
Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

APPLICANTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

Note by the Secretariat¹

Addendum

1. An application for observer status in the SPS Committee was received on 15 February 2011 from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Information provided by COMESA is summarized below.

1. Membership (19)

Burundi	Eritrea**	Malawi	Swaziland
Comoros*	Ethiopia*	Mauritius	Uganda
Djibouti	Kenya	Rwanda	Zambia
D. R. Congo	Libya*	Seychelles*	Zimbabwe
Egypt	Madagascar	Sudan*	

* *WTO Observers*

** *Not a WTO Member or Observer*

2. Mandate, Scope and Area of Work

2. COMESA was established in 1993 as a successor to the Preferential Trade Area, which was created in 1982. COMESA comprises of 19 member states with a population of 430 million. Thirteen of the COMESA member states are Members of the WTO, and five member states have observer status, and only one has neither membership nor observer status in WTO.

3. COMESA's mission is to achieve sustainable economic and social progress in all member states through increased co-operation and integration in all fields of development particularly in trade, customs and monetary affairs, transport, communication and information, technology, industry and energy, gender, agriculture, environment and natural resources.

4. The specific Mission Statement of the COMESA secretariat is: "To provide excellent technical services to COMESA in order to facilitate the region's sustained development through economic integration."

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.

3. Contribution to the Work of the SPS Committee

5. In the COMESA strategy, the agricultural sector is placed at a high priority. One of COMESA's strategic objectives is to improve access by farmers to markets, as well as to promote intra-COMESA trade and the transport of foods and goods at reasonable cost. In the short- to medium-term, the emphasis in agriculture is on the following:

- Adoption and implementation of the COMESA Agricultural Strategy;
- Harmonisation on sanitary and phytosanitary measures;
- Promotion of free trade in agricultural products;
- Promotion of agro-industries; and
- Technical support, including sharing of best practices in the production and marketing of value-added products.

6. The COMESA SPS Logical Framework, which was developed and later implemented with the assistance of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), has four result areas:

- Harmonized SPS systems through private sector-driven common certification schemes/protocols and regional standards for selected food and agricultural products;
- Monitoring, surveillance, SPS diagnostic and analytic capacity, and emergency preparedness programmes established for priority animal diseases, plant pests and food safety risks;
- Improved decision making based on more rapid and transparent SPS information systems across member states, within and among Regional Economic Communities, and between public and private sector, at national and regional levels; and
- Improved regional leadership, coordination and collaboration on SPS issues.

7. COMESA's current activities are expected to achieve the following results:

- Harmonization of SPS standards;
- Supporting member states to participate in the work of international standard-setting bodies;
- Developing laboratory infrastructure, including reference laboratories; and
- Promoting SPS compliance on prioritized value chains.

8. COMESA believes that taking part in the SPS Committee meetings will position COMESA to better to assist and coordinate the work and the effective participation of member states in the meetings of the SPS Committee and ensure their compliance with internationally set standards with the objective of protecting animal and plant health, human life and promoting safe trade within and beyond the region.

4. Reciprocity

9. The WTO Secretariat has not requested observer status in COMESA.

10. As a regional political entity, COMESA cannot put certain high level documents of a sensitive nature in the public domain, but will readily share information concerning all technical and SPS-related matters with the WTO SPS Committee secretariat and other stakeholders upon request.