Food safety has captured worldwide attention in recent years due to serious outbreaks of foodborne disease. These outbreaks have alerted country authorities to the need to improve food safety programs to prevent the transmission of these diseases to the population, economic losses from contaminated food, and barriers to international trade, as stated in the agreements of the World Trade Organization. In addition, consumers have begun to demand information on the origin of the foods they purchase and are demanding that all food be free of contaminants and pose no risk to public health.

This document analyzes the food safety situation in the countries of the Region of the Americas and lays the foundations for the creation of a Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA), and for its Plan of Action. The main objectives of the Commission are to fulfill the basic PAHO principles of equity and Pan-Americanism and serve as a high-level political forum in the Region of the Americas.

The food safety situation in the Americas was analyzed at the 105th Session of the WHO Executive Board and the Fifty-third World Health Assembly, which issued a resolution establishing food safety as a priority (Resolution WHA53.15) and making the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO. This topic was taken up at the 42nd Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization.

The Members of RIMSA XII are invited to review the report and offer comments to the Secretariat for its application in the Region.
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Annex: Proposed Regulations of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)
1. **Background**

1.1 **Importance of Food Safety**

Outbreaks of foodborne disease in the countries of the Americas, the need to guarantee the quality and safety of food for the population, and the obligation to meet commitments to adhere to the international standards governing the food trade have caused countries to review their policies and strategies and strengthen their food safety programs to meet the objectives of preventing foodborne diseases, guaranteeing food safety, and maintaining an acceptable level of quality for the domestic and international marketing of food.

During the past decade, the food trade in the Region of the Americas has grown. These countries of the Region are major producers of meat, grains, vegetables, and fruits. However, foodborne diseases and food contamination have had a negative impact on health and human development throughout the world. Consumers have begun to demand information on the origin of their food and are demanding that all food be free of chemical and microbiological contaminants and pose no risk to public health.

The globalization of the food trade requires that food for domestic consumption and export meet the same requirements of safety and hygiene. The creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has led countries to review their policies, standards, and strategies in food safety to guarantee that the food consumed by their populations meets sanitary standards in addition to facilitating international trade. The countries of the Americas will not be in a position to continue exporting to the international markets or to provide safe food for their own populations if they do not establish food safety programs that meet those needs.

The standards and procedures governing food hygiene developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the consultations of the expert groups of the World Health Organization (WHO) have given high priority to ensuring that products for domestic consumption and export enjoy the same guarantee of safety.

1.2 **Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety**

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) provides technical cooperation to the countries of the Region in areas related to food safety. Based on the initial mandates of the IV Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (IV RIMSA) and the 31st Directing Council of PAHO, held in 1985, and backed by the recommendations of the Inter-American Conference on Food Protection, PAHO launched the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety in 1986. In the
year 2000 the Strategic Plan for Food Safety was presented to the 42nd Directing Council of PAHO and adopted (document CD42/10, 21 July 2000). This Plan outlines technical cooperation strategies to help the countries cope with their epidemiological situation with respect to foodborne diseases and with the new methodologies introduced in their inspection systems, such as good manufacturing practices (GMP), Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs), and the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points system (HACCP).

1.3 *Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (RIMSA)*

The RIMSA meetings were established in 1968 to create a forum at the highest political level to assist in the coordination of the health and agriculture sectors. The Member Governments of PAHO ratified many RIMSA initiatives, such as the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease in South America, the elimination of rabies transmitted by dogs, and the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety. RIMSA has provided essential political support for the organization and technical implementation of national programs of common interest to animal and human health.

With a view to strengthening intersectoral coordination, the XI Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (XI RIMSA), through resolution RIMSA11.R3 (1999), decided to change its name to Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Health and Agriculture, retaining the acronym “RIMSA.” The Director of PAHO has decided to hold XII RIMSA in São Paulo, Brazil, from 2 to 4 May 2001, inviting the Ministers of Health and Agriculture of all the Member States of PAHO.

The present document analyzes the situation of foodborne diseases (FBDs) in the countries of the Region and proposes the creation of a Pan American Commission For Food Safety (COPAIA), which would serve as a high-level political forum in the Region of the Americas in matters of food safety.

