



12 March 2014

(14-1564)

Page: 1/3

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: Spanish

**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 11 March 2014, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

1. The observer organizations of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to promote the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. The IICA wishes to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

1 SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES (CAPACITY BUILDING AND RELATIONSHIP WITH MULTILATERAL FORUMS)

2. As part of the Programme to Promote Participation in the Codex Alimentarius in the Americas, there was a call for applications to participate in the meetings on (i) contaminants in food, (ii) pesticide residues, (iii) the Codex Alimentarius Commission and (iv) food import and export inspection and certification.

3. During the first three months of the year, two coordination sessions with the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) countries were held for the Committees on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables and Food Additives. Two coordination sessions were also held for the Proposed Draft Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella*. The Chair of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene and an expert from the World Health Organization (WHO) took part in the discussion. These particular sessions were of great technical value and outlined the analysis of specific technical issues that have considerable potential for 2014.

4. The IICA supported a Codex event, marking the 50th anniversary of the Codex Alimentarius, in Costa Rica at the end 2013. The national community involved in the Codex and high-level government authorities participated in the event. Countries were encouraged to exchange experiences and a strategic message was successfully brought to high-level domestic authorities regarding the importance and impact of the Codex Alimentarius. Two vice-Chairs of the Codex Alimentarius took part in the event.

5. In October 2013, the IICA supported the first Codex Alimentarius congress held in El Salvador. More than 400 people attended this event, which marked a significant step forward in the development of this country's focal point.

6. The CCLAC countries implemented a "twinning" mechanism that was developed under the coordination of the CCLAC and IICA. The purpose of this mechanism is to promote capacity building between the countries in the region. The IICA thanks the Secretary of the WTO SPS Committee for the information provided on the twinning mechanism developed for notifications, which had served as an example for the development of this mechanism.

7. During the first week of March 2014, the first Codex colloquium of the year was held at IICA headquarters in Costa Rica. More than 50 experts from 15 countries took part in the event and discussed issues that are a priority for the Committees on Contaminants in Food, Pesticide Residues and General Principles. The colloquiums provide a forum for dialogue and coordination, where efforts are made to identify issues of relevance to the Latin American and Caribbean region and to move forward in defining a position for the Codex meeting. Both the colloquium and the participation programme rely on financial support from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

8. The Inter-American Group for Coordination on Plant Protection (GICSV) held a virtual meeting of the ePhyto Working Group, at which the progress and agreements from the ePhyto Steering Group were presented. The North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO), the Regional International Organization for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), the Southern Cone Plant Protection Committee (COSAVE) and some countries took part.

9. On 11 and 12 December 2013, the IICA and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Regional Office for the Americas held a workshop on the OIE standards under consultation, with a view to informing countries of the standards currently being commented on. Representatives for veterinary services from the southern, Andean, central, northern and Caribbean regions attended.

2 SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

10. The project "Support to the Caribbean Forum of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States in the Implementation of the Commitments Undertaken under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA): Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures" (SPS-CARIFORUM-EPA) has been launched. The purpose of this initial stage is to present the project and determine priority needs in the areas of agricultural health, food safety and fisheries, with a view to developing a national action plan aimed at meeting these needs through the SPS project. On average, 50 key actors attended events in eight Caribbean countries and discussed needs and priorities in the areas of animal and plant health, food safety and fisheries. The information gathered from these consultations will be used to formulate the countries' action plans. The project will provide substantial support for the countries concerned in terms of capacity building and active participation in multilateral fora linked to SPS measures (the WTO, Codex Alimentarius, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and OIE).

11. On 3 and 4 December 2013, the IICA held a national forum on agrifood safety in Nicaragua in order to discuss, with the production sector, the importance of developing a domestic production system that ensures product safety. Around 130 professionals from the production sector and professors from four universities took part. As a result of this exchange of experiences, the extent to which the safety system has so far been implemented in domestic production was determined, and problems and support needs were identified.

12. During the week of 9 December 2013, the IICA took part in the second annual meeting of the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP). The World Bank facilitated the creation of this partnership between various actors in order to build capacities in the area of food safety. This partnership will allow actors to meet to collectively fill decisive gaps in this area, through the creation of an open-source, innovative community of practice for exchanging knowledge. Four groups that need to build their capacities were identified: government regulators, inspectors and managers; processors, manufacturers and actors in the private agrifood sector value chain; producers and persons responsible for food safety and the quality control of raw materials in farming; and external food safety inspectors, service providers, trainers and certification bodies.

13. On 6 and 7 November 2013, the Standing Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP) held the workshops "The CVP: 10 Years of Integration and Vision for the Future" and "The CVP: An Example of Regional Integration" in Santiago de Chile. The purpose of the former was to identify relevant issues and generate input for the Committee's strategic planning, promote regional leadership and strengthen the regional technical team. At the latter, institutional and health policy factors affecting the development of the CVP were analysed, as were the regional and international challenges facing the Committee. At the same event, the IICA gave a presentation entitled "Strategic Ally: The Role of the IICA in the Launching and Development of the CVP".

14. As part of the IICA's support for disseminating the proposed rules of the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), two virtual conferences were held on 5 November 2013 in coordination with representatives from the FDA's regional office for Latin American and the Caribbean, with a view to making government officials, the private sector and IICA technical staff in the Americas aware of the entry into force of the new proposed rules regarding foreign supplier verification and third-party accreditation. Moreover, the IICA and Salvadoran Exporters Corporation (COEXPORT) organized a workshop on 15 October 2013 to advise producers and exporters of food to the United States of the implications of the foreign supplier verification programme under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Another technical forum on intentional food adulteration was also held on 7 March 2014.

15. On 19 February 2014, the IICA organized a regional videoconference entitled "Controlling Salmonella in Meats in the United States: Considerations for Establishing Microbiological Criteria", which included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic. This regional event was organized by the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council (CAC), with support from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) and the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). The purpose of the videoconference was to collaborate with countries that have been making efforts to establish harmonized microbiological criteria for unprocessed foods within the framework of the Central American Customs Union. The US regulatory framework for salmonella control in meats, with respect to both processing and controlling imported products, was presented. More than 80 participants attended the videoconference.

16. The IICA has been supporting risk communication through the following actions:

- i. An online course on risk communication was organized for 26 participants from the CVP countries. The purpose of the course was to share experiences regarding the development of risk communication programmes, with a view to improving the capacities of various official services and implementing risk communication as a working methodology used in all aspects of risk analysis.
- ii. A workshop on risk communication was held from 28 to 30 October 2013 in Ecuador in order to strengthen existing communication strategies and improve the performance of 30 health experts from the Ecuadorian Agency for Agricultural Product Quality Assurance (AGROCALIDAD).

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
Agricultural Health and Food Safety
<http://www.infoagro.net/salud>
<http://www.iica.int>
