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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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ACTIONS AIMED AT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE (IICA)

The following communication, received on 22 June 2018, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

The observer organizations of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to promote the understanding and implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). The IICA would like to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

1 SUPPORT FOR MULTILATERAL FORUMS ASSOCIATED WITH SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

- Interregional Codex Colloquium: On 5 and 6 June, an interregional codex colloquium was held for countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and North America. It was attended by 52 delegates from 35 countries, two regional organizations and a Vice-Chairperson of Codex Alimentarius.

The purpose of the event was to foster dialogue between the CCLAC, CCAFRICA and North America regions on the most important issues addressed during the Codex Alimentarius Commission meeting (CAC41), and to identify topics of common interest in order to strengthen the negotiating position of the regions. The Colloquium was funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- Virtual Codex Colloquia: In the period 20 February to 22 March, four virtual Codex Alimentarius colloquia, relating to four different Codex committees (CCFA – CCCF – CCRVDF – CCPR), were held. On average, 27 countries and 54 delegates participated, signalling success in the use of information and communication technologies for coordinating and fostering dialogue between countries. These events received technical and financial support from USDA.
- Promotion of participation in Codex Alimentarius meetings: During this first half year, the Programme to Promote Participation in Codex Alimentarius Meetings facilitated the participation of 15 countries in the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF), of three countries in the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR), and of 17 countries in the Codex Commission (CAC41). The purpose of this programme, which receives financial support from USDA, is to help the CCLAC countries and region to increase and improve their participation in the respective meetings.
- Virtual coordination sessions: The support that IICA provides to CCLAC countries in the area of communication and coordination includes, prior to each Codex meeting, the provision of a virtual communication platform to enable coordination between the countries.

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- Twinning programmes: Between June and August, we are finalizing the twinning programmes that are intended to build capacities in regard to the Codex Alimentarius. The beneficiary countries will be Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and the Dominican Republic, while the cooperating countries are Chile, the United States and Brazil. The twinning projects will focus on the development of institutional, scientific and promotional capacities.
 - Workshop on the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support trade in food and future guidelines on the equivalence of systems: With support from the Government of New Zealand, this initiative was implemented in the interests of fostering the exchange of experience between the countries of Central America and the Pacific Alliance, and of discussing the Codex standards in greater detail. The workshop was held on 19 and 20 June in Costa Rica and was attended by 11 countries.
 - IPPC regional workshops for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean: From 28 to 31 August, a review of CIPF standards will be held in Natal (Brazil) for countries of Latin America. Twenty countries from the region will be able to participate in the event, which will be organized jointly by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Andean Community (CAN), the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE), the International Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA) and Brazil's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO). There will also be a review of standards for the countries of the Caribbean region, to be held in the week of 17 September in Puerto España (Trinidad and Tobago), in which all the countries of the region that belong to the CIPM may participate.
 - The WTO dispute settlement system and its relationship to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures: On 13 June, a virtual technical forum on the WTO dispute settlement system and its relationship to SPS measures was held. The event was organized by the IICA, the WTO through the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC), the Division of Legal Affairs and the Secretary of the SPS Committee. The Government of Canada also participated through "Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC)".

The purpose of the event was to foster an opportunity for reflection on the WTO's dispute settlement mechanisms and their contribution to SPS systems, especially in developing countries. Event participants analysed the dispute settlement mechanism and the instruments available to the WTO's SPS Committee, such as the Catalogue of Instruments for the Management of SPS Issues.

2 OTHER ACTIVITIES

2.1 Institutional modernization

- Jamaica: From 15 to 22 January, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Performance, Vision and Strategy tools were implemented in the areas of plant health, food safety and veterinary services.
- Nicaragua: From 2 to 13 April, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Performance, Vision and Strategy tools were implemented in the areas of plant health and food safety.
- Dominican Republic: From 23 April to 5 May, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Performance, Vision and Strategy tools were implemented in the areas of plant health, food safety and veterinary services.
- As part of a process of ongoing improvement and with the aim of optimizing financial and technical resources and broadening the scope of the PVS process, the IICA has adapted its tools for veterinary services, plant health and food safety to the virtual modality in English and Spanish.

2.2 International standards and regulations in regard to SPS measures

2.2.1 United States/FSMA

- A training for trainers course on the FSMA rule on fresh produce was held from 6 to 9 March, with USAID and USDA FAS resources and with support from JIFSAN.
- An FSMA workshop for importers was held on 3 April with the aim of enhancing their understanding of the FSMA rules on foreign supplier verification, sanitary transportation, fresh produce and preventive controls for human foods.
- Strategic FSMA workshops were held in the Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados) and South America (Paraguay, Peru and Colombia). The first of these were held in Jamaica on 31 May and 1 June, and in Colombia on 21 and 22 June, for the purpose of working with government representatives to identify a relevant plan of action at the local and regional levels.
- The following actions are being implemented within the framework of the strategic alliance with the FDA:
 - Webinar on the FSMA rule on foreign supplier verification – 17 April.
 - Webinar on the Accredited Third-party Certification Programme and Voluntary Qualified Importer Programme – 10 July.
 - Training for trainers workshop on the regulations governing fresh produce in Mexico, with support from JIFSAN and in coordination with SENASICA.
 - A regional workshop will be held from 17 to 21 September to support the training of lead trainers on the rule governing fresh produce for Latin America and the Caribbean, with support from JIFSAN and the Fresh Produce Alliance.
 - During the period 13 to 31 August, training workshops will be held for lead instructors on the preventive controls for human foods rule, with support from the Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance, in Mexico, Chile and Ecuador.

2.2.2 Canada/Regulatory framework

- On 26 and 27 February and 2 March, with support from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, technical assistance workshops on the Canadian regulatory framework for food safety were held in Costa Rica, Mexico and Guatemala.

2.2.3 Webinar on electronic certification of SPS measures

- To be held on 28 June for the purpose of sharing information with Caribbean countries that are using the ASYCUDA system for the customs clearance of agricultural products. This initiative is being carried out in association with the Government of the Netherlands and FAO.

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