WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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COMMUNICATION FROM ISO
(REPORT OF ACTIVITIES)

The following communication, received on 5 June 2013, is being circulated at the request of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

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The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has prepared this information paper as part of ongoing updates and communication between the SPS Committee and the ISO Central Secretariat. It provides a summary of current work undertaken by ISO that may be of interest to members of the WTO SPS Committee and is intended to support and enhance dialogue and coordination between the two organizations.

1 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION (ISO)

1.1. Any general information regarding the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) can be found on http://www.iso.org/. The ISO portfolio counts nearly 19,800 International Standards which have been developed by 219 technical committees and 491 subcommittees managing some 2,469 working groups.

2 ISO'S INTERNATIONAL STATUS

2.1. ISO has a specific status with many UN agencies, including WHO and FAO. It is also an observer at the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO TBT) and the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS).

2.2. ISO's observer status to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) provides an opportunity for the coordination of issues related to a variety of ISO standards that are adopted and used by Codex in its work. ISO methods have been endorsed in the document "*Recommended methods of analysis and sampling*" (*CODEX STAN 234-1999*) which is updated each year during the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling meeting.

2.3. ISO organized a regional workshop on Food Standards and Trade from 8 to 10 May 2013 in Havana, Cuba with the support of the *Oficina Nacional de Normalización* (NC) in Cuba together with the cooperation of the Codex, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). 70 participants from 26 countries (representatives of national standards institutes, government and industry) from Latin America and the Caribbean participated in this regional workshop.

2.4. This workshop offered the opportunity to have an overview of the region's food supply chains, expose the linkages and differences among the various international players, and review the challenges, opportunities and solutions that a coherent implementation of standards and practices can provide.

3 ISO AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

3.1. Since 1960, ISO has had a policy development committee – DEVCO – that deals specifically with the needs of developing countries in standardization. Developing countries need to focus both

on acquiring world-class technological competence and on achieving a good understanding of the technical requirements underlying global trade. For more than 50 years, ISO has been assisting in both these areas through ISO/DEVCO, the ISO Committee on developing country matters. DEVCO's membership comprises 145 national standards institutes from industrialized as well as developing countries. (Find out more about DEVCO on "http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/iso-and-developing-countries.htm").

3.2. In 2012, ISO/DEVCO carried out three projects in relation to ISO 22000 technical assistance and four events were planned in 2013 (see Annex 2). With the objective of improving awareness of key stakeholders in developing countries of the role of such standards in economic growth, world trade and their contribution to sustainable development, four national seminars on ISO 22000 were organized. Three other events were organized with the objective of building capacity: a regional workshop on standards contribution to the food sector in Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, and a regional workshop on Food Standards and Trade in Havana, Cuba, both of them inviting other international organizations such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission to participate; and a national training of trainers seminar, which will be organized in Walvis Bay, Namibia. In addition, six sponsorships were provided in 2012 to individuals from developing countries to attend the meeting of ISO/TC 34/SC 17 – *Management systems for food safety* in Saitama, Japan from 29 October to 1 November 2012.

4 ISO TECHNICAL WORK UPDATES

4.1. The priority areas of mutual interest on which ISO would like to maintain and nurture dialogue with the SPS Committee are the work of ISO/TC 34 on food products and the generic work of the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (ISO/CASCO).

5 ISO'S CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT STANDARDS AND THEIR USE IN FOOD SAFETY

5.1. The 28th plenary of the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (ISO/CASCO[1]) was hosted by the Colombian Institute of Technical Standards and Certification (ICONTEC) and held in Bogotá, Colombia, on 11-12 October 2012. It was attended by 97 delegates from 34 member bodies, 1 internal liaison and 12 liaison bodies including the IEC.

5.2. ISO/CASCO held an open day on conformity assessment in conjunction with the plenary which attracted more than 80 participants. The open day focused on the work of ISO/CASCO working groups (WGs) and recently published ISO/CASCO standards.

5.3. Having the ISO/CASCO plenary in Bogotá facilitated the participation from the Latin American and Caribbean regions in both the plenary and the workshop.

5.1 Topical issues currently being addressed in ISO/CASCO

-    As part of the activities for ensuring good implementation of standards, ISO/CASCO drafted a proposal for the development of an international directory of organizations certified to ISO management systems standards which was presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee (CSC/SPC) (document 04/2013) in January 2013. The strategic issues raised by the CSC/SPC will be addressed in a detailed business assessment of the idea to be presented to Council in September 2013.

-    International Accreditation Forum (IAF) - International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC) - ISO recognizing the need to continue the momentum achieved to date with good implementation of standards is updating a joint strategic plan for the period 2012 to 2015. The plan contains nine action points firmly focused on good implementation of standards with actions for all three organizations.

-    ISO/CASCO has started an initiative to actively promote a harmonized approach to conformity assessment activities based on the ISO/CASCO toolbox by developing a brochure for National Member Bodies (NMBs) intended for use with national regulators. At least one regional workshop in the latter part of 2013 will be held on this subject. The

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[1] http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/conformity-assessment.htm.

possibility of organizing other regional workshops in 2014 will depend on the success of the initial one.