2. **The Food Safety Situation**

2.1 *Social Aspects*

The control and prevention of FBDs pose a current challenge worldwide, since the real incidence of these diseases is unknown. WHO has estimated an annual incidence of 1,500 million episodes of diarrhea, with 3 million deaths in children under 5; a significant percentage of these deaths, depending on the country, can be attributed to contaminated food. In the Latin American and Caribbean countries, with an estimated population of 450 million, the mortality per 1,000 children under 5 ranges from 0.6 in Costa Rica, to 0.7 in Trinidad and Tobago and Chile, up to 8.9 in Guatemala and 9.6 in Haiti.
In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) compiled and analyzed the data from a group of surveillance systems in 1999 and estimated that 76 million cases of FBD and 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,020 deaths linked to them occur in that country each year. Pathogens such as *Lysteria*, *Salmonella*, and *Toxoplasma* are responsible for 1,500 deaths annually.

The data received from 1995 to 2000 by the Regional Information System for Epidemiological Surveillance of FBDs, which the Pan American Institute for Food Protection and Zoonoses (PAHO/INPPAZ) coordinates through the reports from the countries' national systems, indicate that 4,587 outbreaks occurred during that period, with 146,803 cases or people stricken, and among these, a total of 251 deaths. The fact that the system is in its early stages and that a high percentage of outbreaks still go unreported reveals the magnitude of the problem in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Although well-known, some FBDs are considered emerging because they are occurring more frequently and have caused serious epidemic outbreaks in several developed and developing countries, demonstrating the deficiencies of the prevention and control programs. Significant among these diseases are those caused by *Salmonella enteritidis*, in eggs; *Escherichia coli*, serotype O157:H7, in meats; *Lysteria monocytogenes*, in cheeses; *Campylobacter jejuni* and *Yersinia enterocolitica*, in pork and poultry, and * Cyclospora cayetanensis*, in berries. Another example of this situation was the cholera epidemic that struck the Region of the Americas in 1991. While the disease is endemic in several regions of Africa and Asia, this was its first appearance in the Americas in over a century. Although the principal source of transmission is water, a number of foods can transmit the infection, chiefly those of marine origin. The epidemic has hit every country in the Region except Uruguay and the island nations of the Caribbean, producing some 1.2 million cases and more than 10,000 deaths.

Diseases such as infantile diarrhea and cholera, which are fostered by poor sanitation and malnutrition, are more prevalent in the low-income population.

The risk of contracting a FBD has increased in certain segments of the population, such as children, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems.

### 2.2 Economic Aspects

According to World Bank figures, Brazil and Argentina are among the world's 15 largest food exporters, exporting an average of US$ 5,000 to $10,000 million in food products per year (1994-1997 averages). Germany, the United States, France, and the Netherlands are the largest exporters, with figures ranging from $200,000 to $400,000
million per year. Germany, the United States, France, and Japan are the largest importers, with figures ranging from $200,000 to $450,000 million per year.

FAO estimates the annual world food trade at $380,000 million. U.S. imports from Latin America are valued at $22,400 million; Chile exports $1,300 million in fruit to the world; and Mexico exports $4,000 million in livestock.

As an example of the production and marketing of food such as meat, grains, seafood, and fruits, MERCOSUR sold $22.4 billion worth of these products in 1994. Of this figure, $2.9 billion correspond to trade among MERCOSUR countries, $4.2 billion to trade with other countries in the Hemisphere, and $15.3 billion to trade with countries on other continents.

Investigations of several outbreaks of FBD caused by *Lysteria monocitogenes* during the past 15 years in Europe and United States have shown their link to contaminated food to be the principal cause; other important factors in these outbreaks were the increase in immunosuppressed people, the expansion of the food industry and massive cold-storage systems, and changes in consumption habits. More recently, this problem led to the impounding of more than 35 million pounds of sausage and frozen food in the United States.

The cholera epidemic represented more than $700 million in losses for Peru, due to the interruption in exports of fish and other seafood. Another $70 million was lost due to the closing of food processing plants and the decline in tourism.

In 1993 the Economic Research Service of the USDA estimated the economic costs and losses in productivity from FBDs caused by the seven main food pathogens at $9.4 to $15.6 billion. Some $2.3 to $4.3 billion of these costs represent medical care and $3.3 to $5.1 billion, losses in productivity. Of the seven pathogens analyzed, *Salmonella* and *Toxoplasma gondii* were the most costly, due to the high number of *Salmonella* cases and the severity of the chronic disease produced by *Toxoplasma*. The cost of medical care and the losses in productivity from diseases caused by *Salmonella* in 1993 was estimated at from $600 million to $3.5 billion. In the case of *Toxoplasma*, the estimate was $2.7 billion.

