



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
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### **PRODUCTIVE MUNICIPALITIES AND FOOD SECURITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

by

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## **1. Food Situation in the Country**

Food production to meet the nutritional needs of the population has been one of the fundamental goals of the Cuban State. This objective was successfully achieved in the 1980s through the development of intensive agriculture, supported by the use of high volumes of fertilizer, chemical products, extensive areas with irrigation systems, artificial fodder, and the administration of concentrates to livestock, which led to an increase in productivity and acceptable levels in the availability of animal protein (milk, meat, and eggs).

In 1990, at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, the polluting nature of production that employs large volumes of chemical inputs was denounced and there was an appeal to develop sustainable agriculture and take other steps for the conservation of the planet. Cuba emphatically voiced its support for these agreements, and actions to produce wholesome food for the population were strengthened. In addition to the foregoing, the 1990s posed a serious challenge for the Cuban people. The disappearance of the Socialist bloc and the intensification of the blockade by the government of the United States of America led to a profound economic crisis, whose greatest impact was on the food supply due to the decline in production and food imports. In a brief period of time, the availability of basic nutrients in the diet fell sharply, particularly in terms of caloric and animal protein intake. In response to this difficult situation the Cuban Government emphasized food production and gave priority to any action directed toward improving the situation.

In 1993 large-scale cultivation of fruit and vegetables began, based on a strategy of local production. Every square meter of cities, towns, and settlements was cultivated, employing the principles of sustainable agriculture. This process, known as *urban agriculture*, has been unfolding in recent years, incorporating 26 other subprograms, some of them aimed at animal production, basically pigs, poultry, sheep, goats, rabbits, fish, and bees.

Another measure adopted was the strengthening of local governments, with the municipio as the principal political-administrative division, through the creation in 1992 of the People's Councils, which are the basic cell for Government action. Among the responsibilities and duties outlined for the Councils in Law No. 91, Chapter 3 of this act gives them the power to work actively to ensure that the health, economic, educational, cultural, and social needs of the population are met and to search for solutions to the problems that arise. The law also promotes the participation of the area's population, institutions, and entities in initiatives that will help to achieve significant progress in the proposed tasks and unify the efforts of all.

The strategic missions of the municipios were also expanded. Municipios were given greater autonomy, increasing the motivation and participation of the population as a whole, which became a direct protagonist in the solution of its problems. A major actor in local development is the Ministry of Public Health, which has been working with the Pan American Health Organization in municipal development projects and whose basic objective is also to increase the availability of a basic food supply for the population.

## **2. Institute of Veterinary Medicine**

The Institute of Veterinary Medicine (IMV), which is part of the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), is the regulatory agency for animal health in Cuba. It directs the veterinary medicine service and carries out its work with support from the following systems: Epizootiological Surveillance, Disease Control Programs, Border Veterinary Service, Diagnostic Network, Sanitary Food Protection, State Drug Control, and Veterinary Care for Animals. To perform its functions, the IMV has a vertical national structure. At the base, the municipio is the pertinent local organ in which are represented all the veterinary services, which together with the administrative and governmental organs form the Municipal Health Council. The veterinary care of the state service is overseen by the People's Council, which is the basic form of government in Cuba.

In 1986 the IMV, with the collaboration of the Pan American Health Organization and the Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center, began to implement the Epizootiological Surveillance System by geographical quadrants, which allowed it to identify all livestock producers in each locality, to establish the ranges of density of the different livestock per square kilometer, and thus be in a position to take steps to increase production, combat disease, teach safe methods of food production, and protect the environment. In 1993, relying on the strengthening of its system and its prestige, the IMV, together with PAHO, launched the Productive Municipios Movement.

## **3. Productive Municipios Movement**

This movement coordinates actions that promote health and sustainable livestock productivity, bringing political and economic actors together with the population to improve community well-being.

The movement promotes greater production and intake of animal protein, with the support of trained professionals and technical personnel in a population with a protected individual and family nutritional culture, without harm to the environment and seeking to mitigate the damages from potential natural disasters.

#### **4. Objectives of the Movement**

The objectives of the movement are:

- To obtain approval from the municipal governments to launch this process in their respective territories;
- To increase awareness among the principal social actors in the municipios, provinces, and the nation;
- To establish People's Production Councils in at least 169 municipios within three years;
- To systematize experiences, disseminate findings, and encourage mutual support among participating municipios;
- To foster greater intersectoral cooperation.

