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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

**THEMATIC SESSION ON PEST-FREE AREAS
27 FEBRUARY 2018**

PROPOSAL BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Revision

The following communication, received on 24 January 2018, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the United States of America.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1. Following an oral proposal of the United States, the SPS Committee at its meeting of 2-3 November 2017 agreed to organize a thematic session on pest-free areas to be held on 27 February 2018 on the margins of the next SPS Committee meeting. The Committee also requested that the United States submit a written proposal for distribution to Members.

2 SCOPE OF THE MEETING

2.1. Article 6 of the SPS Agreement outlines Member obligations on Adaptation to Regional Conditions, including pest-free areas, when establishing SPS measures. There are obligations for both importing and exporting countries. In 2008 the SPS Committee adopted guidelines on the practical implementation of Article 6 in document G/SPS/48 of 16 May 2008.

2.2. The concept of pest-free areas is fundamental to ensure the safety of plants and plant products in international trade, and to facilitate trade. All WTO Members are impacted by outbreaks of plant diseases and pests. Managing the consequences for trade of these outbreaks is therefore a matter of general interest, yet the concept of pest-free areas for plants and plant products has not been as thoroughly discussed in the Committee as the concept of regionalization relating to animal health.

2.3. This thematic session will focus on the concept of pest-free areas as covered by Article 6 of the SPS Agreement and the relevant SPS Committee guidelines, with an emphasis on practical experience on the establishment and maintenance of such pest-free areas, as part of a well-functioning official control system, including the relevant administrative procedures and the time necessary to complete such recognition.

3 OBJECTIVE OF THE THEMATIC SESSION

3.1. The thematic session will provide an opportunity for WTO Members to increase their awareness of the international IPPC standard for pest-free areas, and share practical experiences about the challenges and benefits of implementing pest-free areas in practice. This, in turn, should contribute to building confidence among trading partners when recognizing or seeking recognition of their pest-free areas.

3.2. It is proposed that the meeting provide a discussion on pest-free areas from the perspective of an importing as well as an exporting party.

3.3. In order for the meeting to be most helpful the active participation from a broad range of Members will be important.

4 OUTLINE OF THE PROGRAMME

4.1. The meeting would consist of presentations by officials and experts from WTO, IPPC, one or more regional plant protection organizations (RPPO) and Members, followed by questions from Delegates. The meeting would conclude with a general discussion. It could be organized in three sessions as follows:

4.1 International rules and guidelines

- Provisions of the SPS Agreement on pest-free areas and relevant guidelines;
- Relevant jurisprudence on pest-free areas (Article 6);
- IPPC standards on the establishment of pest-free areas (ISPM 4).

4.2 Sharing of regional, international and national experiences

- Experiences of regional plant protection organizations (RPPOs);
- Experiences of relevant international organizations;
- Experiences of Members in recognizing pest-free areas of exporting countries or getting recognition by other Members of pest-free areas in their own territory.

4.3 General discussion

5 NEXT STEPS

5.1. The United States suggests that this proposal be circulated to all Members for comments. At the same time, Members should be invited to signal their willingness to present their experiences in the thematic session so that a draft programme can be prepared well in advance of the meeting.
