

# **Mexico and Canada move towards strengthened cooperation to address health emergencies in the primary sector**

Canadian health inspection specialists are interested in learning about the Canine School of the National Agro-alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (Senasica), being a pacesetter in the Americas



Health agencies of Mexico and Canada agreed to strengthen their technical and scientific cooperation on epidemiological surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, non-intrusive plant and animal health inspection, and emergency care due to the entry of pests and exotic diseases that could jeopardize food production and trade in North America.

Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development stressed that both countries share a broad culture of health and food safety, which has resulted in the North American region being positioned as one of the main areas producing healthy and safe food worldwide.

It was noted that officials from National Service for Agro-alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (Senasica) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency met to take stock of the joint actions that took place in 2022 and the projects that will be launched this year.

Whilst welcoming, the Agriculture agency stressed that the technical areas of Senasica maintain permanent communication with the Agricultural Department of the Canadian Embassy in Mexico and their CFIA counterparts, in order to keep health procedures and protocols updated, for the benefit of their production systems.

The director of the United States-Mexico Commission for the Prevention of Foot-and-Mouth Disease and other Exotic Animal

Diseases (CPA), Roberto Navarro López, shared with the Canadian delegation an assessment of the programs that the Mexican organization operates to prevent the entry and spread of diseases not present in Mexican territory and, where appropriate, control and eradicate those that enter due to various factors, such as the arrival of wild animals, commercial flow, migration and tourism.

He specified that, just like Canada, Mexico is currently facing an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza, HPAI A(H5N1), which was transmitted by the passage of water birds through Mexican territory during the winter season.

He pointed out that the Ministry of Agriculture activated the National Animal Health Emergency Device (Dinesa), which makes it possible to implement all human and financial resources available to Mexican Government of to prevent the disease from establishing itself in the country.

The official highlighted the cooperation between the exotic disease diagnostic laboratories of Senasica and Winnipeg, located in the Canadian province of Manitoba, making it possible to exchange scientific knowledge, standardize techniques and exchange highly pathogenic virus strains.

CFIA Executive Director of International Affairs, Parthi Muthukumarasamy, commented that HPAI A(H5N1) is currently the biggest health emergency faced by Canada, which is why

more than 700 Agency officials are permanently dealing with the problem in nine of the country's 10 provinces. .

He pointed out that based on the good results that countries like Mexico have obtained in HPAI containment, CFIA considers using emergency vaccination as a complementary control measure to counter this disease.

He indicated that Mexico is one of the main food suppliers for Canada, mainly beef and pork, so it is essential to be aware of its actions to reduce the risk of entry and spread of pests and diseases of economic importance.

He stated that health inspection specialists from his country are interested in learning about the Senasica Canine School, which, as he observed, has become a pacesetter in the Americas.

Regarding agro-alimentary safety, he announced that his government is fine-tuning the details of the Equivalence Agreement for Organic Products between the two countries, thus expecting to increase trade in this type of food between the two nations, for the benefit of consumers.

As for Senasica, this meeting was also attended by the directors of the Canine School, Pedro Macías Canales; for Phytosanitary Regulations, Israel Cueto Espinosa; for Projects and Institutional Development, René Hernández Ruiz; for Imports and Exports, Fernando Rivera Espinoza, and for Food Safety, Organic

Operation and Pesticides for Agricultural Use, José Luis Lara de la Cruz, among others.

The Canadian government was represented by Canada's Agricultural Counsellor in Mexico, Francis Lindsay, and CFIA Director of Food Import and Export, Kanwal Kochhar, among others.