

Mission of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

To lead strategic efforts among Member States and other partners to promote equity in health, to combat disease, and to improve the quality of, and lengthen, the lives of the peoples of the Americas.



Mission of the Veterinary Public Health Unit (VP)

The mission of the PAHO/WHO Veterinary Public Health Unit is to assist the Member States in implementing their priority programs in the areas of:

- Surveillance, prevention, and control of zoonoses important to public health;
- Prevention of foodborne diseases;
- Safety of food for human consumption;
- Promotion of animal health to boost production, productivity and thus, the food supply and socioeconomic development;
- Promotion of environmental protection to prevent potential risks to public health stemming from livestock production and pet ownership;
- Development of biomedical models for health research and the conservation of neotropical primates;



The Veterinary Public Health Unit of PAHO/WHO is comprised of the coordinating office at Headquarters in Washington, D.C.; the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center (PANAFTOSA) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ) in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and the advisers in the Member States. The Unit is part of the Disease Prevention and Control Area.

Veterinary Public Health

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Pan American Health Organization

Regional Office of the World Health Organization

Unidad de Salud Pública Veterinaria



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Since 1968, the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSAs) has been the only regional forum for collaboration and coordination between the health and agriculture sectors at the highest political level, which is fundamental for the mission of the Veterinary Health Unit of PAHO.

Governing and Advisory Bodies:

- Directing Council of PAHO
- Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture (RIMSAs)
- Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease (COHEFA)
- Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)
- Regional Meeting of the National Directors of Rabies Control Programs in Latin America (REDIPRA)
- South American Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COSALFA)

Strategic Partnerships:

- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Office of Epizootics (OIE)
- PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers
- Universities and research institutes
- Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Associations of livestock breeders, food producers, and consumers
- Entities representing different segments of society



Veterinary Public Health



Zoonosis with impact on public health



Foot-and-mouth Disease



"From farm to the table"
Animal Health–Food Safety



Biomedical models



Veterinary Public Health education

Veterinary Public Health Activities

Most veterinary public health activities are related to the food production chain, a process that extends **from the farm to the table**, beginning with animal husbandry and passing through successive stages from the slaughterhouse to the manufacture, transport, and sale of food, up to the consumer's table. All of these stages require surveillance, technical standards, legislation, inspection, mass communication, and other activities with the direct participation of veterinary public health.

Throughout the food chain, diseases can affect animals as well as people who consume products of animal origin may occur.

Livestock can contract **foot-and-mouth disease**, which does not pose a direct threat to public health but has serious adverse effects on the economy, reducing production and hindering exports.

In addition to causing human suffering, some foodborne diseases, such as **salmonellosis**, are particularly damaging to tourism and the food trade.

Other zoonoses (diseases transmitted from animals to

people and vice versa) constitute more direct public health threats unrelated to the food production chain. Examples of these are **rabies**, transmitted by dogs, bats, and assorted domestic animals and wildlife, and other diseases closely linked with the environment, such as **West Nile virus**.

After the attacks of September 11th, another group of zoonoses came to the fore: potential bioweapons, such as **anthrax** and the **plague**. Some 80% of the recognized potential bioweapons are zoonoses.

PAHO and the Integration of Health and Agriculture

For PAHO, the link between health and agriculture is undeniable and thus, their integration is essential.

Working together, the health and agriculture sectors can promote many initiatives to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. Boosting the production of quality foods will increase the supply of animal protein, family incomes, rural jobs, and thus improve the living conditions and health of the population.

Health and Agriculture: Building Partnerships for a Better Life in the Americas

Achievements in Veterinary Public Health in the Region

Through the efforts of the Member States and cooperation with PAHO, integrated action between the health and agriculture sectors has already resulted in significant achievements:

- Structuring of the States for the production and consumption of **safe foods**, by strengthening policy, creating national programs, setting standards, harmonizing legislation, training human resources in good manufacturing practices and the hazard analysis critical control point methodology, disseminating information, and providing direct technical assistance.
- A 75% reduction in cases of **human and canine rabies** over the past 10 years, to the point where the elimination of human rabies transmitted by dogs is approaching.
- Policy development and the strengthening of national control programs for **bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, hydatidosis, and taeniasis/cysticercosis**.

- Significant progress in the **eradication of foot-and-mouth disease** in South America through support for surveillance, the control of foci, and the vaccination of cattle in some regions.
- The formation of **local animal health committees** to improve sanitary conditions and boost livestock production in rural communities.
- Characterization of risks and development of surveillance systems for the prevention and timely control of **emerging and reemerging zoonoses** such as equine encephalitis, bubonic plague, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).
- The generation of **biomedical models** for developing new vaccines for human use, quality control of the drugs and biologicals used in public health.

Challenges:

- Extreme poverty, a situation that affects approximately million people in the Region of the Americas, generating enormous inequalities in health status, access to public services, and living conditions.
- Globalization, with its controversies, standards, and demands related to imports and exports of meat and of other foods of animal origin.

- Problems in the food production chain in small communities.
- The effects of uncontrolled urban growth, environmental disasters, and emerging and reemerging zoonoses.
- Current issues, such as the potential health hazards of genetically modified foods and the use of zoonoses as bioweapons.
- Searching for balance in the use of science and technology in veterinary public health.

To Meet These Challenges:

- Improve integration among the technical cooperation agencies in the health and agriculture sectors of the Member States, with special attention to rural areas.
- Cement the existing partnerships between the public and private sector through associations of livestock producers, food producers, consumer groups and other entities; forge new partnerships with representative organizations from different segments of society for the exercise of shared responsibility.

- Intensify joint efforts with the PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers, universities, and research institutions.
- Put the policies adopted in the regional forums into action, with the political support of the Member States.
- Concentrate cooperation efforts in the States designated as heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC)—Bolivia, Haiti, Honduras, Guyana, and Nicaragua.
- Develop organizational management capacity, primarily at the local level.
- Improve information and epidemiological surveillance systems and increase the use of the information they generate.
- Develop mass communication strategies for national and regional initiatives.