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Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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UPDATE ON ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SPS CAPACITIES

COMMUNICATION FROM THE ACP SECRETARIAT

The following communication, received on 8 March 2019, is being circulated at the request of the ACP secretariat.

1. African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries can take full advantage of agricultural trade only if they are able to supply produce that is competitive and compliant with the regulations and standards in operation. Increasingly stringent sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, coupled with market demands for environmental, social and ethical standards, are a challenge for ACP suppliers and increasingly affect their ability to access domestic, regional and international markets. Evolving EU SPS regulations are having a particular impact. This includes strengthened plant health rules (under current Directive 2000/29/EC, and the new Regulation EU 2016/2031), which are designed to prevent the introduction or spread of harmful organisms in the European Union, but also place increased demands on ACP inspection services and national plant protection organizations. Regulation (EC) 1107/2009, designed to protect workers, consumers and the environment, is leading to the loss of authorised plant protection products and, in turn, increased production costs for ACP growers, and higher numbers of plant health and pesticide residue non-compliances. These developments are putting pressure on both ACP producers and exporters, as well as public sector competent authorities.

2. At the request of the ACP group of States through their Embassies in Brussels, the European Union has financed a series of technical assistance programmes under the 9th, 10th and 11th EDF. These include the PIP Programme, implemented by COLEACP and providing support to the ACP fruit and vegetable industry to maintain market access and competitiveness in the face of new EU food safety regulations and standards. Later the EDES Programme was established to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to implement risk-based national (public sector) food safety systems.

3. In 2016, these were followed by the Fit for Market Programme: "Strengthening competitiveness and sustainability of the ACP horticultural sector". This forms part of the Intra-ACP indicative programme in the focal area of support for medium and long-term policies to build productive capacity, inspire innovation, and enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of the private sector. By the end of 2018, 600 individual project applications had been submitted, originating from SMEs, cooperatives, and local support services (public and private) in 40 ACP countries. The EDF contribution to Fit for Market of 20 million Euros is co-financed by AfD to the tune of 5 million Euros.

4. Despite progress made by Fit for Market, it became clear that new SPS rules were putting increasing pressure on ACP public authorities, in particular inspection services, national plant protection organizations, and pesticide registration authorities. Developing the capacity of these authorities is fundamental to maintaining the flow of trade and export potential in the high-value horticultural sector, as well as to protect consumers in domestic, regional and international markets. In this context, a new proposal was developed to complement the private sector-focused Fit for Market Programme: "Strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary systems in ACP countries for the horticultural sector". The emphasis is on raising awareness of SPS regulations and standards, enhancing the capacity of public authorities to improve management and enforcement of SPS rules, and research brokerage to develop the necessary knowledge and technologies to enable compliance. At the request of the ACP Group of States, this new support programme will be delivered by COLEACP

between 2019 and 2022, with a budget of 15 million Euros under the 11th EDF. This is a first step towards meeting the very considerable need that exists within ACP competent authorities to ensure safe food for consumers and provides a foundation for the continued work that will be needed to strengthen SPS systems at domestic, regional and international level.