- ISO/CASCO completed its fifth year of managing the ISO Survey of Certifications. The most recent survey results have been made available free of charge to everyone for the first time and are available for downloading on the ISO website ("http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/publications_and_e-products/publication_item.htm?pid=PUB100318").

5.2 Promotion of the ISO/CASCO toolbox and 2012 workshops

5.4. During 2012, the Chair and Secretary of ISO/CASCO promoted the ISO/CASCO toolbox and highlighted the importance of implementing well established and recognised conformity assessment practices by attending the following events:

- UNIDO-ITU-ISO Conformity Assessment workshop for Asian developing countries in Bangladesh, 1-2 February 2012;

- 11th meeting of the ISO/TC 34/SC 9/WG 3 in Lausanne, 24 April 2012;

- ATP Conference[2] in Berlin, September 2012;

- IAF meeting in Frankfurt, 28 April to 3 May 2012; and

- IAF and ILAC General Assemblies, in Brazil, October 2012.

5.3 External representations and liaisons

5.5. One new category A liaison was established with ISO/CASCO in 2012, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

5.4 ISO/CASCO membership and next plenary meeting

5.6. At present ISO/CASCO has 120 members, including 73 Participating members and 47 Observing members.

5.7. The next ISO/CASCO plenary, workshop and associated meetings will be held during the week of 7 October 2013 in Beijing, China.

5.8. More information about the scope and structure as well as a quick link to the work programme of ISO/CASCO ("http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards_development/list_of_iso_technical_committees/iso_technical_committee.htm?commid=54998") is available on the ISO website.

6 CODEX AND ISO/TC 34 COOPERATION

6.1. There is a long history of collaboration between the Codex committees and ISO/TC 34, *Food products*. ISO/TC 34 supports the establishment of an ongoing and sustainable framework for collaboration between Codex and ISO, in order to enhance the mutual coordination of work and the elimination of duplication and contradictions. This also includes interest to support any joint or collaborative communication on each others' work.

6.2. Codex and ISO activities are complementary. Codex, as a governmental organization, prepares documents to assist governments in their statutory and regulatory work to protect their citizens from health hazards caused by food consumption. ISO, as a non-governmental organization, prepares standards in particular on test methods to assist stakeholders along the whole food chain to fulfil both the statutory and regulatory requirements, as well as the requirements of consumers of these products. ISO/TC 34 also works on how to involve more developing countries in the works.

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[2] In reference to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP Agreement).

6.3. Since its creation in 1947, ISO/TC 34 has published more than 800 ISO deliverables (International Standards, Technical Specifications and Technical Reports). 65% of these documents are test methods. See Annex 1 for the structure of ISO/TC 34.

6.4. ISO/TC 34 held its plenary meeting in April 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya in order to foster involvement of African developing countries. A regional workshop on standards contribution to the food sector in Africa was organized during the meeting. There was one representative from Codex Alimentarius present during this workshop.

6.5. A new ISO Handbook, *How to use ISO 22000 Food safety management systems* was published in April 2013. This handbook is intended to provide generic guidance to assist organizations (mainly small and medium-sized) that recognize the potential benefits of implementing a Food Safety Management System in accordance with ISO 22000:2005. It highlights the major steps in the implementation process and divides them into easy to understand tasks with practical advice for each. It also includes specific information for organizations looking to be certified to the standard.

