

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**PROCEDURE TO MONITOR THE PROCESS
OF INTERNATIONAL HARMONIZATION**

Second Annual Report¹

A. INTRODUCTION

1. At its meeting of 15-16 October 1997, the SPS Committee adopted a provisional procedure to monitor the process of international harmonization and the use of international standards, guidelines or recommendations, as provided for in Articles 3.5 and 12.4 of the SPS Agreement.² At its 7-8 July 1999 meeting, the Committee decided to extend the provisional monitoring procedure for at least another two years, to review the operation of the provisional procedure by July 2001, and to determine at that time whether to continue with the provisional procedure, amend it, or develop another one.³

B. ISSUES

2. At its meeting of 7-8 July 1999, the Committee also adopted the First Annual Report.⁴ This report summarized several standards-related issues that the Committee had considered, based on Members' responses to a questionnaire prepared by the Secretariat.⁵ The Committee decided to bring these issues to the attention of the relevant standard-setting organizations.

3. Since the First Annual Report was adopted, no new issues have been raised by Members.

C. RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE RELEVANT STANDARD-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS

4. All three standard-setting organizations replied to the request from the SPS Committee to consider the identified standard-related issues. Their responses were circulated in G/SPS/GEN/137. In addition, the organizations provided updates on these issues at the November 1999 and March 2000 Committee meetings and in submissions. The information provided on each issue is summarized below.⁶

¹ As agreed by the Committee at its meeting of 21-22 June 2000, the Secretariat revised the draft Second Annual Report to include additional relevant information provided at that meeting (G/SPS/W/107/Rev.1). The revised draft report was circulated for approval on an ad referendum basis, as the Committee requested. Members were asked to submit comments by 6 October 2000. No comments were submitted by that date. The report is therefore considered as adopted.

² G/SPS/11.

³ G/SPS/14.

⁴ G/SPS/13.

⁵ G/SPS/W/100.

⁶ Codex responses are from G/SPS/R/17, para. 42 and G/SPS/R/18, para. 58; IPPC responses are from G/SPS/R/17, para. 43, G/SPS/GEN/146 and G/SPS/GEN/183; and OIE responses are from G/SPS/R/17, para. 44, G/SPS/R/18, para. 51, G/SPS/GEN/145 and Add.1.

Requirement for control of Infectious Bursal Virus (IBDV) in cooked chicken meat – Response from the OIE

5. The Bureau of the Code Commission noted that Chapter 3.6.1. of the *International Animal Health Code* (the *Code*) provided recommendations on international trade in domestic birds, day-old chicks and hatching eggs from domestic birds, but remained silent on the subject of products derived from birds, and in particular on chicken meat. To decide whether it would be appropriate to include provisions on chicken meat in the aforementioned Chapter, the Bureau asked experts from the OIE Reference Laboratories for infectious bursal disease for information on the probability of finding the causal virus in fresh meat obtained from chickens that were healthy at the time of slaughter, the effect of refrigeration and freezing on the survival of the virus in chicken meat, etc. During its January 2000 meeting, the OIE International Animal Health Code Commission examined the replies received from these experts. The Commission concluded that, given the current state of scientific knowledge, it was not in a position to develop a draft standard on the subject, as the available information did not enable it to determine whether or not the product in question poses a risk of transmission of the IBD virus. The Commission considered that additional scientific research was needed before it could deliver a definitive opinion on the matter. The OIE does not undertake research itself, but rather relies on Member countries for that purpose. The Code Commission will review this issue at its September 2000 meeting.

Definition of "quarantine pest"⁷ – Response from the IPPC

6. Work on a definition for the term "official control", undertaken as a result of the recommendation of the SPS Committee, resulted in a draft definition and guidelines for the interpretation and application of the concept. These were approved by the IPPC's Interim Standards Committee in May 2000 and were subsequently distributed to governments for consultation. The IPPC Secretariat accepts comments until the end of October 2000. The document will then be reviewed again by the Interim Standards Committee in light of the comments received from governments and will be modified if necessary for submission to the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM). The ICPM could adopt the definition and guidelines at its third Session in April 2001.

Chlortetracycline (CTC) residues in pork and pork products – Response from Codex

7. The Committee on Veterinary Drug Residues in Foods considered the question of Tetracycline. The only maximum residue levels for Tetracycline, which were submitted to the Commission for provisional adoption at Step five, concerned fish and prawns. As regards pigmeat, cattle, sheep and chicken, the recommended maximum residue levels were considered by the March 2000 session of the Committee on Veterinary Drug Residues in Food.

Bacilli and other organisms in canned/bottled products, including jams – Response from Codex

8. At its November 1999 meeting, the CCFH also considered the question of *bacilli* and other organisms in canned/bottled products including jams. The CCFH drew the attention of the SPS Committee to the Codex Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods, and recommended that the Committee on Processed Foods and Vegetables proceed with the revision of the existing standards.

Frequency of controls to be carried out on bulls in collection centres (brucellosis, tuberculosis, leukosis, IBR) – Response from the OIE

⁷ This definition contains the term "officially controlled", which was a source of concern for some Members.

9. The health controls to be carried out on bulls at artificial insemination centres are described both in the *Code* chapters dealing with diseases transmissible by semen and in the appendices relating to artificial insemination in bovines. The International Animal Health Code Commission discussed with an expert the need to re-examine the provisions of the *International Animal Health Code* relating to bovine, porcine and small ruminant semen, taking care to ensure consistency between the chapters on animal diseases and the appendices on semen. A progress report on the work undertaken is due to be given by the expert in question at the next meeting of the Bureau of the International Animal Health Code Commission, to be held in September 2000.

Benzoic acid as a preservative in sauces – Response from Codex

10. Safe levels for benzoic acid are under consideration in the Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants. The March 2000 Beijing meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants (CCFAC) produced a draft standard of 1,000 milligrams per kilogram for benzoic acid approved for use in sauces and like products. The revised draft of the general standard for food additives was circulated in November 1999 and governments were asked to comment before the March 2000 meeting. CCFAC agreed to invite additional comments on the general standard for food additives for further consideration at its next Session.

Certification requirements for origin of animals – Response from the OIE

11. The International Animal Health Code Commission intends to make use of the scientific articles on traceability of animals and products of animal origin that are due to be published in issue No. 2 of Volume 20 of the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review* to consider the subject in greater depth.

Certification regarding the absence of certain pathogens in raw meat products – Response from Codex

12. The Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) considered the question of certification of raw meat products regarding the absence of pathogens. The CCFH recognized that it was scientifically impossible to provide such certification, as it concerned only one step of the HACCP system in the framework of risk management, and recommended adherence to good manufacturing practice as specified in the General Principles of Food Hygiene. The CCFH concluded that at this stage there was no need for a specific text.

Certification requirements for diseases for which national control measures may not exist (meat products) – Response from the OIE

13. With regard to certification requirements on diseases transmitted through meat and meat products, the Bureau of the Code Commission noted that the relevant recommendations were given disease-by-disease in the various chapters of the *Code*, and that the recommendations should not be restricted to List A diseases.
