

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

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

The following communication, received on 19 February 2007, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

1. 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 further the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. The IICA wishes to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

SPS INITIATIVE FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. In conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and with the collaboration of six countries that act as a steering committee (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico and the United States), the IICA continues to implement the SPS Initiative for the Americas (the Initiative).

3. The Initiative, which came into force in October 2002, has now contributed to 14 consecutive SPS Committee meetings, supporting the active participation of the countries of the Americas and helping them build their SPS capacity. For this particular meeting, the Initiative arranged for 28 capital-based experts from 28 countries of the Americas to participate, and 25 of them actually did so. With the Committee's last meeting included, the Initiative has benefited a total of 209 capital-based experts, 63 per cent specializing in agriculture, 31 per cent in trade and 6 per cent in health.

4. All of the 28 countries benefiting from the Initiative for the Americas report having an institutional mechanism for discussing or analysing issues relating to the work programmes of international organizations. This is undoubtedly one of the most important results achieved by the Initiative and the countries themselves. The IICA and the countries of the hemisphere must continue to strengthen these coordination mechanisms, as they can serve to ensure the sustained participation of these countries in international forums.

5. Sixty-one per cent of the 28 countries employ at least one official whose chief responsibility is to ensure follow-up of the SPS Agreement. Consequently, the main challenge facing the IICA and its member countries is to build, on a permanent basis, the capacity of officials responsible for

international SPS-related issues, while promoting the advantages and merits of investing in this resource in countries that have not yet done so.

6. Fifteen countries (54 per cent) have indicated that available resources compete to be assigned to other activities and that limited resources are available for ongoing SPS Committee follow-up, including transparency-related activities. None of the countries have said that they have the resources necessary for participation on a continuous basis and 32 per cent (nine countries) say they have resources for transparency-related activities, but with only partial SPS Committee follow-up.

7. Thirty-six per cent of the countries have an established agenda on key SPS Committee issues and follow it up to a certain extent. Twenty-nine per cent have prioritized issues in accordance with national interests and have carried out a certain amount of analysis in this respect.

8. With the Initiative soon drawing to a close, the countries face the challenge of maintaining the progress they have made over the last four years, without turning to external financial resources.

9. For further information on the Initiative, contact: erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), maureen.obando@iica.int (Maureen Obando) or henry.schmick@usda.gov (Henry Schmick).

SUPPORT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

10. The IICA has various bulletins and channels of communication to promote the exchange of information on SPS matters and the work of the WTO, the relevant international organizations, and regional organizations.

11. The electronic bulletin **CODEX-MSF Opinion Forum** specializes in events taking place in the Codex Alimentarius and the SPS Committee. The bulletin reports and analyses standards and activities and aims to enhance the dissemination and study of these matters. Its readership comprises first and foremost the countries of South America, but it is available to all members at www.iica.org.ar. For further information, contact mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

12. The information system **AGROSALUD** is dedicated to the distribution of information on agricultural health and food safety, and the areas it covers include the standards set and actions carried out within the WTO and relevant international organizations. It is available at www.infoagro.net/salud in Spanish, and www.agrihealth.ws in English. For further information, contact ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

13. The IICA Office in Argentina continues to lend technical support to the Secretariat for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of Argentina (SAGPyA), specifically to the Chair of the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), and the SPS Enquiry Point in Argentina. For more information, contact mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

14. From 30 October to 2 November, the IICA, in conjunction with the OIE, the IPPC and the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, supported a regional workshop organized by the WTO in Colombia. The workshop was attended by ten South American countries. The European Union also contributed to this event. For further details, contact erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

15. In December 2006, the IICA lent its support to the Agricultural and Livestock Services of Chile at a training session for experts and decision-makers involved with the Codex Committee at national level. For further details, contact erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños) or mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

16. From 20 to 23 November, the IICA supported an international workshop in Colombia for the exchange of successful SPS experiences, its purpose being to establish modernization policies in the various institutions concerned with agricultural health and food safety. For further details, contact jaime.flores@iica.int.ve (Jaime Flores).

17. In Paraguay, the IICA supported the institutional strengthening of official services in various fields, such as the new organizational structure, the training plan and international relations. Support proposals were based *inter alia* on the results obtained from the application of the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) tool for phytosanitary protection organizations.

18. At present, the IICA also supports the implementation of a traceability system, the improvement of laboratories and the development of the organic sector. For further details, contact carlos.franco@iica.int (Carlos Franco).

19. In Jamaica, the IICA, in conjunction with the FAO, the USDA and the Jamaican Ministry of Agriculture, lent its support to a simulation exercise on the entry of Avian Influenza. An evaluation of veterinary services was also carried out jointly with the OIE, using the Performance, Vision and Strategy tool developed in conjunction with that organization. For further details, contact carol.thomas@iica.int (Carol Thomas).

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