

Mexico and Guatemala agree on health control processes for the legal introduction of cattle from Central America

Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretaries of Agriculture Víctor Villalobos Arámbula and Mario Méndez Montenegro focused on strengthening actions to organize, regulate and enhance agriculture and livestock trade between both nations.



The governments of Mexico and Guatemala signed a Memorandum of Understanding to regulate the introduction of bovine cattle, originating and coming from Central America into our country, for immediate slaughter and terminal fattening, in order to end the transfer of Central American cattle; such practices were carried out for many years and put the sanitary status of Mexican cattle at risk.

The agreement was signed by the Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, Víctor Villalobos Arámbula, and the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) of the Republic of Guatemala, Mario Méndez Montenegro.

After the signing of the document of importance for the cattle industry of both nations, the secretary Víctor Villalobos Arámbula, stated that this initiative, yearned for years, guarantees the traceability and sanitary security of the country's cattle industry, supported by the management of transparent actions and with no corruption in the importation of cattle from Central America.

He said that this historic action also opens the opportunity for greater bilateral agri-food market and the commercial exchange of cattle in a controlled manner, with the political support of the governments of both countries.

He declared that in compliance with the instructions of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, actions will continue to be promoted in the search to increase the presence of Mexico in technical cooperation and agriculture and livestock trade with countries in Central and South America.

The head of MAGA, Mario Méndez Montenegro, indicated that thanks to its privileged geographical location, biodiversity and commercial management, Guatemala and Mexico are lands that feed more than 145 million inhabitants

combined, utilizing mutual collaboration to solve migratory issues, reduce malnutrition rates and strengthen agriculture and livestock health actions.

He said that the signed agreement guarantees the health and quality of agriculture and livestock products that pass through this border, with strict control mechanisms to eradicate diseases such as brucellosis and tuberculosis, through high standards of traceability and international health.

The signing of this agreement, he said, is synonymous with credibility in the export of live cattle, beef and genetic material, and represents a historical measure to order and reduce the transfer of cattle. This provision, he added, will later be proposed to Honduras and Nicaragua.

He pointed out that these actions are beneficial both for Mexico and Guatemala, and for their cattle sectors, as they contribute to protecting the sanitary condition of production in the region.

He stressed that with the new provision in December, around 80 thousand heads of live cattle could be exported from Guatemala to Mexico, and if they manage to export one million animals a year, they would obtain foreign currency of two billion dollars.

The president of the Livestock Commission of the Chamber of Representatives, Eduardo Ron Ramos, highlighted the institutional work that today results in favor of the national cattle industry, achieving an opening for dialogue between legislators, producers and authorities.

In these works, he highlighted the participation of his fellow federal deputies from Chiapas, Roque Rovelo, and Veracruz, Maximiliano Ruíz Arias (recently deceased), whose results will be indicative of the certainty that the cattle entering Mexico is legal and healthy, which also implies sovereignty and food security.

The executive director of the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), Efraín Medina, gave an acknowledgement to the Government of Mexico and the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development for this historic decision that will have a social and economic impact in the Central American region.

It is, he added, an action to generate common agrosanitary policies, which contribute with different measures to the prevention, control and eradication of pests and diseases, which will allow the generation of healthy and safe production for all the inhabitants of the region.

“It commits us to unconditionally contribute with everything in our power to fulfill our objective of supporting the Ministries and Secretariats of Agriculture of the region for strengthening their actions; in this case, of animal health and thus to achieve a solid and consistent program over time”, he said.

The president of the *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Ganaderas* (CNOG) [National Confederation of Cattlemen’s Organizations], Oswaldo

Cházaro Montalvo, said: “The cattlemen of Mexico, represented by more than one million 800 thousand families of the cattle sector, are in favor of this measure that translates into the health protection of our herds”.

He stressed that these actions are also the way for a fair and orderly trade between the two countries, through full compliance with these devices that end with a practice of informality and the perception of criminality in the area.

“This way we also invoke the principle of reciprocity that must prevail in all agreements, for the Mexican cattle (in terms of genetics) to also have a legal system accessible to that neighbor region, with an impact on the management of healthy and competitive cattle for export to other countries”, he added.

The Work Program emphasizes that the cattle to be exported will come from ranches certified by MAGA as free from bovine tuberculosis (Tb) and brucellosis (Br). It will be differentiated with the Central American Electronic Earring (AEC), which uses radio technology for referencing. For this, the identification of the earring 35 that was used in the mobilization of Guatemalan cattle bound for Mexico will remain without effect.

MAGA technicians and representatives of the OIRSA will verify the compliance of a 21-day quarantine of the cattle at their ranch of origin or in the stockpiles constituted for it. So far, the Central American country has 70 certified ranches.

Subsequently, the cattle will be transported to transit and shipping facilities managed by MAGA. OIRSA will place strapping on vehicles and issue a complimentary letter to the import certificate.

It should be noted that the cattle transported must be less than 30 months of age, because Guatemala is not certified as a country with a low risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, better known as mad cow disease.

The Secretariat of Agriculture and MAGA expressed their interest in implementing a pilot program focused on strengthening the health status of both countries in the sectors of beef production, which will operate between November 2019 and November 2024.

The event was attended by the heads of Animal Health of Guatemala, David Orellana, and of Mexico, Juan Gay Gutiérrez, who came on behalf of the chief director of the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA), Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, as well as the representatives of OIRSA in Mexico, Héctor Manuel Sánchez Anguiano, and in Guatemala, Nidia Sandoval Alarcón.