Based on 31,218 questionnaires administered to English travelers who visited the Dominican Republic during 1996, the subjective incidence of traveler's diarrhea was calculated at 67%; for Mexico, with 3,502 forms, it was 49%; Saint Lucia, with 1,909 forms, 26%; and Antigua, with 1,909 forms, 22%. Despite the relativity of this information, it demonstrates the importance of food safety for tourism, on which many countries of the Region depend.
With regard to the production, processing, and sale of food in developing countries, difficult socioeconomic conditions have given rise to an informal industry that employs a high percentage of the population. This situation demands a major educational effort to prevent the risk of FBDs.

In addition to the impact of FBDs on the population, the countries have suffered significant losses from contaminated food in the international as well as the domestic market for those that have a surplus to export. The confiscation and rejection of food represent a significant category of direct losses for the food industry. The economic significance of this contamination can be seen in the number of contaminated products seized each year by the FDA in the United States.

2.3 Technical Aspects

Great strides have been made in food science and the epidemiology of FBDs in recent decades. Food production has improved with intensive production methods as well as genetic engineering, which, notwithstanding the current controversies calling for more evidence of its potential impact on health and the environment, facilitates the growth of disease-resistant plants and animals and reduces the use of chemicals in agriculture. In other industries such as aquaculture, effective measures to guarantee food safety can be applied. In order to facilitate the timely diagnosis and identification of microbiological and chemical contaminants, rapid methods have been developed.

Implementing the advances made in FBD surveillance in the countries’ systems would make it possible to obtain information on the factors that influence food contamination and to establish measures for prevention and control.

Another significant advance is the development of electronic communication, which facilitates health education programs and the exchange of epidemiological data, as well as the training of personnel.

The outbreaks of FBDs in the United States and several European countries, especially those attributable to *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, have led to the review and modernization of food safety practices. In particular, inspection and control systems have begun to recognize the importance of the concept of the food chain from the farm to the table, focusing on the HACCP system, good manufacturing practices (GMP), and the SSOP. This is a preventive system that covers all the steps in a production process, identifying the hazards and factors that foster contamination and prescribing preventive measures to control them.
One advantage of the HACCP approach is that it concentrates resources on the most important control points, which can reduce to a minimum the resources needed to guarantee food safety. This self-monitoring method is also facilitating the transition of the State as the entity responsible for performing the monitoring, passing this responsibility to industry and acting only as an auditor or verifier.

The usefulness of these new technologies is generally unknown or ignored by consumers and public health authorities, and this is the main reason why many easily preventable cases of disease and death from these causes continue to occur. Safe and effective use of these technologies, however, implies a clear prior understanding of their mechanisms. Application of the HACCP system in industry, combined with the inspections performed by the health/food safety authorities, should effectively ensure the quality of food products for the population. This type of control is impossible in the home, and good control is also difficult in establishments for the retail sale and distribution of food. Thus, consumers and food handlers alike must be educated in the proper application of safe food handling technologies, a matter to which little importance has apparently been given in health education programs.

Finally, to protect human health, food safety policies must be grounded in basic scientific processes and procedures, making reasonable use of the best information and technology available. Risk analysis is thus believed to offer a framework for the systematic, objective evaluation of all the available information on the risks of a FBD.

2.4 Political Aspects

The globalization of the economy and the subregional integration initiatives have led to a broad and massive food trade, both worldwide and in the subregions. The creation of the WTO in the final negotiations of the Uruguay Round, and its agreements on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) have established a new world order for the food trade.

The basic objective is to protect human health and prevent the emergence of non-tariff barriers. In this regard, the countries should adopt common standards that facilitate their trade.

Moreover, decisions should be based on the scientific principles of transparency and equivalence. Thus, the need to modernize food inspection and control systems has been recognized. Systems should be based on methodologies such as GMP, SSOP, and HACCP, which guarantee control of the entire food chain.. In addition, the methodologies employed in laboratory testing should permit total transparency of the results to leave no doubts as to their effectiveness.
The food safety situation created by the serious outbreaks of FBD and the economic losses associated with them has obliged developed and developing countries alike to adopt policies of major importance, such as the initiative on food safety from the farm to the consumer, known as the “Food Safety Initiative from the Farm to the Table” of the President of the United States; the creation of Agrifood in Canada, which brings together all sectors related to food under a single entity; the decisions of the United Kingdom in the wake of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic; the changes in Mexico resulting from NAFTA; and the changes in Guatemala stemming from the FBD outbreak in the United States from berries contaminated with *Cyclospora cayetanensis*, among other examples.

