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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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ANIMAL PRODUCTS – RECENT MEASURES IMPLEMENTED

COMMUNICATION FROM BRAZIL

The following communication, dated 22 March 2017, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Brazil.

1. On Friday, 17 March 2017 the Brazilian Federal Police unveiled an investigation on irregular practices involving certification of meat and meat products by staff members of the Ministry of Agriculture in 21 meat processing facilities that handle beef, poultry and pork products.

2. These initial findings have been taken very seriously by the authorities, and facts are being thoroughly checked and investigated by the Ministry of Agriculture. The police operation itself is proof of the transparency and credibility of the existing controls. The investigation was initiated and entirely carried out by Brazilian authorities. President Michel Temer himself convened a meeting over the weekend of 18-19 March 2017 to assess the safety of domestic and international consumers with regard to the quality of the meat produced in the country.

3. Brazilian sanitary controls are solid and trustworthy. The Ministry of Agriculture is widely recognized for its rigorous and robust inspection service of products of animal origin, thus guaranteeing food safety and quality.

4. Brazil ranks among the biggest animal protein exporters in the world, and the standards of excellence of our products rate among the best of the world. High quality Brazilian meat and meat products are exported to more than 150 countries. For this reason, the Brazilian regulatory system is among the most frequently and strictly audited and monitored worldwide. It meets the requirements of several highly demanding markets and includes additional periodic inspections, monitoring and internal and external auditing based on risk assessment.

5. Some of the main programmes for controlling food quality and safety are well known to our importers: the National Plan for the Control of Residues and Contaminants (PNCRC), the Conformity Assessment Program for Animal Products (PAC-POA) and the Pathogens Reduction Program (PRP).

6. Since the unveiling of the investigations, several measures have been taken. The main concern and commitment is to ensure the safety and quality of the products. At the same time, although the allegations of misconduct by auditors are serious, they have to be put in perspective:

- Of MAPA's 11,000 workforce, 2,300 are auditors working on animal products sanitary inspection – but only 33 individuals are being investigated for improper conduct; all these public servants have been suspended pending the conclusion of ongoing administrative proceedings, in addition to the already launched criminal probe;
- Of the 4,837 animal product processing units subject to federal sanitary inspections, only 21 are allegedly involved in irregularities. Three of those have had their operations halted and all the 21 are being re-audited by headquarters officials as we speak, to verify any material evidence of nonconformities in the products. Moreover, the export authorizations to all these 21 units have been preventively suspended.

- In 2016 alone, 853,000 shipments of products of animal origin from Brazil were exported. Of those, only 184 shipments were considered non-compliant by the importing authorities - often because of non-sanitary requirements, such as labelling or incomplete paperwork;
- Finally, the investigations are not aimed at the agriculture and livestock inspection systems in place, whose rigor is widely recognized, but rather at a few instances of individual misconduct.

7. Brazil reaffirms the adequate maintenance of the official sanitary programmes and specific controls on products of animal origin domestically produced. The Ministry of Agriculture surveillance protocols and procedures are efficient and result in high-quality and safe food for consumption. We reiterate our commitment to continuously improve the guarantees of our sanitary control systems.

8. All relevant Brazilian governmental agencies are working together to clarify the matters under investigation and address any concerns that may be raised by our trading partners. Brazilian authorities have been in contact with authorities from importing markets since the unveiling of the investigation. It goes without saying that the Brazilian Mission in Geneva is available to take any queries or demands that may be presented to us in this regard.

9. Brazil hopes that Members take into account all the information that has been shared with partners and with this Committee, which will be updated as necessary. In this spirit of transparency and cooperation, we expect that Members do not resort to measures which would constitute arbitrary restrictions on international trade or run counter the disciplines of the SPS Agreement and other WTO rules.