6.6. The Press Release is available at:
http://www.iso.org/iso/home/news_index/news_archive/news.htm?refid=Ref1738.

6.7. ISO/TC 34 will continue to offer its full support and cooperation to the Codex Commission with a view to avoiding duplication of work and will adopt, for its own documents, the conclusions of the Codex Commission on all matters concerning food hygiene requirements.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1. It is recognized that the SPS Committee's members, as governments, have the authority to regulate at the national level and that ISO, as a producer of voluntary International Standards, does not. In the framework of good regulatory practice, as promoted at international and regional levels, International Standards and Guides may be considered useful by regulators as effective and efficient tools to achieve important regulatory mandates, manage risk and address market confidence.
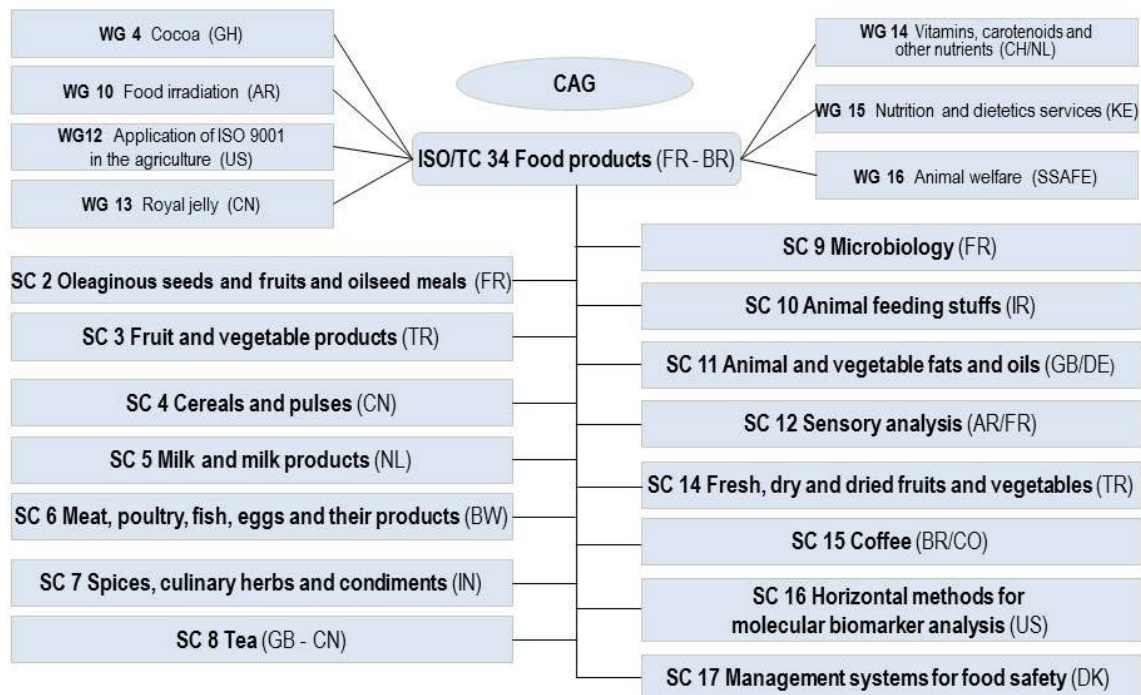
7.2. ISO considers that by using its International Standards, regulatory authorities will achieve their aims in public health and safety at less cost to manufacturers and consumers. Using International Standards also assists countries to meet their WTO TBT and SPS Agreement obligations.

7.3. For any further information on technical developments within ISO that have been reported in this paper, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Marie-Noëlle Bourquin at the ISO Central Secretariat (bourquin@iso.org).

ANNEX 1

STRUCTURE OF ISO/TC 34, *FOOD PRODUCTS*

ISO/TC 34 comprises 51 Participating countries and 58 Observing countries. ISO/TC 34 secretariat is held jointly by France and Brazil (twinning arrangement). ISO/TC 34 has established several substructures [active structures are: 15 Subcommittees (SC) and seven Working Groups (WG)]; the development of important horizontal standards being under the responsibility of Working Groups directly reporting to ISO/TC 34. These substructures are the following:

It can be noted that out of these 15 Subcommittees, only four are horizontal in scope (ISO/TC 34/SC 9, ISO/TC 34/SC 12, ISO/TC 34/SC 16 and ISO/TC 34/SC 17).

ANNEX 2

OVERVIEW OF ISO 22000 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS CARRIED OUT IN 2012 AND THOSE PLANNED FOR 2013

Objective 1: Improve awareness of key stakeholders in developing countries of the role of standardization in economic growth, world trade and sustainable development

Title	Venue/Host	Dates	Total participants	Sponsored participants	Beneficiary countries
National seminar on ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems	Belgrade, Serbia	9-10 October 2012	40	0	Serbia
National seminar on ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems	Khartoum, Sudan	25-27 November 2012	64	0	Sudan
National seminar on ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems	Quito, Ecuador	26-28 June 2013	50	0	Ecuador
National seminar on ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems	Dakar, Senegal	September 2013 (tbc)	50	0	Senegal

Objective 2:   Build capacity of ISO members and stakeholders involved in developing the standardization infrastructure and participating in international standardization work

Title	Venue/Host	Dates	Total participants	Sponsored participants	Beneficiary countries
Regional workshop Standards contribution to the food sector in Africa – ISO/TC 34 – *Food products*	Nairobi, Kenya	24-25 April 2012	123	48	Argentina; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Lesotho; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Colombia; Congo, the Republic of; Côte d'Ivoire; Cuba; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Gabon; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Indonesia; Kenya; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritania; Mauritius; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; South Africa; Sudan; Swaziland; Tanzania; Thailand; Togo; Uganda; Zambia and Zimbabwe

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Title	Venue/Host	Dates	Total participants	Sponsored participants	Beneficiary countries
Regional workshop on Food Standards and Trade	Havanna, Cuba	8-10 May 2013	70	46	Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Barbados; Brazil; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Cuba; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Ecuador; El Salvador; Guatemala; Guyana; Haiti; Honduras; Jamaica; Nicaragua; Panama; Paraguay; Peru; Saint Lucia; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago; Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of; and Uruguay
National Training of Trainers seminar and follow-up seminars on ISO 22000 – Food safety management systems	Walvis Bay, Namibia	19-23 August (Training of trainers)	15 in Training of trainers 100 in follow-up seminar	0	Namibia

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