

Beneficiary

Cattle industry in Costa Rica, including farmers and exporters

Led by

IICA

Time-frame

March 2009 – August 2011

STDF funding

US\$455,220 (total project value US\$654,600)



TRACING THE BEEF VALUE CHAIN TO DRIVE SAFER TRADE AND EXPORTS FROM COSTA RICA

The safe trade gap

From meat to dairy products, livestock is a vital source of nutrition for local consumers in Costa Rica and provides an important income for farmers who run the 50,000 cattle farms nationwide. Infectious diseases can be a major barrier to livestock production, limiting access to lucrative markets and impacting on consumer health. To manage the risk, any incident needs to be traced back to its origins to allow fast sanitary prevention and control. Costa Rican farmers and exporters faced being cut out of the beef trade without a centralized information system and accurate data. A system was needed that would cover registration and identify animals along the value chain, from farm production to final trading, to open up export markets and guarantee consumer food safety.

Partnership approach

The National Animal Health Service (SENASA), hand in hand with IICA, helped to strengthen the National Epidemiological Surveillance Program, and plug the gaps identified by experts from the OIE. Stakeholders across the beef value chain worked closely together with support from the private sector to develop a simple, low-cost traceability system to control the movement of cattle. Public-private sector dialogue came to life through joint meetings and workshops. A Joint Regulatory Commission was set up with members of the Livestock Development Corporation and SENASA, and included ranchers, industry representatives, auctions, and regulators. The Canadian International Development Agency also provided training to stakeholders during the project.

Results

- A national electronic cattle traceability system was set up. The system's user-friendly software traces the origin of a group of animals step by step, from farms to auctions, slaughterhouses, transport and markets. Following the project, 100% of animals in the country have a document of origin.

- Breeders, transporters, distributors, auctions and enforcement authorities built up their knowledge on livestock traceability thanks to practical training sessions rolled out across the country and widely distributed guides, manuals, videos and leaflets.
- Costa Rica gained credibility in international trade by meeting SPS obligations and OIE recommendations. There was a shorter response time to sanitary incidents within 24 hours and a decrease in notification time to the OIE of less than 24 hours following the project.
- Access to regional markets, such as Puerto Rico, Peru, Chile and Mexico, was given a boost. New high value opportunities for livestock trade sprang up in markets worldwide including Japan, Russia, Singapore and the EU.

Sustaining impact

- The project had positive spill-over effects including expanding opportunities for public health surveillance and animal welfare, as well as preventing cattle theft. Government officials looking to address gaps in cattle theft law set up an integrated regulatory framework that included monitoring and traceability developed by the project.
- The results have been used as a stepping stone for a voluntary individual traceability programme launched in 2013, which is identifying individual animals across the country.
- The project set up a baseline that is being used to expand traceability in other products such as dairy, swine, fruits and seafood. As a model of good practice in the region, the system has been replicated in other countries including Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Honduras.

"Thanks to the project, Costa Rica has a mandatory group traceability system in place that controls the movement of cattle nationwide. It has become an important tool to control animal and public health and is being used as a model for other countries in the region".

Sacha Trelles,
IICA

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