

S.America takes aim at foot-and-mouth disease

23 November 2011

Agriculture ministers from six South American countries agreed at a meeting Wednesday to make the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease a regional priority.

[Agriculture](#) Minister Jorge Alberto Mendes Ribeiro.

The ministers called for international assistance to Paraguay.

The Brasilia gathering followed a foot-and-mouth outbreak in Paraguay in September that led to a temporary ban by Brazil on all imports of beef, pork, and live cattle and [pigs](#) from its small neighbor.

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"The eradication of [foot-and-mouth disease](#) is a priority for the region," ministers and top officials from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay said in a final statement.

Participants said the outbreak, which affected 13 animals in Paraguay's province of San Pedro, 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Asuncion and triggered an alert in the entire region, was deemed to have been brought under control.

In reaction to the outbreak, Uruguay, where beef is the top export, immediately closed its borders to animals, animal byproducts and certain goods from Paraguay.

Argentina, the sixth largest beef exporter, then issued a food health alert and suspended imports from Paraguay.

[Beef](#) is the number two export for mostly rural Paraguay, totaling \$650 million last year.

"As a region, we are going to focus on identifying the causes and prevent this type of outbreak from recurring in each of our regions," Paraguay's Agriculture Minister Panfilo Alberto Ortiz told a press conference.

His Argentine counterpart Julian Dominguez hailed regional coordination in confronting the [outbreak](#).

"Together we will be stronger," said Brazil's

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