

**ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE WTO AGREEMENT ON
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

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

The following communication, received on 5 March 2010, is being distributed at the request of IICA.

1. The observer organizations of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are invited to submit reports on activities they have accomplished to foster an understanding of the SPS Agreement and to promote its implementation. IICA wishes to put forward a number of actions or activities which it considers to be of interest to this Committee.

I. TRAINING IN INSPECTION AND PHYTOSANITARY HAZARD PROFILES

2. A methodology was devised in the framework of the IICA STDF 108 project for developing phytosanitary hazard profiles at the border post level. This methodology is based on two fundamental principles: (i) officials at border posts, who are called upon to take rapid decisions on phytosanitary and trade matters with little information, should be provided with the necessary technical tools; (ii) a system needs to be developed to help facilitate trade at the border posts or checkpoints.

3. The dissemination and training process was conducted through regional workshops covering nine countries, five of them from the southern region (Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) and four from the Andean region (Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru). A total of about 100 experts were trained to serve as trainers in their respective countries.

4. The workshop for the countries of the southern region took place in Asunción, Paraguay, in November 2009, and was organized by the National Plant and Seed Quality and Health Service of Paraguay (SENAVE), the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

5. The workshop for the Andean countries took place in Lima, Peru, in February, with the cooperation of the National Agricultural Health Service of Peru (SENASA).

6. The objectives of the workshops were:

- To build up capacity in the preparation of phytosanitary hazard profiles (a new concept for rapid specific hazard risk. Assessments needed at the border posts or commercial ports of entry of perishable goods);

- to develop a team of experts in the various countries that are able to disseminate the methodology in their organizations;
- to create trade facilitation tools that are compatible with the protection of phytosanitary status;
- to enhance the capacity to interrelate and implement ISPMs, and to introduce appropriate inspection procedures to strengthen effective performance in the region;
- to provide updated information on capacities, standards and operating procedures used in the region for phytosanitary inspection, identifying strengths and needs.

7. A similar workshop is also being organized for Ecuador outside the STDF 108 project, and it is hoped that the domino effect of this initiative in other countries of the Andean region, the Caribbean and the central region can be enhanced.

8. The phytosanitary hazard profile manual can be found in Spanish at www.iica.int (the English version will be available shortly).

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II. PROJECT TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN CODEX ALIMENTARIUS MEETINGS

9. In collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the IICA has implemented a project to promote effective participation of the countries of the Americas and to help them to profit from the different Codex Alimentarius committees.

10. To date, the project has included four committees (Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (CCFFV - Mexico), Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSU - Germany), Food Hygiene (CCFH - United States), and Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS - Australia). A second stage is being launched for 2010 which includes the committees on General Principles (CCGP - France), Pesticide Residues (CCPR - China) and Food Contaminants (CCFC - Turkey).

11. Since this is a competitive fund with limited resources, funding has so far been provided for the participation of 13 countries in the different committees.

12. To date, the following conclusions and recommendations have emerged for strengthening the Codex institutional framework in the different countries:

- (a) A considerable number of countries do not have technical sub-committees or if they do, they are not operational. Consequently, it is difficult for a national focal point to coordinate them. The following was observed:
 - Low participation of the private sector;
 - information management problems;
 - no dissemination activities on the importance and benefits of the Codex committee;

- meetings of sub-committees very sporadic;
 - virtually no consumer participation;
 - shortage of manuals of procedures and internal regulations for the national Codex committees as well as for the enquiry points and the technical sub-committees;
- (b) there is a pressing need to work on the management of the national Codex committees;
- (c) it is important to focus on the Codex working groups. The progress made in those groups essentially guides the work of the committees;
- (d) the preparation of delegates needs to be reinforced, particularly if they are new delegates. Fostering encounters among delegates through video conferencing, electronic forums or communities of practice to facilitate the exchange of information and examination of subjects of interest could have a considerable impact;
- (e) a permanent training programme should be developed on good participation practices and Codex standard-setting procedures;
- (f) post-event follow-up should be ensured and the results of the meeting should be disseminated in the country by the participating delegates, and the next steps to be taken in the framework of the National Codex Committee should be established;
- (g) a procedural or management manual should be drawn up as a guide to the newly-formed national committees or to systems that do not have a national Codex committee;
- (h) support should be provided for dissemination activities relating to the international standards-setting process of the Codex Alimentarius and other international reference organizations;
- (i) cooperation with the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), as a mechanism for building regional consensus, should be strengthened.

13. The strategy for implementing this project is described in annex.

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III. DEVELOPMENT OF MANUALS ON GOOD PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

14. The IICA has developed four manuals on good participation practices for the meetings of the WTO SPS Committee, the Codex Alimentarius, the IPPC and the OIE. All of the manuals are designed for officials with little or no experience in official representation and should serve as a management support tool. The manuals can be found at <http://www.iica.int>.

IV. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

15. The electronic newsletter CODEX-SPS *Opinion Forum* specializes in the topics discussed at Codex Alimentarius and WTO SPS Committee meetings. This newsletter disseminates and analyses the standards and actions defined at these events with the aim of increasing information and promoting the study of these issues. The newsletter is available to all member countries at www.iica.org.ar. For further information contact mlfonalleras@iica.int (Lourdes Fonalleras).

16. In Paraguay, a periodic electronic newsletter reports on the activities of the National SPS Technical Committee and on SPS developments. For further information, contact Carlos Franco at carlos.franco@iica.int.

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ANNEX

Programme Implementation Diagram

