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Page: 1/4

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**ECOWAS IMPLEMENTED SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ACTIVITIES
DURING THE PERIOD OF JULY - OCTOBER 2021**

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

The following communication, received on 24 September 2021, is being circulated at the request of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The USAID/West Africa Regional Mission, USDA, Food and Agriculture Organization Subregional Office for West Africa (FAOSFW) and Food and Agriculture Organization Resilience Office for West Africa and the Sahel (FAOREOWA) work 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 - October 2021. It is to note that since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic that is still with us, has impacted the smooth implementation of SPS-related activities at national and regional levels. As such, most planned SPS-related activities were postponed till further notice. However, certain technical and capacity building activities were implemented at national and regional levels, following the COVID-19 protocols.

2 PLANT HEALTH AND PLANT PROTECTION

2.1 Planning the continuation of training workshop on the "Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide"

2.1. Following several coordination meetings, the plan has now been approved for the continuation of the training workshop on "The Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide". This 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.

2.2. It is important to recall the program aims:

- to train in the pilot countries, including Benin and Nigeria, plant quarantine inspectors on a better understanding for further use of the Guide;
- to undertake simulation exercises with practical demonstrations of phytosanitary inspection including pest detection and identification at the laboratory;
- to test the applicability of the Guide.

2.3. Training has been conducted in Cabo Verde on 6-8 September 2021, and will also take place on 5-7 October 2021. Thirty plant inspectors were trained nationwide. This initiative is in line with

ECOWAS priorities and the implementation of the SPS framework to help West African countries' plant quarantine systems meet international standards and to promote safe trade.

2.2 Capacity building of ECOWAS in the prevention, surveillance and control of the desert locust, as well as the analysis of its impact on food and nutrition security in the Sahel in the context of COVID-19

2.4. Regional training on the use of drones in desert locust monitoring and control was implemented in June 2021, in Mauritania as part of the implementation of the comprehensive regional programme on prevention, surveillance and control of the desert locust, as well as the analysis of its impact on food and nutrition security in the Sahel in the context of COVID-19 supported by FAO through a technical cooperation programme TCP/SFW/3801. In addition, the regional training was part of the follow-up actions to the requests of countries, and in line with a "no-regrets" and pre-emptive approach to anticipate the likely crisis, and also in view of the ongoing implementation of preparedness, anticipatory and early actions with the use of technology to solve biological agricultural problems. Fifteen focal points of the nine national desert locust committees of the frontline and invasion countries, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, and regional institutions, including ECOWAS were trained.

2.5. Further, capacity building of competent authorities at the national level on the best practices for the anticipation and control of desert locust invasion in West Africa and the Sahel sub-region was also implemented in invasion countries, including Cameroon (July 2021), the Gambia (August 2021) with 21 and 25 plant protection officers trained, respectively.

2.6. The overall objectives of these training and capacity building activities were:

- curb the spread of desert locust: provide technical equipment and training (survey techniques, spraying techniques, health and environmental monitoring, locust information management and analysis, including the training on the use of new data collection tools (eLocust3g, eLocust3m and eLocust3w);
- national coordination and preparedness: establish/revitalize national desert locust units where necessary and provide training (community sensitization and awareness raising);
- engage in discussion for the development of a national contingency and response plan.

2.7. In both Cameroon and the Gambia, there were also advocacy meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture. As a result, both Ministers, on behalf of their countries, reiterated their willingness to become full members of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO). They will be invited as observers to participate in the forthcoming statutory meeting of CLCPRO.

2.8. At the moment, the situation of the desert locust invasion in West Africa and the Sahel remains calm. Even if the desert locust invasion does not materialize, this initiative has considerably scaled-up the preparedness and control capacities of local actors, while at the same time provided the opportunity to pre-position required equipment, as well as introduce innovative equipment and best practices in this technical field.

