



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World
Health Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Americas

7th MEETING OF THE PAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA 7)

Asunción, Paraguay, 20 July 2016

Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda

COPAIA 7 (Eng)
19 July 2016
ORIGINAL: ESPAÑOL

Terms of Reference of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Pan American Health Organization is responsible for the development of relevant guidelines and the provision of technical cooperation on public health issues. At the request of PAHO Members, and in light of the current situation on food borne diseases and the need to protect public health and facilitate national and international food trade, PAHO has developed a Regional Strategic Plan for Technical Cooperation on Food Safety.
- 1.2. The occurrence of FBD outbreaks during the last decade on various continents, including the Americas, has provided a new dimension to Food Safety Programs in the individual countries. The frequency of outbreaks, variety of pathogens and their consequences for the population's health, as well as their impact on both domestic and international food trade, have led to a revision of both food safety policies as well as the measures for FBD prevention and control in the countries.
- 1.3. The globalization of agricultural markets and the recent (1995) agreements covering Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) insist that countries apply the same strict sanitary standards and practices to exported, imported and domestically produced foods. .. To achieve this goal, the countries require effective food safety programs in order to ensure the safety of products for the local and export markets.
- 1.4. Modern food inspection and control measures are based on the concept of the entire food chain, "from farm to table". It is essential that methodologies allow for the coordination of all the different stages in the food chain, including the health and agriculture sectors as well as producers and consumers.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 In compliance with the World Health Organization's Resolution WHA 53.15 and with the PAHO Directing Council's Resolution CD 42.R3 regarding the regional food safety program, the purpose of COPAIA is to advise RIMSA in order to: (a) contribute to the improvement of food safety within the Region along all the stages of the food chain; (b) maintain political will in the health and agriculture sectors of the countries in the Region to establish integrated food safety programs as an essential public health function; (c) strengthen the technical aspects of these food safety programs; (d) promote the coordination and the integration with producers, consumers and other sectors.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To promote effective food safety programs based on the five building blocks, i.e. : (1). Food safety laws, regulations and policies. (2.) Competent authorities (3). Surveillance and control (4). Inspection and 5. Training and Education In all countries, surveillance and inspection of the food chain. To promote and strengthen intersectoral coordination to develop food safety programs throughout the value chain.
- 3.2 To promote the modernization of national integrated food safety systems through the application of new information and communication technologies.
- 3.3 Promote coordination, partnerships and agreements with other national, binational, subregional and international organisations to develop and implement food safety technical cooperation programs.
- 3.4. To propose strategies and priorities for the regional food safety program.
- 3.5 To promote and recommend mechanisms for collaboration and articulation of food safety technical cooperation between the countries in the region
- 3.6 To promote the active participation and involvement of the Member Countries in meetings, processes and mechanisms of the international organisations, particularly the the Codex Alimentarius Commission and subsidiary bodies.
- 3.7 To review and to assess the progress made by the regional food safety program and the countries in food safety.

4. CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMISSION

- 4.1 The Commission is an advisory body to RIMSA. The Director of PAHO will invite the members of the Commission on a rotating basis, comprising one Minister of Public Health and one Minister of Agriculture of each of the subregions: North America, Andean Area, Caribbean, Spanish speaking Caribbean and Central America, and the Southern Cone), and two members from the private sector: one delegate representing the food production sector, and one delegate representing consumers from each of these subregions.
- 4.2 The subregions are defined as follows: North America (Canada, United States, Mexico), the Andean Area (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela), the Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago), the Spanish speaking Caribbean and Central America (Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti,

Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic), and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela).

4.3 The representatives of the Health and Agriculture sectors will be proposed to the PAHO Director in the following way:

- a. For the agriculture sector of Central America: by the Honourable Council of Ministers of Agriculture of Central America (CIRSA): <http://www.oirsa.org/portal/cirsa.html>
- b. For the health sector of the Central America: Commission of Ministers of Health of Central America COMISCA (<http://www.sica.int/comisca/>)
- c. For the agriculture sector of the Andean subregion: the Andean Community (<http://www.comunidadandina.org>)
- d. For the health sector of the Andean Community: Andean Organisation for Health (<http://www.orasconhu.org>)
- e. In the English Caribbean subregion: Caribbean Community (www.caricom.org) with the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (<http://www.cahfsa.org>) and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (<http://www.carpha.org>) for food safety and health respectively.
- f. For the Southern Cone, from both sectors with the working groups for health and agriculture of MERCOSUR (<http://www.mercosur.int>).
- g. For North America, in food safety, from NAFTA (<https://www.nafta-sec-alena.org/Home/Welcome>).

