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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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SADC SECRETARIAT REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

2020 REPORT TO THE WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 16 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

1 BACKGROUND

1. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region consists of 16 member States namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The region has a population of 345 million people and therefore has a high responsibility to meet the international sustainable development goals for the betterment of the lives of the people and to increase intra-SADC trade through the application of appropriate international standards.

2 THE SADC SPS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

2. The SADC SPS Coordinating Committee is established by Article 14 of the SPS Annex on the SADC Protocol on Trade. The SADC SPS Coordinating Committee met in the fourth quarter of 2019 with the support of the SADC-EU Trade Facilitation Program and the SADC Regional Office of the Food and Agriculture Organisation. The technical committees for plant protection, for animal health and for food safety met to deliberate on regional issues of interest to each subject matter.

3 THE PLANT PROTECTION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

3. The Plant Protection Technical Committee resolved on the following:

- a. Member States to create awareness on the IPPC Strategic Plant Health Framework;
- b. Member States to align national work plans with the IPPC Strategic Plant Health Framework;
- c. Member States were encouraged to regularly check the IPPC website and make comments on documents requiring attention;
- d. Member States should comply with import regulations when sending samples to Centres of Excellence;
- e. Member States requested that SADC mobilize the Committee of Ministers of Trade to encourage them to support the institutionalisation of the National SPS Committee through dedicating resources to it;
- f. That activities of successor programmes and projects should build on regional initiatives that have started rather than starting from scratch, and therefore continue with what was already being done in preceding programmes e.g. regional pest lists; and
- g. The meeting requested that other pests should also be included on the regional priority pest list so that they are also paid some attention e.g. false codling moth (FCM).

4 THE ANIMAL HEALTH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

4. The Animal Health Technical Committee resolved on the following:

- a. The implementation of the STOSAR¹ project must be accelerated in order for the region to benefit from its positive outcomes;
- b. Member States should validate the rabies strategy and start its implementation;
- c. Member States require support for their disease surveillance activities and maintenance of their disease-free status;
- d. There is a necessity for annual animal disease information-sharing sessions for SADC member States to be followed by the publication of the SADC Animal Health Yearbook; and
- e. The upgrade of the Livestock Information Management System (LIMS) and its intended integration into the Agricultural Information Management System (AIMS) must be preceded by a comprehensive needs assessment in the member States to allow for their input.

5 THE FOOD SAFETY TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

5. The Food Safety Technical Committee resolved on the following:
 - a. SADC member States need technical assistance on the development of national food safety policies and the development of food safety laws;
 - b. Reiterated the point raised in the Plant Protection Technical Committee on the need for member States to be assisted with the general formulation of how a national SPS committee must be composed and how it needs to be operated; and
 - c. Member States' need for technical assistance on how to handle the influx of food supplements which the Ministry of Health or the Nutrition Organisation do not know how to categorize and control. This challenge extends to imported food commodities that are donated in response to natural disasters in the member States.

6 THE SADC-EU TRADE RELATED FACILITY

6. The SADC-EU Trade Related Facility which is aimed at strengthening the SPS systems at the national level will close in the first quarter of 2021. Twelve (12) member States are implementing activities related to the SPS and TBT intervention areas. The main activities under SPS involve: (1) capacity-building for WTO notification structures; (2) preparation of Pest Risk Registers; (3) automation of databases related to plant and animal diseases; and (4) upgrading of facilities for managing food safety, animal health and plant protection. The Secretariat TBT/SPS Unit has provided the technical expertise in the review of terms of reference for the engagement of technical experts to develop legislation, IT systems, and to conduct capacity building. Information on regional and international experts on SPS issues has also been proffered to member States.

7. In the area of SPS, substantial progress has been made in several member States in achieving some of the desired outputs, especially on capacity-building, development of regulations and procurement of equipment to refurbish the SPS laboratories. There has been notable success in Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania (equipment only), Zambia and Zimbabwe (systems and equipment). Other member States have been slow in leveraging the program due to project administrative challenges.

8. Like in other regions of the world, the SADC programs have been affected by the need to adjust to the new mode of operation brought about by the need for social distancing. It has taken a while to fully switch to the virtual mode of operation as there was the initial thought that the current pandemic would be temporary. The activities under the Trade-Related Facility were the hardest hit as member States were still hoping to use the final semester of the program to do a final sprint on their projects. It is envisaged that most service providers will have acquired the technology to remotely provide their services.

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¹ "Support towards operationalization of the SADC Regional Agricultural Policy" (STOSAR).