

**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 9 March 2011, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

1. The observer organizations to 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. Support for participation in Codex Alimentarius meetings

2. Using resources from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the IICA is implementing a project to support participation by IICA member countries in Codex Alimentarius meetings.

3. The United States Department of Agriculture is providing 75 per cent of the funds for this phase of the project, and the IICA 25 per cent. This project is considered as a competitive fund since the available resources allow for support to no more than a few countries per committee.

4. The purpose of the project is to support active participation and strengthen common regional interests. Support is therefore given to initiatives that can be managed for that purpose by the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. The third phase of the project, currently being implemented, covers the work of committees on food hygiene, food additives, food contaminants, pesticide residues and food labelling. The fourth phase has already been announced and includes the committees on fresh fruit and vegetables, food import and export inspection and certification, and foods for special dietary uses. The end of the fourth phase in 2011 will see the culmination of three years of support for country participation in different Codex Committees (see table).

6. In addition to facilitating participation in the work of the committees, the project uses the IICA handbooks on good practices for participation and also provides for biennial courses on the Codex regulatory process. As from this year, the handbook on management of Codex committees and subcommittees for institution building will also be available to countries. This will serve to supplement active participation with capacity building.

**Project to Promote Participation by the Americas in the Codex Alimentarius
Beneficiary Countries under the Initiative**

Committee	Date	Place	Beneficiary Countries
Fresh fruit and vegetables	October 2009	Mexico	Uruguay, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Jamaica
Nutrition and foods for special dietary uses	November 2009	Germany	Bolivia, Costa Rica and Paraguay
Food hygiene	November 2009	United States	Bolivia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua and Uruguay
Food import and export inspection and certification systems	March 2010	Australia	Belize, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Peru and Uruguay
General principles	April 2010	France	Colombia*, Guatemala, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay
Pesticide residues	April 2010	China	Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay
Food contaminants**	April 2010	Turkey	Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru
Food hygiene	November-December 2010	Uganda	Chile, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru and Uruguay
Food additives	March 2011	China	Costa Rica, Saint Lucia, Colombia, Peru
Food contaminants	March 2011	Netherlands	Peru, Costa Rica, Barbados, Nicaragua
Pesticide residues	April 2011	China	Jamaica, Ecuador, Uruguay, Colombia
Labelling	May 2011	Canada	Dominica, Uruguay, Panama, Bolivia
Fresh fruit and vegetables	May 2011	Mexico	To be defined
Inspection and certification	October 2011	Australia	To be defined
Nutrition and foods for special dietary uses	November 2011	Germany	To be defined
Food hygiene	December 2011	United States	To be defined

*Colombia was one of the countries selected to participate in the 26th Meeting of the Codex Committee on General Principles. However, the Colombian delegate was unable to make the journey.

**For the Fourth Meeting of the Committee on Contaminants, air traffic was paralyzed on account of the ash cloud, so that we were obliged to suspend participation in the meeting.

7. During implementation of this project, the IICA may put forward a number of conclusions concerning projects of this type:

- (a) Support for active participation in international forums (in this case, the Codex Alimentarius) must be linked to capacity building.
- (b) Countries must "earn" their right to attend by reporting on the level of impact: otherwise, the impact of the funds used may be negligible.
- (c) A minimum structure at national level (Codex Committee) is essential to deriving benefit from these initiatives.
- (d) The exchange of experiences between countries with different levels of institutional development is extremely effective and contributes to speeding up the processes of change and empowerment in countries that are taking their first steps.
- (e) Given the political and institutional changes that take place within countries, training in international affairs must be provided at least every three years, since rotation policies mean that new staff without experience are taken on while those that have received training and learned country-representation skills leave their jobs.
- (f) Given the characteristics of some countries, it is essential to implement regional capacity-building projects.

8. It is hoped that more resources will be made available for continuation of the project, in order to promote capacity building as well as active participation. For further information, please contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

2. Food safety symposium

9. The IICA, through the Uruguay office and the Agricultural Health and Food Safety (AHFS) and agribusiness and marketing programmes, and in conjunction with the Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP) and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, organized a symposium on the safety of food of animal origin on 15 February 2011 in Montevideo, Uruguay. There were 307 participants. For further information, please contact: Lourdes.fonalleras@iica.int (Lourdes Fonalleras).

3. Leadership module on food safety

10. The third module in the second series of the Executive Leadership in Food Safety (ELFS) programme was implemented in Bogotá, Colombia. It was attended by 34 young leaders from 20 countries, together with 10 mentors, and it was organized by the IICA in cooperation with the University of Minnesota and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). For further information, please contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Marisa Cordero).

4. Support for the SPS Committee on Central American Integration

11. The IICA is continuing to provide support to the Central American countries in meetings of the SPS subgroup in the context of the Central American Customs Union Round. At those meetings, the IICA supported the development and revision of normative proposals for Central American regulations on various topics, such as good hygiene practices for unprocessed products.

The proposals have been transmitted to the WTO by the countries concerned for public discussion.
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