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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**INFORMATION ON SPS-RELATED ACTIVITIES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)
(OCTOBER 2021 – FEBRUARY 2022)**

COMMUNICATION FROM ITC

The following communication, received on 3 March 2022, is being circulated at the request of the ITC.

The International Trade Centre is continuing its efforts to assist enterprises to meet technical market requirements. An update of selected SPS-related activities of interest to WTO Members is provided below.

1 PROJECTS

1.1 Malaysia Arise Plus Project (February 2021 - January 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.1. In partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the project aims to support inclusive and sustainable trade growth and poverty reduction in Malaysia, while contributing to economic integration in the ASEAN region.

1.2. A series of workshops have been completed between October 2021 and January 2022 as part of technical assistance to reinforce the control mechanism for pesticides, including the control of counterfeited pesticides and invertebrates as biological control agents. The training aimed at registration and enforcement staff of Pesticides Board of the Malaysian Department of Agriculture, included evaluation of pesticide registration dossier, safety and bio-efficacy assessment, management of counterfeit pesticides, and guidelines developed on simplified registration of minimum risk pesticides, all based international standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the relevant international organizations (FAO, Codex, IPPC). 70 participants attended the training of whom 26 were women.

1.3. Work has commenced to train officers of the Plant Biosecurity Division of Department of Agriculture (DoA) on identification and pest management of EU-related quarantined pests for vegetables, flowers, tropical plants and aquatic plants.

1.2 Philippines Arise Plus Project (March 2021 – February 2025 / Donor European Union)

1.4. In partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, the project supports progressive achievement of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 and realization of the 2nd and 3rd pillars of the Philippines Development Plan (2017-2022).

1.5. The overall objective of the project is to foster inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the Philippines. The specific objective of the project is to improve Philippines' trade performance and competitiveness. Among its expected results are putting in place a National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that promotes export competitiveness, and quality management and control systems for exported food products better aligned with international best practices.

1.6. As part of technical assistance to support Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Agriculture (DA), attached agencies and food industry associations, a series of two training workshops on EU regulations related to food safety were held between 28 October and 4 November 2021. The training covered main requirements under the Regulation (EC) Nos: 178/2002 (General Food Law); 852/2004 (Hygiene of foodstuffs); 853/2004 (specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin); 2073/2005 (microbiological criteria); 2074/2005 (implementing measures); 2075/2005 (Trichinella testing); provisions on contaminants, OCR 625/2017 (official controls regulation), as well as import conditions applicable to all foods, food of animal origin, and food of non-animal origin. Information on EU TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System) and RASFF (Rapid Alert system for food and feed) was also provided. 135 of the 176 participants of these trainings were women.

1.3 EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme - MARKUP (July 2018 - July 2022 / Donor European Union)

1.7. This project aims to contribute to the economic development of the East African Community (EAC) region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), with the specific objective to improve market access of agro-industrial crops and horticultural products such as avocado, cocoa, coffee, spices and tea to the European Union, and among the five EAC partners.

1.8. Support to nine avocado producer groups in Kenya is now complete with the groups being successfully certified to GlobalG.A.P.

1.9. Ongoing support to Quality Champions Hubs and transfer of courses, including a course on food safety. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations available on the EAC Quality for Trade Portal.

1.4 Uzbekistan - Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO (February 2020 - February 2025 / Donor European Union)

1.10. The project supports Uzbekistan's development plans to modernize its economy through leveraging the process of WTO accession. The specific objective of the action is to create a trade environment that is in conformity with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

1.11. A report with recommendations to improve the alignment of the present national food safety law to the SPS Agreement has been submitted to the authorities.

1.5 Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - June 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.12. The ARISE Plus project aims at building inclusive and sustainable trade growth in Myanmar through support to MSMEs in selected value chains enhancing food safety and SPS compliance (targeting tea, coffee, honey, horticulture products) and trade policy formulation and implementation.

1.13. Working is advancing on Myanmar Platform on Quality and Food Safety featuring quality requirements for selected product-market combinations (avocado, coffee, honey, and tea targeting EU markets) with featured Trainer-cum-Counsellor expert profiles and service provider institutions in Myanmar.

1.6 Tajikistan: Enabling Market access for Agricultural Products through Improved Food Safety System (March 2018 - February 2022 / STDF - PG-447 implemented by ITC in collaboration with FAO, in particular for output 1 on the regulatory control system)

1.14. The goal of the project is to improve the export competitiveness of Tajik SMEs and food safety through better use of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines with a focus on honey and apricot sectors.

1.15. The project partner (FAO) is working on guidelines regarding the food control and monitoring system with a focus on honey and dried apricots. A tool and consolidated guidelines on the control and monitoring system were developed, presented and discussed with project partners.

1.16. In October 2021, a study tour for 12 representatives of the Tajik honey sector (private and public) to Ukraine was organised to understand best practices of beekeeping, compliance with related legislation and export procedures to the European Union. The study tour enabled participants to learn good practices from one of the largest honey producing countries in the world.

1.17. A dedicated set of communication material on the application of veterinary medicines and pesticides was developed.

1.18. The project officially ended after four years of implementation on 28 February 2022.

1.7 SYMST: Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam) (December 2018 – October 2022 / Donor European Union)

1.19. The overall objective of the project is to improve food safety through better governance in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. The project aims to strengthen the regulatory framework for control of plant health and pesticides in the fruits and vegetable sector and other plant products through the application of norms and standards to improve market access.