Although food exports are important for the countries’ economies, food safety should be a political priority to ensure the well-being of the entire population in each country.

2.5 *Role of the International Organizations*

The execution of the Plan of Action of the PAHO Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety is the responsibility of INPPAZ and the PAHO/WHO Representative Offices in the countries. The basic approach of the Program is to prevent the risk of FBDs, targeting all the links in the food chain from production to the table. The objectives of the Program are:

- to achieve a supply of safe, wholesome, nourishing, tasty, and economical food;

- to reduce human morbidity and mortality from foodborne diseases.

Through this program, all the countries are receiving cooperation in the following areas: the establishment of food safety programs; incorporation of Codex Alimentarius standards in their legislation; the creation of information system on legislation in food safety; the organization of the Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories; support for the modernization of food inspection and control systems by training personnel in HACCP and GMP; the organization of the information system for the epidemiological surveillance of FBDs (SIRVE-ETA); and the development of health education programs in food safety and community participation.

3. *Priority Needs of the Food Safety Programs*

The situation in the epidemiological, socioeconomic, political, and technical scenarios of food safety makes it necessary for the countries to intensify the
modernization and reorientation of their national services, giving priority to the following points:

3.1 Organization of National Food Safety Programs

All the countries have some type of program, but these programs generally consist of isolated activities without adequate coordination to cover the entire food chain. Depending on their export capacity, in some countries the responsibility for leadership rests with the ministries of agriculture, which must certify the quality of export products. Fortunately, several countries have initiatives to develop programs; significant among them are the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Food Safety Initiative of the United States.

3.2 Review of the Legislation and Adoption of the Codex Alimentarius Codes of Practice

In order to incorporate the new orientations deriving from the food safety situation, effectively carry them out, and harmonize national and international standards, the countries will need to review and update their legislation.

Similarly, to guarantee effective quality control and food safety, the services should adopt the codes of practice recommended by Codex Alimentarius and other national or regional standards. In view of the role assigned to Codex by the WTO, their adoption will facilitate international trade, since the standards are scientifically based and accepted by the majority of the countries.

3.3 Strengthening and Modernization of Inspection and Control Services and the Adoption of New Methodologies

Considering the importance of the concept of the food chain from the farm to the table, attention has focused on the HACCP system and its prerequisites of GMP and SSOP. This system covers all steps in a production process, identifying the hazards and factors that promote contamination and prescribing preventive measures to control them.

3.4 Development and Strengthening of Systems for Epidemiological Surveillance of Foodborne Diseases

In order to prevent and control outbreaks of FBDs, the countries must have effective surveillance systems that will enable them to obtain the information needed to guide their decision-making. The availability of the information is also fundamental.
3.5 Strengthening of Communication and Health Education to Improve Consumer Safety

Expanding communication makes it possible to rapidly inform the population about the risks of food contamination. In order to prevent negative reactions among consumers, the countries should develop effective communication programs that offer guidance on the proper storage and handling of food and that encourage community participation in prevention and control programs.

3.6 Promotion of Intersectoral Coordination and the Participation of Producers, Processors, Distributors, and Consumers in Food Safety Programs

For the countries to adopt the concept of the food chain from the farm to the table and the new inspection and control methods, they will require mechanisms that permit the coordination of all sectors involved in food production, particularly the health and agriculture sectors, and the effective participation of producers, processors, and consumers.

3.7 Promotion of Coordination among International and Binational Technical Cooperation Agencies

The food safety situation has spurred the development of technical cooperation programs among the major international technical cooperation agencies, such as PAHO/WHO and FAO. Working with the countries, it is necessary to establish adequate coordination mechanisms that will make it possible to meet technical cooperation needs in an orderly fashion and effectively utilize the available resources.

4. Proposal for the Creation of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety (COPAIA)

In 1999 an evaluation of the Regional Program for Technical Cooperation in Food Safety was conducted by the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Pan American Institute for Food Safety and Zoonoses (INPPAZ). The final report of the Committee contained a recommendation for the creation of a Regional Commission on Food Safety, which would have committees specializing in technical and political aspects. One of the objectives of the Commission would be to strengthen food safety programs in the Region of the Americas. It would also facilitate the application of the scientific principles governing each stage of the food chain. PAHO/WHO would act as Secretariat ex officio.