#### **5. Expected Results**

The expected results are:

- A strengthened network of participating municipios, from the standpoint of productivity, achieving significant progress in the selected People's Councils, which will be pivotal in the road toward progress;
- Social actors trained through the systematic efforts of educators (universities, scientific institutions, specialists, and others);
- Intense social participation;
- Improvement of animal health programs for the diseases present in the country.

#### **6. Characterization and Organization**

The IMV, with support from PAHO/WHO, has been engaged in a project to promote the Productive Municipios Movement.

The action taken thus far has resulted in identification of the functional approaches of the project, which will make it strategically possible to continue expanding and carrying out future work. These can be summarized as follows:

- production linked with the health and well-being of the population;

- development of human and technical resources, including livestock owners;
- health promotion through activities to increase individual and family safety;
- education for health by improving the diet and sanitary practices of the population;
- intersectoral approach as a response to municipal development;
- conservation of the environment;
- preparation of institutions and the population to deal with possible damage from natural disasters.

The project was formulated with the participation of the various entities working at the municipal level (MINSAP, IMV, MINAGRI, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment, and social organizations). It is governmental in nature and will be headed by the IMV, given the prestige of that entity in the different communities.

This project also provides for the strengthening of the veterinary services, seeking basically to improve the infrastructure created and train local social actors.

The activities of the Productive Municipios project are eminently intersectoral, achieving high mobilization of internal resources in the localities, as well as intense social participation and action by formal and informal leaders.

## **7. Structure of the Project**

The National Projects Group, constituted at the national level, consists of 12 specialists. Identical groups are established in the Provincial Directorates, with a similar structure at the municipal level. This not only guarantees the strengthening of managerial work but contributes significantly to the development of project portfolios at all levels, while elevating the culture in the sector with respect to this methodology. Management is vertical.

The principal functions of the group are:

- technical assistance at the various levels;
- monitoring and evaluation of project implementation;
- formulation of project portfolios in the different entities;
- mobilization of resources (internal and external);

- coordination of the intersectoral process;
- development of technical cooperation with PAHO, other United Nations agencies, and NGOs.

## **8. Executors**

*National:* The central office of the IMV, the executive organs of MINAGRI, the Research Institutes, and related NGOs.

*Provincial:* The IMV office, the required specialists, the delegation from MINAGRI, and related NGOs.

*Municipal:* The IMV office, the People's Councils, the delegation from MINAGRI, MINSAP, the Ministries of Education, Science, Technology, and the Environment, producer organizations, the community, and NGOs.

## **9. Beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries are the inhabitants of the participating territories, the local government structures, community organizations, and participating institutions.

## **10. Achievements**

Currently, the work is in various stages of development in 48 municipios and 59 People's Councils, where the following results have been obtained:

- introduction of nontraditional commercial animal species (rabbits, fresh-water fish, geese, and others), increasing their consumption by the population;
- improvement of the gene pool in traditional species;
- introduction of more modern production technologies;
- increase in the basic diet for animals;
- health education for producers, to protect them against zoonoses and improve hygiene in food production;
- better nutritional education for the population, with the consequent changes in eating habits;
- greater availability of foods of animal origin in family units involved in production;
- greater availability of animal protein for vulnerable social groups in nursing homes, kindergartens, maternity homes, etc.;

- greater availability of food for sale inside and outside the community;
- improvements in environmental education;
- consolidation of the intersectoral work;
- strengthening of the infrastructure in 20 municipal directorates of veterinary medicine;
- human resources development at all levels, including the training of 1,200 professionals, 800 technicians, and 3,800 producers, with some of these courses taught by professors from PANAFTOSA and PAHO.
- Implementation of two projects for technical cooperation among countries, the first in 1999 involving Cuba, Costa Rica, and Panama, coordinated by the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP/PAHO), and the second in 2000 between Cuba and Panama, with positive results for all participants;
- An international workshop in 2000 to discuss the experiences to date in the work of the Productive Municipios projects.

## **11. Policy Rationale and Outlook for the Region**

A deficit in the food base is a common problem in many Latin American communities; to this is added a poor nutritional culture, poor environment, and the presence of zoonoses in the species traditionally raised. Numerous projects managed by the government or NGOs are under way in the search for solutions to the aforementioned problems.

Sharing experiences among countries makes it possible to find solutions that can be adapted to the conditions and idiosyncrasies of the populations at risk.

The Productive Municipios projects can serve as a model that, based on the results obtained, can be adapted to the needs of other Latin American countries. Cuba, which over the years has demonstrated its solidarity with the countries through technical assistance in the fields of public health, education, agriculture, veterinary medicine, and sports, is making the experience gained in this noble project available to the countries of the area.