



ECOWAS IMPLEMENTED SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD OF MARCH - JUNE 2022

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

The following communication, received on 17 May 2022, 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 March - June 2022. 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, since countries have started lifting some of the travels restrictions, 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 Continuation of training workshop on the "Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide"

2.1. It is important to recall that this in-country training should be conducted in all 15 ECOWAS member States plus Chad and Mauritania. 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 complemented by USAID West Africa Office 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. Training has now been planned to be conducted in Senegal (24-27 May 2022), Niger (1-4 June 2022), and Guinea Bissau (6-8 June 2022). The trained inspectors would be capacitated to duplicate the training and also apply it in their daily operations. There would be:

- presentations and discussions on the provisions of the Guide related to phytosanitary inspection procedures for import and export;
- presentations of ISPMs 05, 07, 11, 12, 23, 31 and 32; and
- exercises with practical demonstrations of inspection, sampling, pest detection and identification and decision-making.

2.2. Also, it is important to recall the programme aims at:

- training plant quarantine inspectors in the countries on a better understanding for further use of the Guide;
- simulation exercises with practical demonstrations of phytosanitary inspection including pest detection and identification at the laboratory;
- testing the applicability of the Guide.

2.2 Capacity building of plant quarantine inspectors and technicians on pest surveillance and inspection

2.3. Online training on inspection procedures was conducted for plant quarantine inspectors and technicians of the 15 ECOWAS member States plus Chad and Mauritania. Overall, 46 inspectors and technicians were trained on these online modules. Following a post-training evaluation, it was noted that these online training modules were of interest and would add value in the future as the world is moving towards online and innovative methods of training.

2.4. There were challenges reported by the participants including access to internet connectivity, availability of computers, downloading of certificate of participation among others. These challenges could be resolved through technical assistance programmes, on a case-by-case basis.

2.3 West Africa NPPOs and Partners' Taskforce annual meeting and preparation of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-16) meeting

2.5. The Regional West Africa NPPOs and Partners Taskforce meeting and preparation of the harmonization of common positions for the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-16) meeting was held from 7-11 March 2022, Cotonou, Benin. Participants are NPPOs from 15 ECOWAS member States plus Chad and Mauritania as well ECOWAS's regional partners. The meeting has discussed matters of interest tabled for discussion at CPM-16 and a common position document was drafted. Among other matters of interest was the ECOWAS request to be recognized as a Regional Plant Protection Organization (RPPO) of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). All member countries have reiterated their commitment and engagement to this process. However, during the discussion at the plenary at CPM-16, the matter was postponed to allow further consultations with the Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) of the African Union Commission (AUC). A consultation meeting will be held from 6-8 June 2022, hosted by the IPPC secretariat at FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy.

2.4 National training of technicians in the establishment and monitoring of fruit fly surveillance system in Liberia, 16-18 May 2022

2.6. A national training on the above thematic area is organized by the ECOWAS Commission through its funding support from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and European Union (EU) to build the capacity of the plant protection directorate technicians in this area. This is in line with the objectives of the Regional Innovative Fruit Fly Control System in West Africa (SyRIMAO) project.

3 FOOD SAFETY

3.1 Participation in the regional and continental harmonization meeting to discuss and agree on common positions for the Draft Guideline for Developing Harmonized Food Safety Legislation for the CCAFRICA Region

3.1. A regional and continental meeting was organized from 9 to 11 May 2022, in Arusha, Tanzania to discuss this draft document and harmonize common positions. Following discussions, a common position document was developed and member countries were invited to submit conference room documents (CRD) as well as comment through the online commenting system (OCS) of the Codex Alimentarius commission for consideration during the plenary at the next CCAFRICA meeting when the matter would be discussed. Participants were from the EAC, ECOWAS and experts from CCAFRICA.

3.2 Organization of the 1st regional meeting for establishing an ECOWAS food safety regulatory convergence forum

3.2. The first regional meeting for establishing an ECOWAS food safety regulatory convergence forum is being planned to hold from 18 to 22 July 2022 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Expected participants are Codex contact points, OIE focal points and other CVOs, National Plant Protection Organizations, WTO-SPS focal points, experts, private sector representatives, regional organizations and partners.

3.3. The key objectives are:

- To review and validate the statutes of the forum/network of West Africa food safety actors;
- To review and validate the paper on the proposed Mechanism for Convergence of Food Regulatory Measures Amongst ECOWAS Countries;
- To define and agree on scope of the food safety coordination mechanism;
- To define common food safety priorities for the region;
- To agree on a roadmap for actions in relation to Codex and SPS work in the region;
- To revitalize the network of West Africa food safety actors.

3.3 Participation in the virtual 15th Codex Committee on Contaminants meeting, 9-24 May 2022

3.4. There was coordination of matters related to this technical committee at regional and continental levels with common positions document drafted and participation in the ongoing virtual meeting.

4 ANIMAL HEALTH AND ZOOSES DISEASES

4.1. Regional training on GIS and risk assessment for the optimization of surveillance and control systems for transboundary animal diseases.

4.2. The ECOWAS Commission has organized an ECOWAS regional training on risk communication, disease emergency management on transboundary diseases (TADs) and zoonoses conducted from 16 to 20 May 2022 in Dakar Senegal. Participants are the OIE focal points, Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) from the ECOWAS member States, experts, regional organizations and partners.

5 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

5.1. 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, technical assistance and support for future implementation.