The recommendations of the STC II of INPPAZ were submitted to RIMSA XI, held in 1999, as part of the presentation of the Regional Program for Technical
Cooperation in Food Safety. Through resolution RIMSA11 R.5 the Meeting adopted the PAHO Plan of Action, resolving in paragraph 4 "to request the Director of PAHO to examine the feasibility of carrying out the recommendations of the II Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of INPPAZ (February 1999)."

The report on food safety in the Americas presented at RIMSA XI was submitted to the Member Governments of PAHO at the 126th Session of the Executive Committee and the 42nd Directing Council, which adopted the PAHO Plan of Action in food safety through resolution CD42.R3. This resolution recommends that the Member States of the Organization strengthen their food safety programs and that the Director of PAHO continue to provide technical cooperation to the countries of the Region in food safety. Specifically, item 3b recommends that the Director "explore the need for a regional commission on food safety to deal with matters related to the development of regional policies in this area."

The world food safety situation was recently reviewed at the 105th Session of the Executive Board of the 53rd World Health Assembly, which issued a resolution establishing food safety as a priority and made the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO. As demonstrated in the present document, the political and technical benefits of having this type of Commission continue to grow.

In compliance with these recommendations, meetings were held in February 2000 between officials from the Government of the United States of America, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and officials from the Government of Brazil to report on and discuss the feasibility of creating this Commission and determine the appropriate time for its first meeting. In order to set up this Commission, communications were exchanged between the Food and Drug Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Secretary of Agriculture of the State of São Paulo, Brazil, and PAHO.

A Commission at that level will enable political leaders, producers, and consumers, as well as the international organizations, to work together to reach an understanding on priority areas for action to ensure that food safety occupies a position of importance in the countries of the Region.

A similar commission, the Hemispheric Commission for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (COHEFA), was established during the 1987 RIMSA to strengthen and promote the political will to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease in South America. As a result, coordinated programs involving the active participation of producers are in place in a number of countries. This has led to significant progress in Argentina, Brazil, Chile,
Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay. As a result of this coordinated effort, more than 100 million head of cattle are currently free of foot-and-mouth disease.

5. Final Considerations

In order to address the current problems in food safety and international trade among countries, strong national food safety systems are necessary. The establishment of the Pan American Commission for Food Safety, as an advisory body of the RIMSA, will help to achieve this objective. A similar initiative has been launched by the European Union through the establishment of a new institution that will promote, among other things, the organization of strong national food safety systems.

This Commission should promote the coordination of all existing efforts in food safety, including those of the Codex Alimentarius Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, FAO, the FDA, IICA, RIOPPAH, USAID, and USDA, as well as subregional economic integration initiatives such as NAFTA, CARICOM, and those of Central America, the Andean Area, and MERCOSUR.

Proposed Regulations for the Pan American Commission for Food Safety have been prepared and appear in the Annex.

Annex
PROPOSED REGULATIONS OF THE PAN AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR FOOD SAFETY (COPAIA)

1. Background

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is responsible for establishing the orientations and providing technical cooperation in public health. In the area of food safety, at the request of the countries, it is implementing a strategic plan for technical cooperation in food safety for the Region. In order to address the current problem of foodborne diseases (FBDs) and the need to protect health and facilitate the national and international food trade, a Strategic Plan was prepared that was presented and adopted by the XI Inter-American Meeting, at the Ministerial Level, on Animal Health (RIMSA XI) through resolutions RIMSA11.R5 and RIMSA11.R6, by the 126th Session of the Executive Committee through resolution CE126.R7, and by the 42nd Directing Council through resolution CD42.R3. These resolutions request the Director of PAHO "to explore the need for a regional commission on food safety to deal with matters related to the development of regional policies in this area."

Food safety problems were recently discussed at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO), which adopted resolution WHA53.15 establishing food safety as a priority and an essential public health function and made the corresponding recommendations to the Member States and the Director-General of WHO.

Outbreaks of FBDs on several continents, including the Americas, during the past decade have given a new dimension to food safety programs in the countries. The frequency of the outbreaks and their consequences for the health of the population and the domestic and international food trade have led to a review of food safety policies in the countries and of the measures established for the prevention and control of FBDs.

