

EXPERIENCE OF THE OIRSA SUBREGION WITH THE HARMONIZATION OF SUPPLEMENTARY VETERINARY REGULATIONS

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The Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA, Regional International Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health) comprises 9 countries (Belice, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panamá, República Dominicana). With the goal of improving the prevention of disease introduction, the control and eradication of existing diseases and facilitating trade, the OIRSA countries have agreed on the need to incorporate modern and effective supplementary regulations into their national veterinary legislation. These take the form of technical guidelines or manuals for adoption by the public and private sectors, in collaboration with the scientific community and professional bodies.

The OIRSA sub-region is going through a process of integration in terms of economic, agricultural, veterinary (and other?) policies. To meet the goals of the sub-region, member countries have seen a need for harmonisation of livestock health policies and practices. The region has extensive experience with intra-subregional harmonisation of secondary regulations, especially in the area of poultry health, where an analysis is made of both successes and areas for improvement.

For livestock and bees, OIRSA is adopting the same model as was used in the poultry sector, under the overall control of the OIRSA joint public/private regional technical committee on poultry health (CTRSA). The Technical Committee comprises the Chief Veterinary Officers of OIRSA member countries. To progress the initiative, working groups are set up in key areas, including health of cattle, swine, aquatic animals and bees. Ad hoc groups will be established to address key topics, such as health, disease diagnosis and animal welfare. The OIE Veterinary Legislation Guidelines are the key reference on the areas to be covered by national veterinary legislation.

The ad hoc groups will assess needs, identify work priorities and formulate proposals. These are sent to each country for comment, which are developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including livestock producers and scientific and professional bodies. The OIRSA Secretariat compiles the comments, makes appropriate revisions and submits the proposals for approval to the Technical Committee at one of its six-monthly meetings.

Once the Technical Committee has approved the final text of the guideline or manual, it is submitted to the Executive Committee, which comprises the Deputy Ministers for Agriculture and Livestock Production. If the Executive Committee deems the guideline appropriate, it submits it to CIRSA (the committee of agriculture ministers of the OIRSA subregion) for definitive adoption.

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