



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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### **LIVESTOCK AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS**

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## **Summary**

1. Argentina's agricultural food production model can be used to explore the greater hemispheric problem of formulating recommendations to improve food protection systems. Making the most of the Region's comparative advantages in producing safe foods and strengthening fair trade, efforts are under way to promote regional integration in this area within the framework of the Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture. This means participation in the initiatives promoted in the both World Trade Organization, with its Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Codex Alimentarius, and the World Animal Health Organization (formerly the International Office of Epizootics). It also means the development of decentralized policies based on a consensus among all actors in the system (production, industry, academia, etc), through financially self-sufficient organizations independent of economic and commercial interests. These policies should be based on the knowledge and application of risk analysis, the HACCP system, and good manufacturing practices in food safety programs and industry. In addition, making transparent and effective use of information, the community should be kept informed to help meet its demand for safe food.

## **Introduction**

2. Argentina's agricultural food production system has always been a mainstay of the country's economy. The economic weight of the sector can be seen in the fact that the agricultural food production system accounts for around 60% of the country's total exports. In fact, Argentina is the fifth largest producer and eighth largest exporter of food in the world, with food production representing approximately 20% of its GDP.

3. The wide expanses employed in livestock production in South America in general and Argentina in particular constitute a significant comparative advantage in terms of animal health. Low livestock density and an abundance of pastures and forage hinder the spread of infectious agents, unlike the situation in the highly intensive production seen in the industrialized countries.

4. Argentina has a cattle population of 53 million head and produces meats and first-level dairy products. Its cattle are raised almost exclusively on ranches with extensive landholdings and are fed on native and planted forage grasses, circumstances reflected in the quality and nutritional value of its beef.

5. We also have a growing hog, poultry, and bee industry, which has grown exponentially in recent years. In addition, in response to growing world demand, we have boosted our production of organic foods. Argentina's productive ecosystems have much to do with the availability of wholesome, very high quality foods.

## **Development**

6. The intensive livestock production systems of the highly industrialized countries, in contrast, tend to use feed balancers and feed substitutes in their livestock production that leave contaminants and residues behind in meat, milk, eggs, and other foods, posing the risk of diseases with serious consequences for human health. One such example has been the appearance and persistence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, in England and other European countries--a malady stemming from the use of contaminated meat- and bone meal. This has had an enormous impact on the international meat trade, where consumer pressure to safeguard the food supply has played a major role in changing food production practices.

7. The food trade operates in a free and competitive market. Guaranteeing food safety in a totally deregulated market could sometimes appear to be a contradiction in terms. That is why initiatives have emerged to pass legislation guaranteeing food safety at the international level, while eliminating barriers to trade among nations. The legal framework currently governing the international food trade is the result of trade practices in a deregulated globalized economy, and its main objective is to eliminate every type of para-tariff barrier.

8. Argentina, one of the world's leading producers and exporters of agricultural food products, is facing one of the most critical challenges in its history: consolidating its chains of production and developing sustainable and auditable sanitary, quality, and safety systems to lay the foundation for an agroexport platform. That is what we are working toward.

9. For Argentina and the other countries in the Region, it is extremely important to maintain and improve our current sanitary status. It is essential to keep out diseases that do not naturally occur in our country and that can be transmitted through international trade. Ensuring the health of our people and keep the international markets open to our livestock products are the criteria for setting priorities to prevent the introduction and spread of what are known today as trans-boundary animal diseases. Many animal diseases also affect man, some more severely than others, and it is the constitutional responsibility of the State to protect public health.

10. To this end, our country has information systems in place that guarantee flexibility and transparency in communications. This in turn fosters international confidence and is the foundation of a system that protects animal and plant resources and human health. We have learned this lesson by controlling the most serious foot-and-mouth disease epidemic in Argentina's history, a feat that enabled us to restore the confidence of the markets. In March of this year, this translated into the reopening of 61 markets to Argentine beef. As a result of this disease control effort and our strong

negotiating presence, Argentina's exports grew from US\$ 150 million in 2001 to \$350 million in 2002, with estimates of \$420 million for the present year.

11. The struggle to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease in Argentina had a profound affect on the production, transformation, and marketing of Argentine beef. Although this disease does not have a direct impact on public health, it led the country's animal health authorities to put mechanisms in place for its control and eradication. The strategic framework they created, which is fully operational today, is the basis for the production and processing of safe food products. What is innovative about the country's agricultural health system, born of the efforts to control and eradicate foot-and-mouth disease, is the development of a countrywide network of Local Sanitary Inspection Boards. These bodies, made up of livestock producers, professionals involved in raising livestock, and the State, are directly responsible for conducting sanitary activities, with guidance from the provincial and national authorities. Each Local Sanitary Inspection Board has a Technical Committee and an Administrative Committee, which are linked in turn through the Provincial Animal Health Commissions. These Commissions join together at the national level to form National Sanitary Inspection Commissions.

12. Administrative decentralization in animal health has had an enormous impact in a number of areas: flexibility in decision-making; shared responsibilities, manifested in active commitments; and management of the resources necessary for implementing sanitary control plans. This is what has enabled Argentina to obtain an excellent sanitary status in recent years. Healthy herds, monitored food production and processing systems, and a marketing chain that guarantees food safety are the foundation for the production, processing, and trade of Argentina's products.

