

**Assessment of hygiene and sanitary control systems in international meat trade.**  
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Increasing demands on human and animal health protection are promoted by growing knowledge of food hazards and by a trend to more opening in international trade. Hygiene and sanitary control systems (HSCS) ruled and enforced in the different countries are frequently scrutinized by foreign counterparts. It is a common practice that veterinary inspection services of importing countries make on site observations on their exporting counterparts. This is achieved after some reasonable regulation equivalence is established and after OIE's animal health status is recognized for the concerning diseases. These activities are normally performed within the frame of bilateral agreements. Recently an important milestone was established with the foundation of the WTO (World Trade Organization- 1994) where the "Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures" (SPS Agreement) constitutes a significant contribution to science based food regulation and enforcement.

In this climate public access to sound information has a pivotal role to develop mutual trust between national governments themselves and with consumers.

As a contribution to this goal an assessment of the Argentine HSCS for export beef products was published. (*Lasta et al. Die Fleischwirtschaft 1-2000*). The paper analyzes facts and findings resulted after the application of a plan designed and enforced by the Argentine National Animal Health and Agri-Food Quality Service (SENASA) for the 1997 year. Routine yearly assessing the performance of competent national services and publishing the results in the World Wide Web would be an important step to increase transparency in food regulation enforcement provided that: 1. Evaluations are conducted according with widely accepted international criteria and 2. Proved independent experts are nominated.

International meat trade partners from farmers to consumers will be beneficiaries of updated and well administered regulatory policies showing scientifically based risk management.