



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

APPLICANTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT¹

Addendum

An application for observer status in the SPS Committee was received on 2 December 2019 from the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). Information provided by AOAD is summarized below.

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1. Membership includes 22 Arab members as listed below:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Algeria** | 9. Lebanon** | 17. Somalia** |
| 2. Bahrain (Kingdom of)* | 10. Libya** | 18. Sudan** |
| 3. Comoros** | 11. Mauritania* | 19. Syrian Arab Republic** |
| 4. Djibouti* | 12. Morocco** | 20. Tunisia* |
| 5. Egypt* | 13. Palestine*** | 21. United Arab Emirates* |
| 6. Iraq** | 14. Oman* | 22. Yemen* |
| 7. Jordan* | 15. Qatar* | |
| 8. Kuwait (the State of)* | 16. Saudi Arabia (Kingdom of)* | |

* WTO Member.

** WTO Observer.

*** Not a WTO Member or Observer.

2 MANDATE, SCOPE AND AREA OF WORK

2.1. AOAD's mandate is centered on agriculture; Khartoum was selected to host the organization's headquarters. Precisely, the Arab countries took this step of establishing AOAD driven by the need for coordination of their agricultural policies, natural and human resources as well as to foster economic development, aiming at achieving the ultimate goal of fully integrated Arab economies.

2.2. The organization's goals, as defined at its establishment, are aligned along two dimensions, nationally as well as regionally. At the national level, AOAD is tasked to assist member countries in developing and enhancing their respective agricultural sectors. At the regional level, AOAD is to facilitate coordination within the agricultural sector amongst its member States, with the aim of achieving a fully integrated Arab economy and food self-sufficiency for the region.

2.3. The overall objective of AOAD is to identify and develop linkages among Arab countries in all agricultural and agriculture-related activities, including the following:

- Developing the natural and human resources available in the agricultural sector, and enhancing their output based on technical know-how;
- Increasing agricultural productivity, both in the animal and plant sector, and attaining full agricultural integration among Arab countries;

¹ This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the position of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

- Facilitating exchange of agricultural products among Arab countries;
- Increasing agricultural production in order to attain food self-sufficiency;
- Supporting agricultural projects and processing industries;
- Bettering the living conditions of workers in the agricultural sector.

2.4. Convinced that the joint Arab cooperation in agriculture should have a long-term strategic framework, the Arab leaders issued in 2005 the Algiers Summit Resolution. The Summit instructed the AOAD's General Assembly to prepare the Strategy for Sustainable Arab Agricultural Development for the Upcoming Two Decades (2005–2025), and this Strategy is currently under reconsideration to further underline AOAD's role in regard to the promotion and implementation of SPS measures.

2.5. Overall the strategy covers the following components that are directly relevant to and linked to the SPS agenda:

- Provision of safe food;
- Increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural Arab products in international markets.

3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORK OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

3.1. AOAD fully acknowledges the vital role of agriculture in facilitating Arab trade and the potentials of enhanced domestic, intra-regional and international Arab trade in food. In this regard the organization has always been fully aware of the trade dimension of its agricultural-focused mandate.

3.2. Undoubtedly, this trade-related aspect of AOAD's regional agenda has been reinforced by the accelerated developments in global trade, especially also in regard to the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The new principles of the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) were consequently in 1997 also addressed in the declaration of the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area (PAFTA) under the League of Arab States (LAS).

3.3. Subsequently to the conclusion of PAFTA it was in 2005 when Arab countries agreed to zero tariffs among themselves, and more focus was put on tackling non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to trade. Hence the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of LAS recently took the decision to establish a SPS and TBT Committee and to include legal SPS and TBT provisions in the PAFTA.

3.4. Considering AOAD's mandate and the role it is playing by acting as technical implementation arm for any SPS-related work within LAS, AOAD has become an active member of the SPS committee at regional level and it is hence now striving to further enhance its engagement and to assure that the Arab region is fully integrated and represented at international level by becoming an observer in the SPS Committee.

3.5. Overall, AOAD's interventions in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures focus on the following:

- Conduct of relevant regional studies;
- Organization of national and regional technical and policy workshops;
- Conduct of trainings for relevant technicians and decision makers of the region;
- Facilitation of meetings and expert-working groups to foster coordination and collaboration in the SPS field within the Arab region;
- Development of guidance manuals and technical report and dissemination among all its members;
- Awareness raising and dissemination of international best practices in the SPS field.

4 RECIPROCITY

4.1. All documents related to SPS activities are available on the AOAD website. Furthermore, the AOAD offers to grant the WTO Secretariat observer status in the meetings of its governing General Assembly as well as broad access to AOAD documents and proceedings.
