15th INTER-AMERICAN MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL, ON HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE

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"Agriculture and Health: Alliance for Equity and Rural Development in the Americas"

PANEL 1: Facing new challenges: Climate Change, Food Security, and Economic Growth

1. There is a need for technical institutions with the capacity to develop sustainable production technologies to improve the quality of life for rural populations while maintaining a harmonic relationship with the environment.

2. The solution to the food crisis should be linked with rural development, implementing programs with transparent rules for international trade especially within the region. In the case of Haiti, a special international effort is required.

3. There is a need to work with rural youth so that they are aware of a viable sustainable rural life and not to migrate to marginal urban settlements.

4. Implementation of new technologies for organic production should be encouraged to attract investments in the food production sector so to reach environmental sustainability. This must be done from the perspective of the food value chain not only focusing on foreign markets but also the domestic consumer promoting equity in the distribution of added value.

5. The impacts of the rise in food prices must be mitigated in most vulnerable groups through specific policies such as subsidies to the consumer, popular and school lunches. The impacts of such programs are enhanced when the food stuffs are purchased locally and thus support vulnerable groups..

6. There is a need to build capacity to integrate and develop markets with a focus on the preservation of the environment and sustainable development in order to mitigate and adapt to the effects of global warning.

7. There is a need to build capacity at the national level with the technical and financial support of international organizations to contribute to the integration of the necessary policies to improve agriculture and health in the face of climate change.

8. Joint work is required between the public and private sectors to improve public regulatory systems as well as private sector self-regulation to guarantee the right of the consumers to environmental quality, personal health, food and safe water.

9. It is necessary to encourage compensation for environmental credits promoting innovation and financing of programs to adapt to climatic change that consider options of sustainable development especially for vulnerable groups.

10. The current crisis of access to food in quantity, quality and nutritional value sufficient to ensure the health of the population has special relevance in the Americas.

11. The production, domestic consumption and exportation of food are interdependent and linked to the life and work conditions of the rural community.

12. Tourism in all its forms including eco-tourism forms an important part of economic activity and health promotion. It is closely related with the health conditions and epidemiologic situation of the areas and tourist facilities.

PANEL 2: Nutrition, Food Safety and Health: how to meet the new challenges

1. The concept of food safety should be integrated with food security and nutritional quality requiring a holistic approach.

2. Food safety must be based on national regulations aimed at improving the health of the country and improve the competitiveness of exports in a consistent, synergistic and complementary manner.

3. The national food regulatory agencies must be independent, avoiding being situated in departments in which there may be a conflict of interest. They must ensure that the information is available at the right time and in the right place to take regulatory action. All stakeholders including the consumer must work towards the development of regulations to ensure compliance.

4. The concept of "farm to fork" is logical within the framework of food borne diseases, but the policies to promote food safety and nutritional quality should focus the process (in the opposite direction) from the consumer to the producer.

5. Municipalities can develop plans for the sustainable production of safe, nutritious and quality foods supported by available technology, including intensive urban farming, and international cooperation.

6. Governments can engage with stakeholders to achieve food safety and nutritional goals with a combination of regulatory standards and self-regulatory measures including food guidelines, public information, product labeling and consumer education.

PANEL 3: Rural Development and Health: directing the efforts toward the social inclusion

1. Social inclusion and health are inseparable concepts. From the presentations and discussion, it is clear that social determinants of health such as socioeconomic level, employment conditions, and education, allow the identification of multiple approaches to the development of public policy, plans and programs for social inclusion and health.

2. Agro-tourism, eco–tourism, health tourism and healthy tourism, are emerging concepts as regards to health. They must be planned and organized following criteria of protection and promotion of health and environment protection to make them healthy and sustainable activities, as well as a stimulus to economic and social development of countries and communities.

3. "*Faces, Voices and Places*" is an initiative which demonstrates the exercise of citizens' rights to health at the local level. This initiative is promising for achieving Millennium Development Goals and targets national health. Its integration with other initiatives such as "*Productive and Healthy Municipalities and Communities*" has great potential.

4. The need for a rapid collective multi-agency response, especially in view of possible pandemic and epidemic outbreaks, is a major challenge that requires coordination between continents, countries, and agencies to protect the entire global population.

5. Neglected diseases and zoonoses are a great burden on rural populations. Urgent measures for strengthening prevention, surveillance and control should be carried out especially in rural communities, giving priority to indigenous people and other vulnerable groups.

6. Social inclusion is part of equity in health. If equity in health is not addressed, progress towards health as a right of all people will not be possible. The programs' sustainability and scale is a great challenge that requires systematization of experiences, lesson learning and political will. The cultural relevance of the strategies is an ethical, technical, and political requirement.