13. The development of safe, quality agricultural food products presupposes central government coordination of activities with provincial governments, livestock producers, the food industry, universities, research institutes in the fields of science and technology, professional associations, and nongovernmental organizations. Here, management modalities that were already a model of public-private association back in the 1990s have been strengthened, opening them to participation by all actors in the agricultural production system. Within this framework, areas of action that pose a particular challenge are foot-and-mouth disease, tuberculosis, brucellosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease), fruit fly, and citrus canker. Other areas are the strengthening of epidemiological surveillance systems; the development of traceability systems; the extensive implementation of good agricultural practices (GAP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), sanitation standard operating procedures (SSOP), and the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) system; and the certification of products and processes in the food industry, giving greater responsibility to the private sector. All this guarantees that safe raw materials processed with safe practices will yield safe food.

14. In this area, Argentina's definitive priorities linked to the health of its livestock, and hence, to its positioning as a country that produces healthy, high-quality meats, are: eradicating foot-and-mouth disease, preventing the introduction of BSE and other exotic diseases and plant pests, and detecting and notifying the pertinent international authorities of diseases and disease agents that may be present in the country that have never before been detected.

15. This integrated system for food production and trade is based on an organizational and financial structure comprised of the Ministry of Production, through the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food and its National Service for Agricultural Food Safety and Quality, and the National Drug, Food, and Medical Technology Administration, with its National Food Institute under the country's Ministry of Health.

16. SENASA, as a decentralized agency of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food of the Ministry of Production, is responsible for implementing national policies to guarantee the health, quality, and safety of animals, plants, and food, verifying compliance with the current legal norms in this area. SENASA also exercises authority over federal inspection, traffic, imports, and exports of livestock, animal, and plant products and byproducts, agricultural food products, veterinary drugs, agricultural chemicals, and fertilizers.

17. Although still not fully a reality, there is consensus in the international science community that it is imperative to have reliable food protection systems all over the globe, overseen by organizations independent of economic and commercial interests. For this reason, Argentina is considering the possibility of allowing agencies like SENASA to have and administer their own budget. This budget would come mostly from moneys collected for service rendered, since SENASA's clients, whether food producers or food processors, finance the agency through fees for services. There is another reason why it is important to preserve the autonomy of agencies like SENASA: the guarantees to importing countries. International trade requires the presence of official agencies that act as guarantors of the safety of food exports; they do this by directly certifying the products or acting as accreditation agencies for private certification bodies. SENASA certifies the food production and food processing systems. This certification system also enables the private sector to trade food products with value added, instead of simple commodities. Here, like many countries in the Region, Argentina still has a long way to go down a road that holds great promise.

18. We all know about the dizzying advances in the generation of new knowledge and technologies today. In order to take advantage of these advances and collaborate in this area, Argentina also has its renowned National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), which supports growth and change in the country's primary livestock production systems, furnishing producers with information through its extension offices.

19. For scientific research and information dissemination, and to provide training for the agricultural sector, Argentina also has numerous first-rate universities, both state and private.

20. Argentina is also headquarters for the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (INPPAZ), a specialized center of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), financed by the countries of the Hemisphere. INPPAZ is an institution at the forefront in matters related to food safety and is an important venue for national and international forums.

21. In short, Argentina has a solid food protection system in place, which serves as the basis for its agroexport vision and has the potential for providing technical assistance to the countries of the Region.

22. Aware that, in addition to the safety of the foods marketed, food production systems should take the variables that make for fair and free trade into account, Argentina has been sensitive from the outset to global concerns about developing an agricultural food market as streamlined and transparent as possible.

23. The WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in particular has lent transparency to trade by demanding scientific justification for sanitary requirements more stringent than those established by the pertinent international organizations: the OIE, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and Codex Alimentarius--organizations that play a key role in setting the criteria for the access of goods to international markets, ensuring that they do not become hidden barriers to trade.

24. Argentina has distinguished itself in the WTO's Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and in the international organizations cited above, preventing the imposition of standards that restrict the access of agricultural products to foreign markets and proposing mechanisms to facilitate trade. The struggle to prevent trade barriers disguised as sanitary measures from being erected is never-ending, and here, our countries must also adopt a common approach and encourage greater coordination.

25. At the regional level, Argentina proposes that the countries work with the Pan American Health Organization in the area of technical cooperation, using INPPAZ as a platform for development and training.

26. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 8.5 billion people will be living on this planet in the near future, the majority of them in poor countries. This could create serious problems with respect to guaranteeing a safe food supply. Teamwork is therefore imperative to prevent the spread of pathogens that are already known and the emergence of new and increasingly hard-to-control diseases that

impact public health and livestock production. Efforts are moving in this direction, as seen in transborder epidemiological surveillance systems. These efforts are being promoted by the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, and the World Animal Health Organization (formerly the International Office of Epizootics), which work with member countries in disease prevention and control. This initiative is dependent to a large extent on the transparency, timeliness, and way in which the national animal health and public health services furnish information.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

27. Argentina is acutely aware of the global challenge of attaining food security for future generations, and it understands that, together with environmental protection and safe drinking water, the production of safe food in sufficient quantities will be one of the issues high on the agenda in the coming years. The whole of Argentina's agricultural food protection system is concentrating its efforts on guaranteeing ever-safer food to its own population and that of its trading partners—food whose production involves respect for the abundant natural resources with which our country has been blessed. At the same time, Argentina is aware that this type of initiative must be implemented jointly all the countries in the Region and worldwide. Only thus can we ensure safe and abundant food in the scenarios predicted for future generations within the framework of fair and free international trade.

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