

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**UPDATE ON THE "MENTORING" SYSTEM OF ASSISTANCE RELATING TO
THE TRANSPARENCY PROVISIONS OF THE SPS AGREEMENT**

Note by the Secretariat¹

1. As Members may recall, the Secretariat launched a mentoring mechanism in 2008 (G/SPS/W/217). Such a mechanism was originally proposed by New Zealand (G/SPS/W/214) and strongly supported by the SPS Committee during the Workshop on Transparency held in October 2007.
2. The objective of this mechanism is to assist developing country Members in implementing and benefitting from the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement. It involves the development of an ad hoc and informal supportive relationship between individuals who have similar responsibilities as Enquiry Points and/or Notification Authorities. It does not imply any commitment to provide financial or other types of assistance, nor is it meant to replace other forms of technical assistance.
3. The Secretariat has received a total of 19 mentoring requests and nine mentoring offers. The requests are typically for assistance in submitting notifications, managing and following up on incoming notifications, and raising awareness at the national level. In light of the gap between requests and offers, we would encourage interested Members to offer assistance as mentors. Mentoring entails responding to questions, providing advice and sharing experiences with officials with similar responsibilities.
4. The Secretariat is mandated to provide an annual update to the SPS Committee on the functioning of the mentoring mechanism, based on mentoring requests and offers received, and on responses to a questionnaire by Members participating in the procedure. The Secretariat circulated a questionnaire late in 2010 to those already participating in the mechanism to get their feedback on the functioning of their mentoring arrangements. We received nine replies. The main points that emerged are the following:
 - (a) All respondents believe in the usefulness and effectiveness of the mentoring system, although the actual success of the mechanism is dependent on the proactive participation of both sides in the exercise.
 - (b) The mentor-mentee pairs have had differing experiences with respect to the intensity of communication, although most have only communicated once every three to six months or less. Most have maintained communication through email, although some have met face-to-face in the margins of the SPS Committee or through on-site visits. For some others, the process has not really started yet and this has been primarily attributed to a lack of mutual participation in the process.

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.

- (c) Other difficulties encountered included technical problems, such as emails bouncing back, as well as internal procedural requirements and staff turnover.
- (d) Lessons learned and recommendations included the need for setting concrete objectives and timetables and for Members receiving mentoring to be more proactive in identifying their needs.
- (e) Some Members suggested that the Secretariat take a more active role in facilitating the mentoring process by formulating a set of guidelines for the process as well following up on the progress of the mentoring relationship. Another suggestion was for Members involved in mentoring to provide written accounts of their experiences to share in a report provided to the Committee.

5. We would also like to inform those Members which have expressed an interest in receiving mentoring assistance that we will keep them informed of developments.

ATTACHMENT

Mentoring Pairs from Round I:

Mentee	Mentor
1. Ghana	Switzerland
2. Mozambique	Switzerland
3. Malawi	New Zealand
4. Ukraine	New Zealand
5. Armenia	New Zealand
6. Dominica	United States
7. Saudi Arabia	United States
8. Swaziland	United States
9. Peru	Argentina
10. Costa Rica	Colombia
11. Belize	Chile

Participants which responded to the questionnaire sent in 2008: Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Malawi, New Zealand and Saudi Arabia.

Mentoring Pairs from Round II:

Mentee	Mentor
12. Kenya	EU
13. Senegal	EU
14. UAE	China
15. Pakistan	China
16. Mauritius	Australia
17. Georgia	New Zealand
18. Djibouti	New Zealand
19. Bangladesh	New Zealand

Participants which responded to the questionnaire sent in 2010: Senegal, Pakistan, Switzerland, Mauritius, Malawi, European Union, Colombia, Australia and Argentina.
