



**RILAA** Red Interamericana de Laboratorios de Análisis de Alimentos  
**INFAL** Inter-American Network of Food Analysis Laboratories



EVERYTHING ABOUT

# INTERAMERICAN NETWORK OF FOOD ANALYSIS LABORATORIES

## Background

Unsafe or nutritionally inadequate food supply constitutes a major threat to public health and trade in the Americas. Each year, millions of citizens suffer from food-borne diseases caused by the consumption of unsafe food. The recurrent exposure to chemical substances and toxins from food might lead to the development of chronic health diseases which undermine the social and economic development of a country. The implementation of coherent food control systems with suitable laboratory infrastructure are necessary to enforce standards and regulations and ensure that food sold in the Region is wholesome and safe.

The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) has worked for more than a century providing technical cooperation to countries in the Americas building health capacities for self-sufficiency transcending south-south cooperation. The importance of laboratory networking was recognized back in 1997, when representatives from 24 countries in the Americas and six international agencies, unanimously approved the establishment of the **Interamerican Network of Food Analysis Laboratories (INFAL)**.

## What is the INFAL?

The INFAL was created as an interaction mechanism among food analysis laboratories in the Americas to strengthen their analytical capabilities by mutual support to ensure food safety, protect consumer's health and promote international trade.

The mission of the INFAL is to promote and strengthen the technical competence of food safety and quality laboratories in the region of the Americas, supporting the development and interaction between laboratories within national food safety programs to protect consumer's health and facilitate trade.



## Objectives

- Achieve the methodological equivalence of food analysis laboratories.
- Promote the implementation of equivalent quality management systems in INFAL laboratories.
- Strengthen technical-scientific cooperation among countries.
- Organize and promote training and continuous education programs exchanging experiences and resources available in the region.
- Support the creation of national networks.
- Maintain an information system for the members of the INFAL.

## Membership

The members of the INFAL are the official food analysis laboratories of the Americas appointed for the control and surveillance of the quality and safety of food. The incorporation of a country into the INFAL is voluntary, and upon prior agreement, the laboratory or organization commits to the accomplishment of the agreed programmed activities. The continuation of the laboratory in the INFAL depends on the active participation in its programs.

Laboratories that fulfill the INFAL statute's requirements can become direct members of the INFAL. Food analysis laboratories from national laboratory networks and decentralized offices can also become members of the INFAL.

To date, there are more than 250 laboratories from 31 countries in the Americas, members of the INFAL that regularly meet via web-based platforms, seminars, workshops, assemblies or through other activities promoted by the INFAL.





## Organization

The network's organization, as well as the rules for participation set forth in its statutes, are based on equity of privilege which are guaranteed by:



### Assembly

Is the INFAL highest authority and is integrated by all member laboratories who meet every two years and define the strategies and priorities of the network.



### Ex-officio Secretariat

Is hosted by PAHO/WHO and provides oversight and technical support to the network tasks, as well as supports its operations.



### Executive Committee

Is integrated by seven laboratories from different member states who are elected by the Assembly to follow and guide the network biannual action plans.



### National Networks

Are INFAL laboratory members that promote the creation of National Laboratory Networks within the National Food Safety Frameworks.



### Technical Groups

Are created on ad-hoc basis depending on the emerging food safety issues in the Region. To date, there are three technical groups: Microbiology, Chemistry and Quality Technical Groups.



### Advisory Group

Is composed by technical and financial partners selected by the Executive Committee which collaborate with the INFAL to facilitate the implementation of action plans.



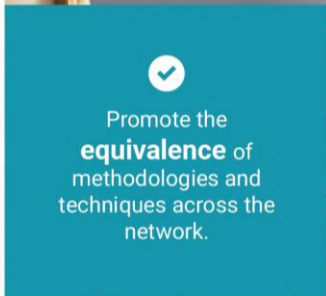
## Main INFAL Activities



Promote **technical cooperation** among laboratory members.



Create **tools and documents** to improve laboratory's quality systems.



Promote the **equivalence** of methodologies and techniques across the network.



Organize **workshops, seminars and courses** on technical subjects.



Promote the participation of laboratories in **proficiency testing schemes**.



Outreach emerging **food safety** issues.



**Contact**  
INFAL *ex officio* Secretariat

**Address:**  
PANAFTOSA-OPS/OMS - Av. Governador Leonel de Moura Brizola, 7778  
São Bento - CEP 25040-002 – Duque de Caxias - RJ – Brasil

**E-mail/Web:**  
rilaa@paho.org  
www.rilaa.net

**Phone:**  
+55 (21) 3661-9000  
Fax: +55 (21) 3661-9001

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  RILAA\_INFAL  
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PANAFTOSA  
Pan American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Center  
Veterinary Public Health