



14 October 2021

(21-7803)

Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

SADC SECRETARIAT REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

SADC REPORT TO THE WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 12 October 2021, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

1 BACKGROUND

1.1. 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 its citizens through safe intra-SADC and international trade through the application of relevant international standards.

1.2. Plant pests and animal diseases can inadvertently be transported along with traded commodities thereby threatening the agricultural production and environment of the importing country. Food and feed may be contaminated with pesticide residues or other chemical toxins. To reduce these risks without unduly restricting regional or international trade in food and agro-products, the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Annex to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Trade allows SADC member States to adopt harmonized or scientifically justified SPS measures. This is in line with the implementation of the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of SPS Measures, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

2 UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS ANNEX TO THE SADC PROTOCOL ON TRADE

2.1 Harmonization

2.1. On 29 September 2021, the SADC secretariat collaborated with the SADC Business and GIZ - CESARE in facilitating a virtual consultative meeting to discuss differences on health attestation requirements in SADC member States. The purpose of the meeting was to enable seamless movement of food commodities across borders and avoid unnecessary costs incurred due to the variations in market requirements as required by the health attestation certificates. The meeting was attended by public and private sector organizations and business entities involved in cross-border food trade.

2.2. On 26 August 2021, the SADC secretariat and member States participated in a virtual capacity building meeting organised by COLEACP for the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) countries' National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs). This was in line with the COLEACP mission of developing inclusive, sustainable trade in fruits and vegetables including other food products focusing on trade amongst ACP countries and on their trade with the European Union (EU).

2.3. The SADC secretariat and member States participated in the virtual African Union (AU) Technical Validation Meetings for the draft Continental Plant Health Strategy (PHSA) and Continental Food Safety Strategy for Africa held on 31 August and 17 September 2021 respectively. The meetings were organised by the African Union Commission (AU), Department of Agriculture Rural Development Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (DARBE).

2.4. These continental strategies will have several medium to long-term outcomes such as the operation of an efficient, science-based food regulatory environment; an enhanced compliance leading to delivery of safer agri-food value chains across the continent; a reduction in the foodborne disease burden and plant health threats in Africa; as well as an improved competitiveness of Africa's plant and food commodities for increased intra-African and global trade.

3 UPDATES ON EU SUPPORTED TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMMES

3.1 The SADC-EU Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP)

3.1. The Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) has focused on ensuring that the SADC Protocols on Trade and Trade in Services are effectively implemented and that the implementation of the EU - SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is adequately supported. The TFP also covers regional integration matters in the areas of TBT and SPS measures as well as customs technical assistance support.

3.2. During the period under review, the programme has launched several studies that are aimed at building a good understanding of the gaps that exist in the industrialisation and trade frameworks and systems of the region so that they may be addressed. One study sought to find the key standards, technical regulations, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and their associated conformity assessment procedures along the identified value-chain. These include grains – wheat and rice; oil seeds and legumes – soya beans, cotton and sunflower; livestock – poultry. These categories and products were selected based on the fact that SADC region was not producing and trading in enough of them.

3.3. The other study, aimed at the development of a framework for mutual recognition of certificates of compliance issued by the competent national authorities across SADC member States, is underway. This framework will specify typical terms and conditions under which each SADC member State will, guided by international principles, accept certificates of compliance issued by the competent authority of the trading partner. It is envisaged that this will reduce trade costs through eliminating the need for multiple testing, inspection and certification of food and feed commodities in the exporting member State and re-testing in the importing member State. Over and above the resolution of case-by-case import and export issues, this framework will also serve to impart the necessary confidence and transparency that member States should have in each other's national SPS systems.

3.4. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an immense influence on the way that SPS issues are handled at both the national and regional levels. For a science that is highly dependent on the physical, there is no doubt that the SPS field has to develop the means of achieving regional SPS objectives by remote means. This kind of adaptation will not be achieved overnight and will need a lot of collaboration amongst member States and between regional economic communities. The SADC region would strongly welcome such opportunities centrally coordinated in the global SPS sphere.

Report by: Mr. Chiluba Mwape
SADC Key Expert on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
