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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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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 26 February 2016, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

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 Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). The IICA would like to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

1 EFFORTS TO MAKE GREATER USE OF MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL FORUMS

1.1 World Trade Organization

1.1. Trade Facilitation Forum: A technical forum, attended by experts from the World Trade Organization (WTO), was organized to give participants an overview of the importance, aspects and content of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation, its relationship to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and, by using electronic certification as a practical example, to show how the Agreement on Trade Facilitation is implemented. There were 341 different connection points in Spanish and 132 in English. Some of these were through our IICA offices in countries where five to ten persons participated (depending on the country) in each office.

1.2 Codex Alimentarius

1.2. Twinning programme: The IICA is currently conducting a Codex twinning programme, the objective being to boost cooperation among countries in the Americas and thereby improve the situation as regards the regulatory framework, build institutional and technical capacity and strengthen participation in this forum. In December, Ecuador organized an event under this programme to associate academic circles in Codex Alimentarius activities so as to generate more and better scientific information needed for the various Codex Alimentarius procedures and also raise the technical and scientific quality of country positions. Chile was the cooperating country for this activity.

1.3. In February, also under this programme, there was a twinning event between the Bahamas and Canada, with the objective of promoting the development and harmonization of the regulatory framework in the Bahamas in respect of veterinary drug residues and strengthening the institutional framework of the Codex technical sub-committee on residues of veterinary drugs.

1.4. In Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, during the week of 14 to 18 March, there was another twinning programme with the collaboration of Chile and Costa Rica. These two activities were aimed at building institutional capacity as regards the Codex Alimentarius and political positioning vis-à-vis decision-makers.

1.5. Programme to develop Codex Alimentarius-related priorities: The IICA is implementing this programme in order to create a process with the various Codex actors for identifying priorities that can help countries to focus resources on strategic Codex Alimentarius-related issues of major interest to their sectors. In October and November, activities under this programme were conducted in El Salvador and Honduras, with Paraguay to follow.

1.6. Codex Colloquium Programme: Codex colloquiums are events which bring together a large number of countries in the Americas to discuss matters on the agenda of the Codex Alimentarius Committees. Two colloquiums were held in March. In the first week of March, 19 Latin American and Caribbean countries convened in Mexico to review the work of the Committees on Food Additives and Contaminants and Pesticide Residues, and in the last week 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries met in Atlanta, United States, together with African countries, to discuss matters relating to the Committee on General Principles.

1.7. Participation programme: This programme is a competitive fund to facilitate participation by some five countries in selected committees. It has recently provided support for the Committees on Food Hygiene, Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems and shortly for those on Contaminants in Foods and General Principles.

1.8. Programme to support institutional strengthening in Codex Alimentarius in Caribbean countries: In January, the Chilean Agency for Food Safety and Quality (ACHIPIA), together with the IICA and with financial support from the USDA, held a planning and coordination event to endorse a programme that will support institutional strengthening in five Caribbean countries: Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Saint Lucia.

1.9. These activities benefited from the financial support of the United States Department of Agriculture, Canada and the IICA's own resources. In addition, they were or will be supported by officials from Latin American and Caribbean countries.

1.10. As part of the participation programme and the EU-CARIFORUM SPS Project, support was provided for the participation of Caribbean countries in meetings of the Committees on Food Hygiene, Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, and Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems.

1.11. On 14 December, a technical forum was held on "Priority issues for the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs". It was attended by experts from Chile and the United States. Over 57 connections were recorded during the transmission of this event.

1.3 27th Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations

1.12. The IICA took part in the 27th Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations, held by the IPPC from 2 to 6 November 2015, in Memphis, United States. The IICA coordinated the meeting of the Inter-American Group for Coordination on Plant Protection (IGCPP) held in connection with the Technical Consultation.

