Roll-out of a movement control system for cattle

Develop a framework for a mandatory nationwide traceability and monitoring system to register and track the movement of cattle throughout the country which ultimately strengthened the National Epidemiological Surveillance Program and provided the foundation for national expansion.

A result story on the project is available here.

STDF/PG/116

Status
Completed

Start Date
01/03/2009

End Date
30/08/2011

Project Value (US$)
$654,600

STDF Contribution (US$)
$455,220

Beneficiaries
Costa Rica

Implementing Entities
Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

Partners
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Corporación de Fomento Ganadero (CORFOGA)
Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería de Costa Rica (MAG)
National Animal Health Service (SENASA), Costa Rica

Background

After numerous worldwide episodes of foot and mouth disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other sanitary events, it has become mandatory to introduce measures in the beef trade that aim to prevent these incidents. A well-developed traceability system ensures that any sanitary event may be traced backwards and forwards, thus allowing for any appropriate measures to be adopted. As such, traceability is an important food-safety tool and an unavoidable requirement for access to some markets.

In recent years Costa Rica has approved several tools to regulate the development of its cattle production and processing industry, aiming at ensuring the quality and safety of its beef-related production, both for local consumers and for the export oriented industry.

Results

A mandatory nationwide group traceability and mobilization control system

The project created a mandatory nationwide traceability system with mobilization control for the tracking of cattle movements throughout the country. This required close interaction between every sector of the cattle production chain, thus creating a robust public-private cooperation structure as well as a strengthened national cattle industry. Furthermore, the newly established traceability requirements align Costa Rica's regulations with OIE recommendations - the benefits of which continue to be reaped. Not only is Costa Rica now in compliance with its SPS obligations, but it has also gained credibility in international commerce, thereby expanding its trading opportunities, especially to profitable external markets. Aside from the potential monetary gains, Costa Rica has seen the opportunity to improve its internal public health as well. The program has not only increased the level of quality assurance provided to consumers, it has also expanded the opportunities for public health surveillance in order to quickly track and rectify any potential public health threats related to beef consumption. Human populations were not the only beneficiaries of this system; in fact, overall animal welfare within the cattle industry has increased as the project allowed for greater control over cattle producers and transporters throughout the production chain.

A new regulatory framework

The project coincided with the passage of Law 8799, the Control Act for Cattle and its Prevention and Punishment of Robbery, Theft and Receiving Stolen Goods. The law's passage required that subsequent regulatory action be taken. Seeing the potential for the creation of a unified regulatory system that incorporated facets of the project, government officials worked to create a single regulatory framework that met the needs of the law as well as those of traceability and monitoring. This system created a more easily identifiable regulatory structure and placed into law features of traceability and monitoring that legitimized the program as well provided transparency to actors within the cattle production chain. This additional clarity allowed for a more effective use of the system and the mandatory nature of the regulations made the project more sustainable and nationally applicable. This opportunity to harmonize the structure of the program with national law has streamlined the project as well as laid the groundwork for future expansion and development.

Updated and harmonized full record-keeping system

The process of establishing the mandatory nationwide traceability system and monitoring controls required an analysis of previously held records as well as their update. Records held prior to the project's inception were poorly organized, often resulting in overlapping and outdated records. The project offered a solution to this problem by creating a centralized bank of information from which details about groups of cattle can be extracted from any point on the cattle-production line. This electronic system, managed by SENASA and MAG offices, is accessible across the nation, allowing for immediate access to data anywhere. This system follows cattle across the production chain through the use of individual and unique cattle brands by all producers. Furthermore, the recognition of individual cattle brands has provided the basis for the prevention and punishment of cattle theft - a widespread problem within Costa Rica.

Recommendations

The importance of a country-specific plan

The project utilized a long-term strategy that was adopted as a national priority, which allowed for the development of stable objectives and strategies that were resilient to both internal and external pressures. The traceability and monitoring system was developed with the specific needs and resources of Costa Rica in mind, meaning that it was able to best utilize the country's strengths as well as mitigate any perceived weaknesses. This approach allowed for the creation of a strong national plan that was, ultimately, extremely sustainable. Furthermore, the use of national resources and capabilities, such as IT platforms, reduced overall costs and strengthened the ties of the program within the country, adding to its prospective sustainability.

The need for participation and cooperation amongst all stakeholders

The nature of this project demanded intensive relationships across multiple sectors within the cattle production chain as well as a strengthened public-private cooperation. The recognition of this demand from the project's outset allowed for meaningful involvement of all stakeholders at every stage of the project's implementation. In addition to the need for varying stakeholders, the project demanded a complementary approach in regard to development of both animal and food safety, meaning that officials needed to be involved in continuous discussions with stakeholders in order to establish effective priorities in real time.

This approach ensured the success of the project and allowed for the multidisciplinary design necessary to its success. Furthermore, in addition to internal cooperation and participation, project developer's recognized the need for international cooperation to assure the project's success. Funding and resources were needed from external sources, such as the STDF, CIDA, and IICA, in order to supplement and develop existing capabilities. This funding mechanism ensured that Costa Rica's country-wide resources and perspectives were never marginalized, merely enhanced.

The need for flexibility in project development and implementation

This innovative program was able to break many paradigms in Costa Rica's approach to animal and food safety. This innovation was due in no small part to the project's openness to feedback and development. A continuous feedback-loop allowed those overseeing the project to assess its successes and weaknesses on a regular basis, ensuring that every portion of the project was running at an optimal level. This approach demanded flexibility from all participants, a quality that was necessary for the project's continued success. This plan was enhanced by the gradual, step-by-step nature of the project's implementation, which allowed each phase of the project to build on prior experiences as they grew in complexity.