The globalization of markets and the Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) of the World Trade Organization imply that food for domestic consumption and export must both meet stringent sanitary standards. To this end, it will be necessary for the countries to have effective food safety programs in place to guarantee safety in the domestic and export markets.
Since the modern approach to food inspection and control is based on the concept of the food chain "from the farm to the table," it is of priority importance to have mechanisms for coordinating all the links of the chain, especially between the health and agriculture sectors and between these sectors and producers and consumers.

Since 1968 PAHO has been convening RIMSA, originally known as RICAZ, with the participation of the ministers of agriculture and some ministers of health. Since XII RIMSA, pursuant to resolution RIMSA11.R3, the ministers of health have formally participated, with the object of evaluating and adopting the program and budget of the regional veterinary public health programs of PAHO. RIMSA has become the intersectoral forum for health and agriculture at the highest political level of the Region of the Americas.

In 1987, resolution RIMSA5.R13 empowered the Director of PAHO to create the Hemispheric Committee for the Eradication of Foot-and-mouth Disease in order to muster the political will to eradicate this disease from South America and prevent its introduction into countries free of foot-and-mouth disease in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. The activities of this Committee have been fundamental in encouraging the countries to eradicate foot-and-mouth disease in South America.

2. **Purpose**

The purpose of the Commission is to contribute to improving the safety of food for domestic consumption and export by maintaining the political will of the countries of the Region to set up integrated food safety programs as an essential function of the health and agriculture sectors, to apply the technical aspects of the programs, to promote coordination with producers and consumers, and to facilitate the execution of PAHO’s regional plan for technical cooperation in food safety.

3. **Objectives**

- Promote the organization of food safety programs as an essential activity for the inspection and control of food for domestic consumption and export in all the countries of the Region.

- Promote and strengthen intersectoral coordination at the different links of the food chain.

- Promote coordination and partnerships with other national, international, and binational organizations for technical cooperation programs in food safety.
• Define the policies needed to successfully implement the technical aspects of food safety.

• Review and evaluate the countries’ progress in food safety.

• Promote collaboration among the countries for food safety.

4. **Formation of the Commission**

The Commission is an Advisory Body of RIMSA. The Director of PAHO appoints the members of the Commission on a rotating basis. The Commission will be comprised of a minister of health and a minister of agriculture from each of the subregions: North America, the Andean Area, the English-speaking Caribbean, the Southern Cone, and Central America and the Latin Caribbean, together with a representative of both food producers and consumers for each of these same subregions.

The subregions are defined as follows: North America (Canada, the United States, Mexico), the Andean Area (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela), the English-speaking Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago), Central America and the Latin Caribbean (Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama), and the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay).

Two representatives are selected from the private sector, one for the producers/processors and one for the consumers of each subregion. Given the wide variety of products and processes, an effort should be made to ensure that the two representatives cover the different types of food produced.

Ministers of Agriculture and Health from Member States that are not members of the Commission and representatives of international technical, and financial cooperation agencies such as FAO, IICA, OIRSA, IDB, World Bank and others are invited as participants to the meetings.

Invited observers may present papers and participate in the debates without the right to vote.
Commission members hold office for two years corresponding to the period between RIMSA sessions. The Director will have the authority to extend the period only once.

5. Secretariat of the Commission and its Functions

Representing the Director of PAHO, the Pan American Institute for Food Safety and Zoonoses (INPPAZ) acts as the Secretariat of the Commission, and its Director, as Secretary ex officio.

6. Organization of the Sessions

One session will be held per year, convened by the Director of PAHO.

The officers of the Commission, consisting of a president, a vice president, and a rapporteur, are elected every two years at the regular meeting.

A majority of the members of this Pan American Commission constitute a quorum.

The provisional agenda of the sessions is prepared by the Secretary ex officio and sent with the convocation of the meeting. Commission members can propose additional items.

The reports on the sessions of the Commission are submitted to RIMSA for approval and forwarded by the Secretariat to all the ministers of health and agriculture of the countries of the Region of the Americas and to the observers.

The decisions of the Commission shall be adopted preferably by consensus, or in its absence, by a majority vote of the members present, and shall be expressed in the form of recommendations.

7. Financing

PAHO would provide the necessary resources for the participation of the Ministers of Health and Agriculture at the regular meetings. The producers’ and consumers’ organizations would cover the expenditures of their delegates.
8. **Modifications to the Regulations**

The present Regulations may be reviewed at the request of a Member State and modified fully or in part with the approval of RIMSA.

All other matters not foreseen in these Regulations shall be resolved directly by the Commission.