

**ACTIONS AIMED AT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT
ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY
MEASURES (SPS AGREEMENT)**

Information Submitted by the Inter-American Institute
for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

The following communication, dated 16 June 2004, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

1. The observer organizations of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) are invited to submit reports on activities they have carried out to contribute to the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. At this meeting, the IICA wishes to focus on two complementary activities that aim to improve implementation of the SPS Agreement.

Support for the active participation of the countries of the Americas in the SPS Committee

2. In conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and with the collaboration of five other countries noted for their active participation in the SPS Committee (Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and Chile), the IICA continues to implement the Initiative for the Americas on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in the context of the World Trade Organization.

3. The Initiative, which has held six meetings since implementation started, focuses on the strengthening of institutions, the development of leadership and coordination between public and private sector institutions. The strategy adopted for its implementation is based on the exchange of experience and the strengthening of alliances for cooperation between countries (horizontal cooperation or country-to-country cooperation).

4. The Initiative grew out of the observation that countries can make major changes to achieve effective international participation and implementation of the SPS Agreement not solely through heavy financial investment but by building capacities and strengthening institutions.

5. Document G/SPS/GEN/427 was the first report submitted to the SPS Committee showing some of the results achieved. For the present meeting a new document has been drawn up outlining five basic activities observed in developing countries that have succeeded in positioning themselves and in playing an active part in the SPS Committee. The Initiative encompasses 34 countries in the Americas, six of which play the role of co-operators and facilitators.

Strengthening official agricultural health and food safety services by developing a common vision and joint action

6. The other activity the IICA wishes to outline is the development and application of an instrument to secure high standards in official agricultural health and food safety services taking into account countries' current requirements, one of the most important being implementation of the SPS Agreement.

7. The instrument will enable the public and private sectors to develop a common vision and will facilitate the establishment of a joint strategy to strengthen official services. So far, Mexico – the first country to do so – has embarked on implementation and the Central American countries will soon do likewise following an express request from the Ministers of Agriculture of the region.

8. The OIE is lending it cooperation in the area of animal health, and the instrument is now covered by the STDF as an instrument for country cooperation.

9. The IICA chose these two activities to present to the Committee because thanks to their coverage and characteristics they assist countries in targeting and optimizing scarce resources and help international organizations to channel their cooperation on the basis of an agreed agenda of priorities.

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