2.3 Participation in the virtual consultative meeting for the validation of the continental plant health strategy for Africa, 16 September 2021

2.9. We participated in the virtual consultative meeting for the validation of the continental plant health strategy for Africa held on 16 September 2021. The meeting was attended by more than 46 participants from regional economic communities (RECs), African Union Commission (AUC) technical institutions, private sector, academia, FAO, WHO, WTO, STDF, USDA, USAID, the European Union, other donors and technical partners. There were fruitful discussions during the plenary, and these yielded comprehensive and consensual outcomes that the hired consultant is finalizing in the plant health strategy for Africa.

3 FOOD SAFETY

3.1 ECOWAS Regional meeting on data generation for Codex work, 27 to 29 October 2021, Cotonou, Benin

3.1. Codex standards must be based on sound science. Within the Codex work process, Scientific Advisory Bodies have been established by FAO and WHO to provide scientific advice to Codex Committees during the elaboration of Codex standards. These scientific bodies include:

- Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives and contaminants (JECFA);
- The Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR);
- The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessment (JEMRA);
- The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Meetings on Nutrition (JEMNU).

3.2. In the process of providing scientific advice to Codex Committees and members, the scientific bodies conduct risk assessment using occurrence, consumption and toxicological data from Codex members. Inclusion of data reflecting geographical coverage of Codex membership makes Codex standards representative, inclusive and facilitate domestication of the standards at national level.

3.3. In the past, there have been concerns that certain Codex standards had been developed without data from Africa, and that this could potentially have negative trade implications for food commodities of African origin. Although data from Africa are sometimes available and have been used in the Codex risk assessment and standard setting process, there have also been instances where data from African countries have been rejected due to poor data quality. In most cases however, Africa has not been able to submit relevant data to support Codex standard development even for some priority commodities for the region. Moreover, several African countries do not have national monitoring or foodborne disease surveillance programmes on priority food safety hazards and risks, hence limiting their ability to: anticipate and predict foodborne outbreaks, identify areas of weakness in the food chain and determine the effectiveness of hazard control or mitigation measures.

3.4. Addressing this data gap will require strengthening surveillance and testing capabilities to produce reliable results, leveraging comparative advantages of laboratories in the region for capacity building and data generation, anticipatory, mid and long-term planning, coordination of laboratories at national and regional levels through networking and seamless information flow on Codex data needs and their integration into national food testing activities and research agenda. These may also feed into the SPS index for inclusion in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Biennial Review report.

3.5. With the support of AU-IBAR, ECOWAS is convening a dialogue and networking meeting for food safety laboratories in ECOWAS member States to explore pathways for addressing these challenges. This regional meeting will be held from 27 to 29 October 2021 in Cotonou, Benin.

3.6. The meeting objectives are to:

- Promote networking, peer learning and information sharing between food safety laboratories in the ECOWAS region for greater cooperation;
- Identify Codex work of priority for the region, data needs and approaches for data provisions;
- Identify and discuss procedural and governance issues required for establishing the ECOWAS Regional Food Safety Laboratories Network and agree on a roadmap of actions.

3.7. Participants are Codex Contact Point Officers from ECOWAS member States, coordinators in the National Food Safety Laboratory Network, experts serving on AU-IBAR Expert Meeting on Contaminants, Pesticide Residues, Residues of Veterinary Drugs, as well as representatives from selected national agricultural research institutes and academia.

3.2 Participation in the virtual consultative meeting for the validation of the continental food safety strategy for Africa, 17 September 2021

3.8. We participated in the virtual consultative meeting for the validation of the continental food safety strategy for Africa held on 17 September 2021. The meeting was attended by over 91 participants from countries, RECs, AUC technical institutions, private sector, academia, FAO, WHO, WTO, STDF, USDA, USAID, the European Union, other donors and technical partners. There were fruitful discussions during the plenary and these yielded comprehensive outcomes that the hired consultant is compiling to finalize the food safety strategy for Africa.

4 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

4.1. The ECOWAS Commission takes this opportunity to thank all partners for their continuing support in advancing SPS-related issues in the ECOWAS and Sahel sub-region, and to call for more collaboration, and support for future implementation, especially in the new era of and post COVID-19.
