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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**SPS ACTIVITIES OF THE CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURAL HEALTH
AND FOOD SAFETY AGENCY (CAHFSA)**

REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 22 June 2021, is being circulated at the request of CAHFSA.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) was established by the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to perform a coordinating and organizing role in the establishment of an effective and efficient regional sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime and to execute on behalf of member States such SPS actions and activities that can be more effectively and efficiently executed through a regional mechanism.

1.2. CAHFSA is pleased to provide this report to the eightieth regular meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, summarising key activities and providing updates on CARICOM SPS work programme.

1.3. As with most organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the CAHFSA work programme over the past year, forcing an adjustment in the approach to execution of activities. However, the Agency has managed to improvise innovative ways of progressing its work programme and execute its mandate.

2 ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

2.1. CAHFSA is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and the election of a new Chairman and vice-chairman of the CAHFSA Board of Directors. Dr Gavin Peters, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and a citizen of Guyana assumed office on 1 April 2021. Mr Christopher Worrell of the Bahamas and Dr Simone Titus of Trinidad and Tobago took duties as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors on 1 June 2021.

2.2. On 16 June 2021, CAHFSA held its first regional symposium on the institution's mandate to "establish an effective regime of SPS measures" in the CARICOM Region. Key to the discussions was the importance of the WTO SPS agreement in facilitating the safe trade of agricultural products among the member States and third countries and its potential role in improving regional food security.

**3 COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE
AREA OF AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY**

3.1. CAHFSA continues its engagement with the OIE, IPPC and the Codex Alimentarius Commission through meeting participation and regional coordination of activities.

3.2. CAHFSA was privileged to chair the meetings of the 32nd Consultation on Regional Plant Protection Organization. The global health crisis notwithstanding, the RPPOs met during 202 and early 2021 to share updates and discuss how to mitigate the pandemic's impact on their activities

and progress the work of the TC-RPPO. As usual, the IPPC provided tremendous support to the planning and delivery of the meetings.

3.3. CAHFSA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the COLEACP to support CAHFSA through technical assistance programmes managed and implemented by COLEACP. The associated work plan includes, among others, activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of the CAHFSA member States and staff, upgrading of critical regional analytical facilities through training and support in laboratory organization and management and sharing of COLEACP experience and expertise in the context of inter-regional trade.

3.4. On 15 April 2021, CAHFSA collaborated with COLEACP, the COMESA Secretariat, the Directorate of Agriculture and Rural Development of ECOWAS Commission, and EAC in organizing an e-meeting addressing "Establishment and update of regulated pest lists in ACP countries – main implications and challenges".

3.5. Under the 11th EDF project and the Support of IICA (the executing agency), CAHFSA will lead the development of a Regional Policy and Action Plan for Agricultural Health and Food Safety. The project seeks to develop a regional Agricultural Health and Food Safety Policy and Action Plan and a National AHFS Policy Framework that will allow the Caribbean to have a more strategic and focused approach for addressing important AHFS regional and national issues such as meeting SPS requirements for regional and international market access. This intervention will ultimately provide the region and countries with a coherent, coordinated and focused approach to addressing AHFS issues.

3.6. Also, under the 11th EDF project, CAHFSA is collaborating with IICA to support improvements of the SPS regulatory framework in the CARIFORUM member States. This component of the project aims to upgrade select SPS legislation to meet international standards, improve coordination that contributes to effective and efficient SPS control systems, and strengthen the policy framework that guides processes and plans for harmonization of AHFS systems across the Caribbean Region.

4 CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

4.1. CAHFSA continues to coordinate the application of the IPPC PCE tool in three remaining CARICOM member States. The project, which began in 2020 under a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean, has seen one of the four project countries successfully completing the PCE process remotely. Like all projects being executed by CAHFSA, realization of the outputs from this project has been affected by the pandemic as no face-to-face interaction was possible.

4.2. CAHFSA is very excited to be piloting the first STDF P-IMA online course under an STDF project preparation grant. The course is training officials from SPS authorities as P-IMA Facilitators who will collaborate with public and private sector stakeholders to use evidence to prioritize SPS investments in the region.

4.3. In collaboration with COLEACP, CAHFSA is currently supporting a pilot application of the COLEACP Rapid SPS Assessment tool in Suriname. The COLEACP Rapid SPS Assessment Tool (R-SAT) provides a practical, step-by-step guide for ACP countries to assess their national sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) systems to strengthen them in line with international standards and regulations. The aim is to develop a national priority action plan to enhance SPS systems, firmly based on a shared strategic vision agreed upon by all stakeholders.

5 SPS REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

5.1. The Legal Affairs Committee of the CARICOM has approved two draft model SPS bills. The draft animal health bill and the draft plant health bills, which were prepared under the 10th EDF project, were adopted as region models when the Committee met on 11 June 2021. The models are now available for use by the member States in developing/revising their national SPS legislations.

6 TRADE FACILITATION

6.1. CAHFSA continues to implement the Caribbean Development Bank-funded project to support the development of guidelines for intra-regional trade in animal and plant products, which will enhance the framework for intra-regional trade in agricultural commodities among member countries. Specifically, the project involves developing regional commodity-specific sanitary and phytosanitary guidelines for five animal and fourteen plant products.
