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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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**ECOWAS IMPLEMENTED SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ACTIVITIES  
DURING THE PERIOD OF JULY - SEPTEMBER 2020**

**COMMUNICATION FROM ECOWAS-USAID SENIOR SANITARY  
AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) STANDARDS ADVISOR**

The following communication, received on 1 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1. The USAID/West Africa Regional Mission works to support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to advance their vision to create an economic union and common market. In line with this objective ECOWAS is implementing many agreements designed to support the free movement of goods and people throughout the region. Since 2017, SPS related actions have been implemented.

1.2. In view of improving and strengthening SPS activities in the ECOWAS region, the following activities were implemented during the period of July to September 2020. It is to note that since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted on the smooth implementation of SPS related activities at national and regional levels.

**2 PLANT HEALTH AND PLANT PROTECTION**

**2.1 Preparation and organization of 3<sup>rd</sup> NPPOs regional harmonization and common position of matter of interest tabled for discussion at CPM15 – Virtual meetings to consolidate common position**

2.1. As in previous years, in early 2020 a meeting was planned with the financial support of USDA for the 15 ECOWAS member States, to be held in Cotonou, Benin, in March 2020. The meeting was intended to discuss subjects of concern and harmonize common positions on matters of interest for the sub-region at the CPM15 first planned from 30 March to 3 April 2020, in Rome, Italy. The objectives of the preparatory meeting were to review and discuss in detail the identified matters of interests for the West Africa sub-region to be discussed at the CPM15, and agreed on common position as well as consolidate these positions and identify lead and support countries to present these positions at the CPM15.

2.2. Considering the COVID19 situation, a draft comment position was prepared by experts group and shared electronically with all NPPOs for comment. The comments received were compiled and sent again to NPPOs for validation with a second deadline by 16 June 2020. These comments were put into virtual discussion by Zoom in three sessions held on 14, 17 and 24 July 2020. Thus, this draft proposal has been finalized and common position consolidated taking into account all the comments received and views of NPPOs as the final joint ECOWAS proposal to present at the CMP15 meeting which will be organized using remote mechanisms as the online Commenting System (OCS).

2.3. Following the virtual harmonization meeting and considering that this was the first ever virtual sub-regional pre-CPM15 meeting, there was need to assess this virtual approach and gathered National Plant Protection Organizations' (NPPOs) views as to whether this was efficient and effective

method, with suggestions of recommendations for improvement for the future sub-regional harmonization meetings. In this view, a questionnaire was developed and NPPOs provided feedback.

2.4. Overall, the sub-regional harmonization on matters of interest for CPM is critical for the 15 ECOWAS member States. As such, participating NPPOs found it very relevant and expressed their views as for having a sustainable mechanism for the sub-region. It is also to note that despite holding the face-to-face meeting, the virtual platform provided an opportunity to discuss and contributes to quick build up of consensus/compromise positions to progress CPM texts within the CPM and the Commission, and also provide a forum to share knowledge on various matters. Further, it is to note that if meeting were to continue virtually (that requires improvements), it will only allow member States and very few other countries that have minimum internet connectivity to participate. This will create unnecessary disadvantage to those countries. This time around Mali, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Cabo Verde did not participate in the virtual meetings. Nevertheless respondents/participants agreed that the face-to-face meeting provides an opportunity to all member States to participate and also that the facilitation, participation in the meeting and consensus building are easily achievable.

## **2.2 Training workshop on the "Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide"**

2.5. The training workshop on "The Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide" is an effort of USDA-FAS dedicated to support West Africa NPPOs Taskforce to disseminate the harmonized Guide in order to promote best practices in the conduct of plant quarantine operations in the sub-region.

2.6. The programme aims:

- to train in the pilot countries including Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana plant quarantine inspectors on a better understanding for further use of the Guide and;
- to conduct simulation exercises with practical demonstrations of phytosanitary inspection including pest detection and identification at the laboratory;
- to test the applicability of the Guide.

2.7. The training was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire from 28-30 September 2020. Fifteen port, sea and terrestrial border inspectors selected in the country were trained. Similar training will be conducted in Ghana from 4-8 October 2020. It is anticipated to scale up this training to all 17 ECOWAS and Sahel countries. This initiative is in line with ECOWAS priorities and the implementation of the SPS framework to help West Africa countries' plant quarantine systems meet international standards and to promote safe trade.

## **3 FOOD SAFETY AND CAPACITY BUILDING: "DO RIGHT AND FEED EVERYONE SAFELY"**

### **3.1 Coordination and participation to the CAC43 meeting**

3.1. In collaboration with AU-IBAR and CCAFRICA there have been a coordination and scientific advice provided to member countries prior and during the CAC43 (in progress). A number of regional and international standards were adopted. The CAC43 is still on and the final report of the CAC43 will be adopted on 19 October 2020. During the coordinating meeting participants agreed to a communique as a way forward. Prof. Ahmed Elswalhy, Director of AU-IBAR thanks all participants and partners as well as the organizing committee. He stressed the commitment of the African Union in supporting food safety related issues for the benefits of the member States and the African population.

## **4 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD**

4.1. The ECOWAS Commission takes this opportunity to thank USDA, USAID, FAO, African Development Bank (AfDB), AU-IBAR, CCAFRICA coordinating committee and all partners for their continuing support in advancing SPS-related issues in the ECOWAS and Sahel sub-region. Also want to call for more collaboration, support for future implementation, especially in the new era of COVID-19.

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