

## ***Harmonizing control standards for foods of animal origin in Latin America***

### ***The challenge...***

Chemical contaminants in food are hazardous to human health, damaging to the environment and can curtail trade. They include veterinary medicines, pesticides and their metabolites. To enhance consumer food safety in the Latin America region and to improve capacities for regional and international trade, countries in the region implement National Residue Control programmes similar to those in place in the European Union (EU) and the United States of America. However, all are at different levels of development, mainly due to the lack of appropriate skills and analytical methods.

### ***The project...***

Given the resource limitations and lack of access to appropriate technologies, as well as the need for uniform standards in food control in Latin America, the establishment of a network of national laboratories to consolidate capacity and ensure sustainability was proposed. More advanced laboratories would act as regional reference laboratories, specializing in various aspects of residue analysis, and would inform and support the less developed ones, thus maximizing the use of limited resources and ensuring sustainability.

The IAEA's technical cooperation programme facilitated the harmonization of protocols and procedures for the analysis of pharmacologically active substances and contaminants in food of animal origin. Knowledge and experience were shared through numerous expert missions, scientific visits and workshops.

Making full use of expertise available within the network, the more advanced laboratories in the region have helped the less developed ones to implement quality assurance programmes to demonstrate their competencies through ISO 17025 accreditation. Technologies developed at EU reference laboratories for the detection of antibiotics in animal products has been transferred, modified and implemented in the region with IAEA support.

### ***The impact...***

As a result of the project, laboratories in the region have successfully participated in proficiency tests and extended the scope of their ISO 17025 accreditation for food control. Results from the project have been presented at an international workshop on validation and regulatory analysis, focusing on veterinary drug and pesticide residues and contaminants in foods. In addition, the project has enhanced the competitiveness of the collaborating countries in the international market by demonstrating their improved capability through EU Food and Veterinary Office inspection missions.

