

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

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

The following communication, received on 8 October 2010, is being circulated at the request of the 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 the activities they have carried out to promote understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. The IICA wishes to present some of the actions or activities it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

1. Closure of STDF 108 Project

2. The final report on the STDF 108 Project was presented to the WTO. The Project undertook numerous activities pertaining to sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) in 28 IICA member countries. Its outcomes included developing 26 national SPS agendas by applying the IICA's new PVS tool for national SPS systems, and the implementation of four regional sub-projects. Furthermore, the following documents were published in English and Spanish:

- Handbooks of good practices for participation in international SPS forums (Codex, IPPC, OIE and the WTO SPS Committee);
- methodology for creating phytosanitary hazard profiles for plants;
- an audit manual for national notification systems;
- procedural manual for National Codex Committees;

Moreover, a Codex and SPS information management system was adapted to the institutional structure of another five countries and numerous technical personnel were trained in the aforementioned methods and topics across 28 countries of the Americas.

3. This project is far from over because its topics are such that many of its activities can be implemented and followed up over time. Three more national STDF projects are soon to begin, with the IICA as the implementing agency. They will be located in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Colombia. For further information, please contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

2. Audits for notification processes

4. The IICA has initiated a process of application of the audit manual for SPS notifications in preparation for the workshop on transparency. The process was begun in Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Peru and Paraguay. This manual is intended to provide countries with a methodology for evaluating the different elements that positively or negatively impact their notification procedures, and for identifying the actions needed to improve on the current situation. For further information, please contact: erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

3. Support for the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in studying the draft phytosanitary standards

5. The annual meeting of Caribbean countries to discuss IPPC Standards was organized by the IICA in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 6 to 10 September 2010. Fourteen countries participated in the meeting, which was the second such event, a similar meeting having taken place at the IICA headquarters from 30 August to 3 September with 19 countries of Latin America participating. As a result of these events and other training and institutional upgrading activities, the IICA and the IPPC are looking into the possibility of signing an agreement to offer cooperation to the countries of the Americas. For further information, please contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins).

4. Support for participation in Codex Alimentarius meetings

6. The third phase of the project to support the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in participating in Codex Alimentarius Committee meetings is now under way. It encompasses the meetings on food hygiene, food additives, food contaminants, pesticide residues, and those of another committee that will be reported on subsequently.

7. The United States Department of Agriculture is providing 75 per cent of the funds for this phase and the IICA 25 per cent. This project is considered as a competitive fund, because the available resources allow for support to no more than five countries per committee, whereas there are 32 countries that can compete for these benefits.

8. It is important to recall that the project is not aimed at building capacity through participation, but at supporting active participation and strengthening common regional interests. The countries supported are therefore those for which there is an obvious link between the significance of the topics of the committee and the constraints on their participation. Institutional and other kinds of capacity building are addressed using other strategies since participation is clearly of little effect when it comes to institutional sustainability.

9. Another similar activity, albeit not included in this project, was the support given to four countries of the Americas to enable them to participate in the upcoming meeting of the Working Group on the Labelling of Foods and Food Ingredients obtained through Certain Techniques of Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering, scheduled for November this year in Brussels, Belgium (special meeting in the framework of the Codex Committee on Labelling). In support of this process, a videoconference was held with eight countries to discuss technical aspects and country positions, and this helped invigorate the discussion at the regional level. For further information, please contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

5. Inter-agency coordination in risk communication

10. The Inter-agency meeting on risk communication took place at the IICA headquarters in San José and was attended by representatives of PAHO, OIE, UNICEF, USDA, CFIA, OCHA, CDC

and IICA. The meeting was part of the activities planned to begin developing a comprehensive risk communication programme under the IICA's Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) programme. For further information, please contact: ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Marisa Cordero).

6. Specific activities

11. On 2 and 3 September the IICA supported the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (SECAC) in holding a seminar/workshop on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, organized so as to share with the Panamanian authorities the sanitary and phytosanitary advances taking place at the Central American Customs Union and Central American Agricultural Policy levels. For further information, please contact: Alejandra.diaz@iica.int (Alejandra Diaz).

12. Support was provided in organizing and staging a regional workshop on pest risk analysis, which was undertaken jointly by SIECA, SECAC and the IICA as part of the plan to implement the Central American Agricultural Policy. The workshop took place in Honduras from 8-10 September with Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua participating. One of the outcomes of the workshop was a proposed Central American guideline on the preparation of pest risk analyses, drafted by the participants. For further information, please contact: Alejandra.diaz@iica.int (Alejandra Diaz).

13. The workshop on good practices for participation in international forums for Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname has taken place. Among the participants were Rolf Schoenert representing CFIA (Canada) and Delilah Cabb representing BAHA (Belize), as country experts. There were 45 participants in the workshop, which dealt with good participation practices for meetings of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, the International Plant Protection Convention and the Codex Alimentarius. For further information, please contact: ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Marisa Cordero).

14. Two workshops on food safety risk assessment (chemical and microbiological hazards) were held from 12-23 July, jointly organized by the IICA and the Food Processing Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The course was held for Guatemala, Mexico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica. There were 43 professionals in attendance. For further information, please contact: Ericka.calderon@iica.int (Erica Calderon).

15. Six workshops were held from 27-29 July on good practices for participation in SPS measures: three for the Central Region (plus the Dominican Republic) and three for the Andean region. The topics examined were the WTO SPS Committee, the Codex Alimentarius and the IPPC. There was an average of ten participants per country. For further information, please contact: erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

16. A course on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) was organized by SENASA and the IICA and held from 27-29 September in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The course was designed to build capacity among officials from national and provincial institutions responsible for coordinating the implementation of GAPs, and in the demonstration units in the various subregions of Argentina. The work revolved around specific targets for increasing and upgrading implementation coordinators' technical knowledge of GAPs; capacity building for GAPs coordinators in terms of transfer of technology and incentives for adopting technology transfer; updating the vision and information of SENASA and the provinces regarding the GAPs strategy and the objectives, guidelines and actions of the SENASA programme; and encouraging provinces to participate in the programme. For further information, please contact: Lourdes.fonalleras@iica.int (Lourdes Fonalleras).

17. In September, the IICA provided support to Ecuador in the form of a capacity-building module for local markets, in which 12 agri-business organizations participated. The module included topics such as the preparation of a production plan with a view to local marketing, requirements for the marketing of food in Ecuador, the importance of quality and safety for agribusiness enterprises, and the implementation of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs). In addition, the IICA supports countries through export platforms, with a view to building the capacities of small and medium-size agro-exporters. For further information, please contact: marcos.sanchez@iica.int (Marcos Sanchez).

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