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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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SADC SECRETARIAT REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

The following communication, received on 16 October 2019, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

1. In the past two quarters the TBT/SPS Unit attended the African Union consultative meeting for the development of the African Union Sanitary and Phytosanitary Policy Framework; as well as five meetings (7-10 SPS TWGs and TFTA SPS Experts Group) concerned with the development of implementation modalities for the SPS Annex (Annex IX) of the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA). The attendance of the SADC Office at such meetings serves to keep track of the latest SPS developments at the continental and international level, so as to ensure that the SADC regional SPS developments are also aligned with the continental goals, in line with the call to operationalize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The intelligence espied at such meetings also becomes very useful to the TBT/SPS-related guidance duty of the Unit to the preparatory work associated with the development of regional agro-processing value chains under the Action Plan of the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap. The status quo of the vacancy of the flexible position of Program Officer-Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures still persists at the Secretariat. In June 2019, in Windhoek, Namibia, the SADC Committee Ministers for Trade took the decision to request member States to second personnel to the position. The decision is intended for further clearance by the meeting of the SADC Council scheduled for March 2020.

2. The EU-SADC Trade Related Facility (TRF), which targets interventions at the national level, has made tremendous contributions to the enhancement of the performance of the beneficiary member States with regard to the implementation of the SPS Annex to the SADC Protocol on Trade. The First Quarter report (June 2019) shows that: Eswatini has validated reviewed veterinary public health regulations and is at the advanced stages of the development of a national online pesticides management system; Mozambique developed animal health, veterinary public health and food safety regulations; Lesotho has acquired equipment which included the liquid chromatography – mass spectrometry for the Department of Veterinary Services and GMO detection equipment for the Plant Protection section. The testing capacity of the laboratories of the Department of Veterinary Services and for plant health inspection were also enhanced through training and were now in the process of developing a Web-based system to coordinate and facilitate WTO SPS notifications. In Mauritius the NPPO took advantage of the project to establish a phytosanitary and sanitary information management system at the national plant protection office (NPPO) and at the division of veterinary services (DVS) of the Ministry of Agro-industry and Food Security.

3. In Mozambique, the development of a regulation for inspection of imported animals at the border points and quarantine standards is in the pipeline as well as the training of staff of veterinary services and other stakeholders in the implementation of the national veterinary strategies and regulations. In Seychelles a project is at an advanced stage of the development of the new Food Safety Act and a standard manual for risk-based sanitary and phytosanitary controls. They will also conduct training and internships for the staff of the Seychelles Plant Health Laboratory on LC/MS. In Tanzania the activities include the procurement of LCMS/MS equipment for the Department of Veterinary Services, the development of a Strategy for Food Safety Standards; the procurement of GMO detection equipment and inspection tools for plant health inspection output. Rapid Test Kits have been procured for the Department of Veterinary Service, Field test kits and inspection tools acquired for the plant health inspection and a Web-based system to coordinate and facilitate WTO SPS notifications will be developed. Due to late onset of implementation and consequent low delivery of the facility, it has now been extended until 2021 at no cost. During this phase, a lot more emphasis

will be placed on finding ways in which the national activities can be more aligned to the regional integration objectives.

4. Having not met in the past 24 months, the SADC SPS Coordinating Committee will meet on 11-13 November 2019, made possible by a collaborative effort between the member States, the regional FAO Program and the SADC-EU Trade Facility. This meeting had to be postponed from August 2019 to November 2019 due to a low response from the member States, attributed to resource constraints, as only three member States had committed to attend. In addition to the forward planning of the regional SPS program, this meeting also aims, amongst other items, to facilitate capacity enhancement on the risk-based scientific approach to the development of technical regulations. The SPS Program under the 11th EDF will facilitate initial discussions and the full development of a regional system for the mutual recognition of food safety certificates amongst the SADC member States. A framework for enabling imported products to be sampled at the point of entry into SADC and analysed for compliance with food safety provisions will be developed. SADC also intends to continually build the capacity and raise the awareness of small-scale farmers and private sector on compliance with SPS measures. Overall, the SADC SPS matters will further be guided by the resolutions of the upcoming November 2019 meeting of the SADC SPS Coordinating Committee.

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