1.20. In Lao People's Democratic Republic, support is underway to provide access and make information available regarding registered pesticides, target uses, national/Codex MRL setting for target commodities for export. A database providing relevant information is also being developed under this activity.

1.21. Development of draft Ministerial Guidance on 'Measures Responding to Non-Compliance Export of Plant Product and Regulated Articles to European Union Import Regulation'.

1.22. Support DOA on MRL training ongoing, list of equipment and consumables required for the training has been procured.

1.23. A series of online consultations and field training took place in October and November including, virtual training on TRACES for targeted exporters. Internal consultation on draft EU manual on plant health and disease management and training in targeted provinces; preparation of DOA awareness campaign on challenges and rules for export of rice and watermelon; training on MRL pesticide analysis for target active substances in Luangnamtha province, Vientiane capital and Champassak province.

1.24. In Viet Nam, a second training programme on TRACES took place from 14 to 16 September. The second event provided a broader training (TRACES) focused on coaching both the economic operators and the authorities on the day-to-day use of TRACES. The training also provided assistance on technical issues when using and issuing a phytosanitary certificate or using the administration functions of TRACES e.g., managing the users, manage the operators, etc.

1.25. The development of the bilingual (English and Vietnamese) document on EU regulations related to food safety and phytosanitary for imported plant and food agricultural products for inspection commenced. A virtual meeting was organized on 9 September and attended by PPD and relevant stakeholders to discuss the first draft out the document. A virtual meeting was also organized on 27 September and attended by PPD and relevant stakeholders, to present the outline of the bilingual book titled "EU food safety and plant health regulations for imported plant products". The methodology and timeline of the book were presented to stakeholders.

1.8 Thailand ARISE Plus Project (November 2020 – October 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.26. The new ITC implemented ARISE Plus Thailand project aims to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through international trade in Thailand.

1.27. Under this overall objective, ITC supports the enhancement and dissemination of organic agricultural practices in line with EU standards.

1.28. A technical guide on the revised EU legal framework will be developed and the adaptation to the country context of Thailand will be discussed as part of the guide. In addition, the new legal framework will be compared to the existing Thai and ASEAN organic standards.

1.29. The training material on organic production for farmers and producers is being drafted. The project will focus on rice and mangosteen organic production in two regions of the country.

1.30. An IRCA approved lead auditor training for ISO 9001 was carried out and an awareness campaign on organic production as well as the planning of trilateral (Thailand, European Union and other ASEAN states) events for exchange of experiences in organic production and cross-learning started.

1.9 Lao ARISE Plus Project (2018-2022 / Donor European Union)

1.31. Nine Quality Champions developed under the Arise Plus Lao People's Democratic Republic Quality Champions Programme are featured users on the Quality Connect tool, who, once certified, will offer their services to SMEs through the national chamber of commerce and industry (LNCCI).

1.32. 15 Quality Champions were trained on food safety, including HACCP.

1.33. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations available on the Lao People's Democratic Republic Quality for Trade Portal.

1.34. First part of training of food inspectors attached to FDD implemented.

1.35. Ongoing cooperation between the Centre of Medical Science of Thailand and the Food and Drug Department of Lao focuses on assistance to strengthen the pesticides and chemical laboratory.

1.36. Posters developed by Codex, WHO and others have been identified by the Food and drug Department for translation/reproduction to sensitise on COVID-19 and hygiene.

1.10 Pakistan: Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (June 2019 – December 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.37. The project aims to contribute to the reduction of poverty through the development of rural MSMEs in selected districts within two provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan and Sindh.

1.38. During the period under report, ITC has been providing support to the food authorities in the two provinces on a variety of topics, including food safety standards and compliance in milk and meat sectors. Furthermore, ITC is providing training to the Department of Plant Protection in SPS compliance, as well as to animal health-related departments on the monitoring of slaughterhouses. ITC is also providing support to the provinces to develop foot and mouth disease (FMD) strategies in line with the recently approved federal policy, and on setting up disease control zones in the provinces. Two mobile laboratories are being purchased for the food departments which will then be operationalized, and training will be provided to the staff to use them as per best international practices. At the enterprise level, ITC continued to provide trainings to MSMEs (farmers and processors) in rural Sindh and Balochistan to improve their awareness on quality, SPS and food safety through GAP and GMP modules. ITC is planning for further outreach of these trainings in the future.

1.39. ITC also developed training material (manuals, slides, case stories, exercises etc.) for the training of SMEs (from horticulture and livestock) on quality management systems and on principles of food safety and SPS at farm, processor and market levels. The training material will be handed over to Pakistani institutions in Sindh and Balochistan to use it to train SMEs in rural areas and in this regard, master trainers from these institutions are being trained through extensive train-the-trainer workshops.

1.11 EU-Bhutan Trade Support Project (2012–2023 / Donor European Union)

1.40. The specific objective of the project is to increase export diversification, contributing to the implementation of the "Brand Bhutan" initiative, by improving the capacities of trade and investment

policy formulation and implementation, and increasing exports in two selected value chains, i.e. horticulture (ginger/turmeric, mushrooms, and yak dairy) and textile handicrafts.

1.41. Training support on food hygiene and food safety to Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) staff and SMEs, is ongoing.

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