4.4 4.4 The private sector representatives from each subregion, one from the food industry (for example, primary production, food processing, transport and storage, wholesalers, large and small markets, street vendors, restaurants) and one representing consumers. Given the wide scope of processes and food products, PAHO will make all possible efforts to ensure that the industry representatives represent a wide spectrum throughout the five subregions.

4.5 Two representatives will be appointed from the private sector for each subregion, using the following transparent process:

- 1) PAHO will select the country from which an industry or consumer representative is required. (There will be a table on the PANAFTOSA website with countries that have provided industry and consumer representatives in the previous five years.)
- 2) PAHO will put out a call for participants on its website, six months before selecting organisations from countries that are interested in serving on COPAIA for a 2 year period. These organisations should provide a justification regarding their interest to serve as members of the Commission, which can be published on the PANAFTOSA website.
- 3) PAHO will review the applications to ensure that the five members representing consumers and industry represent a wide range of interests and perspectives in all five subregions. Furthermore, PAHO can consult with the respective governments to confirm whether the representation from the provide sector is considered appropriate.

4.6 The following can participate as invited observers in the COPAIA meetings: Ministers of Health and Agriculture of member states that are not members of the Commission and representatives of International Organisations providing technical or financial assistance such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Regional Organisation on Agricultural Health (for Central America) (OIRSA), the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank and the non governmental organisations with which PAHO has official relationships.

The Commission members shall hold office for the interval between RIMSA meetings.

5. THE COMMISSION'S SECRETARIAT AND ITS FUNCTIONS

5.1 En representación de la Directora de la OPS, actúa el Centro Panamericano de Fiebre Aftosa (PANAFTOSA) como Secretaría de la Comisión y su Director como Secretario ex officio.

6. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETINGS

6.1 The Director of PAHO will convene meetings which may occur at various intervals:

- Ordinary or regular meetings, to be held every two years prior to RIMSA
- Extraordinary meetings, to be held whenever the circumstances require them.

6.2 During a regular meeting, the Commission shall appoint a Board of Directors comprising a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a Rapporteur.

6.3. The majority of the members of COPAIA shall be deemed to constitute a quorum.

6.4. The provisional agenda of the meetings and the issues to be dealt with will be prepared by the ex-officio Secretary and forwarded together with the notice of the meeting. The Commission's members may propose additional issues to be included in the agenda.

6.5. The decisions taken by the Commission shall be preferably adopted by consensus among its members and shall be expressed as recommendations.

6.6. The Recommendations included in the reports of the Commission's meetings shall be submitted to RIMSA for approval and forwarded by the Secretariat to all Ministers of Health and Agriculture of the countries in the Region of the Americas, as well as to the observers.

7. FINANCES

COPAIA shall propose to RIMSA the mechanisms that are to govern the financing of the Commission's meetings.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 8.1. The present Terms of Reference may be reviewed at the request of any Member State and may be fully or partly amended with the approval of RIMSA.
- 8.2. Any other issues that may not have been covered by these Terms of Reference shall be resolved directly by the Commission.

Lines of Action of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)

Development of appropriate regional food safety policies The definition of food safety policies and the promotion of their implementation within the different Member Countries should become the central issue for the organization of food safety programs as an essential public health activity.

High, priority shall be given to the promotion of those policies covering modernization of hygienic food inspection, thus contributing to the harmonization of health-related legislation between the countries and the equivalence inspection systems and control procedures, as well as the development of effective foodborne disease surveillance systems.

Promoting the modernisation of national integrated food systems through the incorporation of new information and communication technologies.

Assessment of food safety programs based on the five building blocks. As a followup mechanism to previous policies, COPAIA will promote the analysis and evaluation of national food safety programs and will utilize the results to propose strategies to improve their coverage and effectiveness.

Promotion of intersectoral coordination. The Commission shall play a key role in the promotion and strengthening of the “farm to table” food safety concept, including all the sectors involved in the process, such as producers, regulatory and control authorities, consumer organizations, education, tourism, and others.

Development of strategic alliances. One of COPAIA’s key roles shall be to foster and to promote strategic alliances between national, binational, subregional and international organizations and economic blocks aimed at the strengthening of such food safety programs in order to rationalize cooperation resources in the field of food safety as well as to optimize the effect of the activities organized by the different organizations in the individual countries.

Foster involvement and participation of the Countries in the Region in the work of the Codex Alimentarius. In view of the fact that Codex standards have become an international reference and considering their underlying scientific basis, it is suggested that COPAIA play a leading role in encouraging governments of the Member Countries to have stronger involvement in the work devoted to Codex Alimentarius as well as the implementation of the relevant standards through their inclusion in their national laws and regulations.

In this sense, strategies shall be based upon the adoption of national policies supporting the constitution of National Codex Committees.