

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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

Fifth 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 The Committee decided to extend the provisional monitoring procedure for a further two-year period in July 1999, and again in July 2001.³ On 25 June 2003, the Committee agreed to further extend the provisional procedure for 36 months, and to review its operation in July 2006 to determine at that time whether to continue with the provisional procedure, amend it, or develop another one.⁴

2. The Committee has previously adopted four annual reports on the monitoring procedure.⁵ These reports summarized several standards-related issues that the Committee had considered and the responses received from the relevant standard-setting organizations.

B. NEW ISSUES

3. Two new issues have been raised since the adoption of the Fourth Annual Report. The first issue is with regard to low pathogenic strains of avian influenza, and the second concerns risk management options for products with no Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) levels or Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs).

Low pathogenic strains of avian influenza

4. At the meeting of the Committee on 7-8 November 2002, the United States proposed that the Committee request the OIE to revise Chapter 2.1.14 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code⁶ (Terrestrial Code) to include procedures for low-pathogenic strains of avian influenza (G/SPS/GEN/343). The Terrestrial Code currently deals only with highly pathogenic avian influenza.

5. The representative of the OIE reported that an expert group meeting on avian influenza had been held in Paris in the first week of November 2002. He noted that several OIE members had requested that the chapter of the Terrestrial Code dealing with avian influenza be expanded to cover low pathogenic strains and frequently traded products. At the OIE General Session in May 2003,

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

² G/SPS/11.

³ G/SPS/14 and G/SPS/17.

⁴ G/SPS/25.

⁵ These were circulated as G/SPS/13, G/SPS/16, G/SPS/18 and G/SPS/21.

⁶ Previously called the International Animal Health Code.

members agreed that further work on the proposed revised avian influenza chapter would be considered a priority for the work programme for the next year.

Management of products with no ADI or MRL

6. At the meeting of the Committee on 2-3 April 2003, and again on 24-25 June 2003, Thailand raised a concern regarding the management of products with no established ADIs or MRLs. Thailand urged Codex to pursue its efforts to provide science-based recommendations on risk management options for compounds with no ADI or MRLs as soon as possible. In particular, Thailand stressed the need to establish an operational definition of zero tolerance in the Codex system, and for collaborative efforts among countries for the development and testing of methods of analysis which would be suitable for routine enforcement use by Members.⁷

7. The representative of Codex stated that attention would be given to this issue subject to availability of resources. Internal seminars or consultations would be convened in order to consider what measures should be taken in this respect. The representative of Codex noted that a large part of the problem was due to changes in available analytical methodologies.

C. RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE RELEVANT STANDARD-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS

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

8. In June 2002, the OIE informed the Committee that infectious bursal disease had been included in its work programme for the following year.⁸ The OIE was waiting for research results in order to progress in this area, but had not yet received information. At the Committee meetings in April and June 2003, the representative of the OIE recalled that OIE members had agreed to send relevant information or risk analysis on poultry meat and IBVD disease control mechanisms to the OIE. Unfortunately, to date no such information had been provided to the OIE. He encouraged members to provide information on this disease to help expedite the work in this area .

⁷ G/SPS/R/29.

⁸ G/SPS/R/27.