, EMPRES has conducted several interventions, mainly in Africa and the Middle East, for the control and eradication of rinderpest, foot-and-mouth disease, African swine fever, Rift Valley fever, and other serious transboundary diseases. In Latin America and the Caribbean, given the official notification of the presence of screw worm in Cuba, an EMPRES intervention to set up a national control program was conducted at the request of the government. The intervention later assumed a regional dimension, extending to the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica, where screw worm is endemic. This served as a catalyst, leading the Government of Jamaica, with financing from the United States and support from the IAEA, to launch a program to eradicate this pest from its territory, a goal that will soon be met.

32. In the Americas, foot-and-mouth disease, classical swine fever, and screw worm are the most important transboundary diseases. Thus, FAO assists its member countries through national and regional programs for the prevention, control, and possible eradication of these diseases, in addition to others for strengthening the veterinary services.

33. The project to draft a Plan of Action for the modernization of agricultural health and food protection services in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela enabled the various actors in the agricultural food chain to adopt an innovative, effective, and participatory approach to one of the most important issues for the countries of the Region. National plans, consistent with WTO requirements, were drawn up to modernize and strengthen agricultural health and food protection services through project profiles geared to the autonomous search for solutions. The project also provided technical and organizational assistance, facilitating a participatory situational diagnosis of the official animal health, plant health, and food safety services, together with the search for solutions. Some 60% of these services have no need of external financing but rather, institutional and operational adjustments, so they can continue to adapt to changes and/or shifts in the national and international markets.

34. In Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, the regional project to evaluate and upgrade the systems for the prevention of bovine spongiform encephalopathy and quality control of feed was launched. The project revealed the countries' weaknesses and strengths in preventing this disease and resulted in recommendations to create or strengthen national entities for risk analysis, establish an ongoing training program through second-generation courses on diagnosis and epidemiological surveillance, prepare educational materials and information for reporting neurological syndromes in cattle suspected of having contracted BSE, develop a manual on good practices in feed production for the of BSE, and set up an Internet website with relevant information for the control and eradication of the disease.

35. In Cuba, the project for strengthening prevention and the progressive control of swine fever was executed, determining the endemicity of this disease in the country and confirming the circulation and reemergence of indigenous strains of the virus in most of the nation's territory. While supporting the National Control and Eradication Program, these actions also led to Resolution No. 355/2003 of the Ministry of Agriculture, which introduced measures beyond the Program and approved the formation of a National Coordinating Council, consisting of multidisciplinary teams from the various sectors. In order to meet the enormous training and information needs nationwide, a Multimedia Book on Swine Fever and an Illustrated Manual on how to recognize the disease were prepared.

36. In Argentina, the project to create a quantitative molecular epidemiological system for the FMD virus was launched, making it possible to improve the speed, sensitivity, and simplicity of diagnosis, complementing the existing methods. More specifically, two new methodologies were perfected, involving the detection of antibodies against nonstructural proteins and RT (reverse transcriptase)-PCR (polymerase chain reaction). In 2001 and 2002 Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay were hit by a severe outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, and the methodology perfected by the project became highly relevant, providing substantial support for the control of the outbreak--so much so that Argentina's Chamber of Deputies declared it in the interest of parliament to develop a Permanent Plan for Molecular Epidemiology of the FMD Virus and to create a national databank of the virus' genome sequences. The project also led to the adoption of this technique by the Pan American Foot-and-mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) of PAHO.

Hemispheric Plan for the Control and Eradication of Classical Swine Fever

37. The pig is a species that contributes substantially to food security in peri-urban and rural areas of the Region, and the American Hemisphere is the world's third largest producer of pork, with significant potential for moving up. Classical swine fever is the most serious disease in this species after foot-and-mouth disease, resulting in high mortality, poor weight gain, and the creation of trade barriers. In 2002, the lack of a regional strategy for eliminating this disease prompted FAO to promote the creation of the Hemispheric Plan for the Control and Eradication of Classical Swine Fever in the Americas, a partnership between the member States and international animal health organizations to facilitate coordination among national and subregional swine fever control programs aimed at eliminating the disease. Eighteen countries of the Region officially adhered to the Plan, resulting in major progress toward the control and eradication of classical swine fever in Central America and the Caribbean, while in the Southern Cone, Argentina entered 2004 in the final phase of eradication.

Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs)

38. Despite previous efforts, the enormous economic losses in the livestock sector worldwide caused by transboundary diseases like foot-and-mouth disease between 1997 and 2003,; classical swine fever in the Caribbean and Europe between 1996 and 2002; BP in Somalia in 2001; and more recently, the highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak in 10 Asian countries in 2004, with mortality extending to people that were exposed, intensified the pressure to improve management of these diseases from the outset, before they spread across borders and reached devastating proportions. This was the main incentive for FAO and the OIE to create the Global Framework for the Progressive

Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases in May 2004, which will be launched in the Americas in April 2005.

39. The Global Framework is a melding of the strengths of FAO and the OIE toward common objectives that will facilitate the development of technical strategies and regional financial partnerships to fight transboundary animal diseases. The Global Framework was launched in Asia and will be introduced in the Americas in April 2005, with the participation of the directors of the veterinary services of the member countries of the two organizations and representatives from the private sector involved in livestock production in these countries.

Recommendations

40. Promote the competitiveness of rural producers: improve access to lands, supplies, and technology to boost the production of small landholders; facilitate rural credit through the promotion of savings cooperatives, microfinancing, and formal and informal institutions linked with rural access to credit.

41. Develop policies adapted to the multidimensionality of the rural sector: shift the attention from small landholders to the broader rural family; from agricultural work to multiple jobs; from crop production to its links with agribusiness and services. Promote and develop productive ties between rural areas and urban centers and medium-sized cities.

42. Establish or, if necessary, strengthen the National Codex Alimentarius Commissions and raise awareness among government institutions, consumer groups, and the general public about its purposes and scope.

43. Increase active participation by the developing countries and countries in transition in the basic work of Codex Alimentarius, such as the development of global food quality and safety standards.

44. Make political support a priority and promote the formation of strategic financing partnerships with the private sector to improve the prevention, control and, if necessary, eradication of transboundary animal diseases.

45. Strengthen the national veterinary and veterinary public health services through continuous training of the professionals working in these services, and create or strengthen training for the civil service career to heighten protection of the countries' livestock capital and public health.

46. Using all the media, raise awareness about how to preserve the quality and safety of food, and step up surveillance and efforts to prevent the introduction of transboundary animal diseases in the countries.

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