1.4 Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE)

1.13. The IICA supported COSAVE's participation in the following IPPC events: Meeting of the Bureau (12-16 October, Rome, Italy), Regional Workshop (20-23 October, Lima, Peru), Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations (2-6 November, Memphis, United States), Standards Committee (16-20 November, Rome, Italy) and Technical Panel on the Standards Glossary (7-10 December, Rome, Italy). It also collaborated in convening meetings of the following Working Groups: Sampling, Inspection and Certification (19-22 October, Foz de Iguazú, Brazil), Biological Control (20-23 October, Santiago, Chile), Health of Propagating Materials (3-6 November, Buenos Aires, Argentina) and the LXXXIVth Meeting of the Steering Committee (7-10 December, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

1.5 Southern Cone Standing Veterinary Committee (CVP)

1.14. The IICA supported the CVP's participation in the ENDESA meeting (19-23 October, Mato Grosso, Cuiabá, Brazil) and the convening of the IInd Regular Meeting of the CVP

(21 October, Mato Grosso, Cuiabá, Brazil) and of the IVth Meeting of the Food Safety Group of the CVP (27 and 28 October, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Likewise, within the framework of the IICA-CAS/CVP Agreement, on 11 and 12 November, a symposium was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, on "Strategies for Mitigating the Risk of E. coli (STEC)", with the aim of examining alternative strategies capable of being adapted for implementation in the CVP region. The symposium was attended by around 80 officials from government veterinary services, the private sector, producers and industry from countries within the CVP region, together with participants from academia.

2 SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL, TECHNICAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

2.1. In January and February, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) conducted a series of technical missions in Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic in order to share knowledge on the use of antibiotics and antimicrobial agents in various animal production systems. These missions involved technical and high-level personnel from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, and the private sector in all the countries.

2.2. The initiatives formed part of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures project, which receives support from the 10th European Development Fund, under the programme "Support to CARIFORUM States in the Implementation of the Commitments Undertaken under the CARIFORUM-European Union (EU) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA): Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures", which is implemented by the IICA with support from the European Union.

2.3. This initiative was developed on the basis of the specific needs identified by the region, in collaboration with the College of Veterinary Medicine of Ohio State University (OSU).

2.4. As part of these efforts, between June and December 2015, 27 professionals from 15 CARIFORUM countries gained better knowledge of the use of antimicrobial agents and their resistance in agriculture. The training was specifically designed for veterinarians, epidemiologists, experts in diagnostics and other public health professionals in Caribbean countries.

2.5. One of the most important results of the project has been the development of a pilot project, to be implemented in various countries as a first step towards the establishment of a regional system to monitor resistance to antimicrobial agents in the Caribbean.

2.6. **Workshop on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).** In order to become better acquainted with the rules in the FSMA, as well as the proposed regulations currently being approved, and thus enable the export sector to respond satisfactorily to the new requirements and facilitate access to or maintain its position in the United States market, on 10 and 11 December, the IICA held a workshop in Managua, Nicaragua, on "Requirements for the export of food to the United States market – Approach of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)", which was attended by 143 representatives of the sectors concerned: producers, exporters to the United States and government authorities.

2.7. **One Health Leadership Series.** The third module in the One Health Leadership Series was held in Georgetown, Guyana, from 12 to 16 January. The module addressed sanitary and health matters and its purpose was to continue training a group of regional leaders so that they can advocate the concept of "One Health" and apply it in activities that seek to prevent, treat or eradicate health problems. Forty representatives from all Caribbean countries took part.

2.8. **Guidebook of Animal Health Programmes.** On 10 December, the Guidebook of Animal Health Programmes was endorsed in Asunción, Paraguay. Representatives of the National Animal Quality and Health Service (SENACSA) and the IICA took part, and the event brought together a total of 30 participants. As a result, SENACSA reiterated its interest in applying the guidebook in its programmes.

2.9. **IICA/GMA: Food Safety Webinars.** On 27 October, a series of webinars organized by the IICA and the GMA was launched under the title: "Observations and Standards in the US on Food Safety", with the aim of communicating some important aspects of the new standards stipulated by the FSMA and their impact on the export of agricultural products, food and beverages, in international trade between Latin America and the United States.

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