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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 5 October 2018, 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 SUPPORT FOR MULTILATERAL FORUMS ASSOCIATED WITH SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

1.1 Virtual Codex colloquia

1.1. A virtual Codex colloquium on issues covered by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) was held on 5 September. Delegates from 24 countries participated in the event and discussed technical criteria with a view to improving understanding of the issues to be covered at the next CCFICS meeting in Australia from 22 to 26 October. Once again, the event demonstrated how new information and communication technologies make it possible to hold events that while costing little, produce significant results.

1.2 Face-to-face Codex colloquia

1.2. A face-to-face colloquium was held in Brazil from 2 to 4 October. Delegates from 14 countries discussed issues of strategic importance for the Latin American and Caribbean region and Northern region. Participants examined issues that were to be the focus of three upcoming meetings: (i) Food hygiene; (ii) Nutrition and foods for special dietary uses; and (iii) Antimicrobial Resistance.

1.3 Support for participation in Codex Alimentarius meetings

1.3. In the second half of the year, support was provided, through a competitive fund, to facilitate participation in the meetings of the Codex Committees on Food Hygiene and Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses, and the meeting of the Ad hoc Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance. Latin American and Caribbean countries participated in this fund.

1.4 Virtual coordination sessions

1.4. The support that the IICA provides to countries of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) in the area of communication and coordination includes, prior to each Codex meeting, the provision of a virtual communication platform to enable coordination between the countries.

1.5 Workshops and courses

1.5. In Costa Rica, the IICA gave its support to a national workshop on trade policy formulation entitled "*Reflexiones en apoyo a la formulación de políticas comerciales*", which was organized by the World Trade Organization and various national bodies. The IICA also supported the staging of the Spanish version of the Specialized Course on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which began in October 2018.

1.6 Electronic phytosanitary certification (ePhyto) project

1.6. A regional workshop to encourage the sharing of experiences in the area of electronic phytosanitary certification systems was held from 11 to 13 September. The event was organized by the Argentine Foreign Ministry and the Australian Embassy in Argentina, and supported by the IICA and the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE). The ePhyto project is an initiative driven by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) that seeks to ensure harmonization, provide a generic national system, and implement a global hub for exchanging certification, with a view to streamlining trade in plant products and making such trade safer.

1.7. Delegates from 22 countries (Belize, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Viet Nam) took part in the workshop. The governments of Argentina and Australia organized the regional seminar with a view to sharing the knowledge gained under their bilateral ePhyto cooperation programme.

2 OTHER ACTIVITIES

2.1 Institutional modernization

2.1. In September 2018, the results obtained from the application of the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) tool were presented to the Minister for Agriculture of the Dominican Republic, Osmar Benítez, and his staff. The results were compared with those achieved using the same tool in 2011. In this way, it was possible to identify the areas in which most progress had been made and those in which there was still room for improvement in the three services (animal health, plant health and food safety).

2.2. The PVS tool was designed by the IICA to assess the performance and implementation of development strategies for institutions concerned with agricultural health and food safety. It addresses the issue of sanitary and phytosanitary measures using an institutional, international and horizontal approach.

2.2 International standards and regulations in regard to SPS measures

2.2.1 United States – FSMA

2.3. At a regional workshop held in Costa Rica from 17 to 22 September, more than 60 food-safety professionals with links to the public sector and academic circles, from 13 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries, received training to become trainers on the safety standard for fresh agricultural produce exported to the United States. This training initiative was promoted by the IICA and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under a cooperation agreement that seeks to raise LAC country representatives' awareness of issues relating to the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). The training was provided by the Joint Institute of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) and the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA).

2.4. As part of this event, participants were provided with tools and inputs that would enable them to apply to the PSA for leader-trainer status and subsequently train exporters, producers, academics and other officials in their countries on the safety standard for fresh agricultural produce.

2.5. The professionals who received training at this event came from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago.

2.2.2 Risk-based sampling

2.6. In response to a request from Latin American countries, the IICA, in conjunction with the Andean Community (CAN) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) via the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), organized a workshop to support countries in the implementation of methodologies that promote the use of science-based procedures to maximize performance in the areas of phytosanitary protection and trade facilitation. The workshop on risk management and good practices in regard to decision-making and the implementation of risk-based sampling helped enhance the skills of 36 professionals, including risk and regulatory assessors from the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) of 11 Latin American countries.

2.7. The USDA, through APHIS, ensured that the workshop benefited from all its specialized technical capacity in the area of risk-based inspection; it also financed the event. It was the first time an event of this nature had been held in Spanish and was therefore highly beneficial to Latin America. Good phytosanitary risk management practices were also examined with support from the World Trade Organization and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), while the IICA and USDA/APHIS helped participants identify the best way to implement these practices in their countries.

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