

**TECHNICAL COOPERATION: THE STATE OF THE DIFFERENT AGRIFOOD
SANITARY SYSTEMS IN THE AMERICAS**

Submission by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety systems (SPFSS) have been developed with different priorities in mind. However, their objectives in some cases have been aimed at strengthening the control and eradication of pests and diseases, at providing a rapid response to the introduction of same, and at taking quarantine actions at the border, backed up, on some occasions, by heavy investments in infrastructure. These actions are necessary, but, if taken separately, can create weaknesses in the overall health and safety system, as a result of imbalances in the institutional, technological and regulatory frameworks.

2. Another weakness that has been detected in the SPFSS is the lack of articulation between the public and private sectors and between the different public institutions either directly or indirectly involved in the field of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. This public/private articulation takes place through formal and informal channels of communication, which facilitate the identification and prioritization of the needs of both sectors. The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) addresses this issue in the document "Technical Cooperation: an Overview."¹ In the document, emphasis is placed on the need to articulate and balance the actions taken in the three basic frameworks of the SPFSS: institutional, technological and regulatory.

II. THE BASIC FRAMEWORKS OF THE SPFSS

3. Under the *institutional* framework, national sanitary and phytosanitary interests are represented and defended, agreements are implemented and commitments acquired at the international level are fulfilled. Also, channels of communication are established at the intersectoral and interinstitutional levels, and the financial and technical sustainability of the system is ensured.

4. The *technological* framework increases the efficiency of the actors in both the public and private sectors, and involves actions in the fields of surveillance, quarantine, and diagnosis. This framework demands few resources, and should be backed by processes of identification and prioritization, which considers the possibility of regional investments.

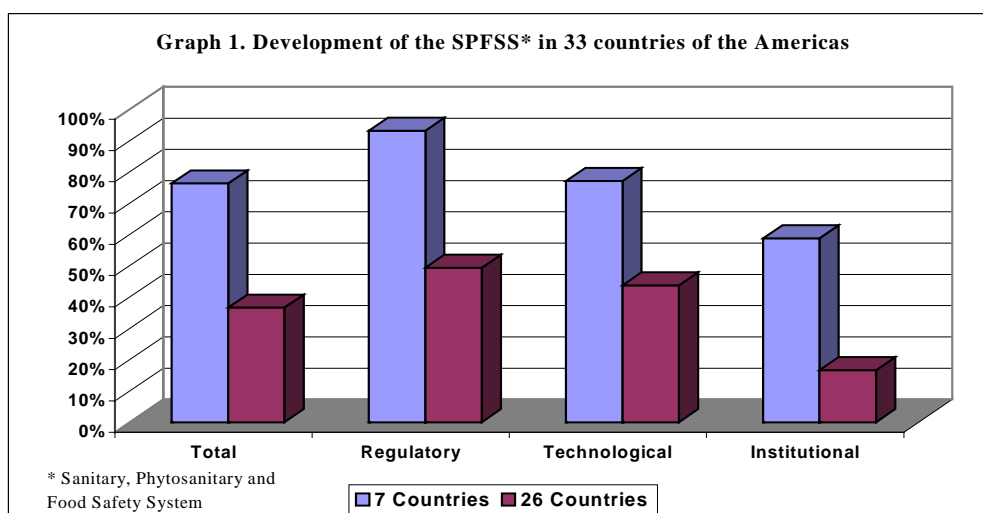
¹ Document to be presented to the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (CSPM) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

5. The *regulatory* framework promotes the modernization of legislation (laws, regulations, decrees, rules), bringing it into line with international regulations and defining the rights and obligations of the actors.

III. RESULTS OF THE STUDIES ON THE SPFSS OF THE AMERICAS

6. The level of development of the different variables of the three frameworks in the SPFSS of the Americas, vis-à-vis the proper implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (ASPM) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), can be quantified on the basis of an analysis of the results of several studies conducted in the region.

7. The data from these studies show that, of the 33 countries for which there is information, seven form a group that meets, on average, 76% of favorable conditions in order to comply and implement the ASPM. More specifically, they meet 93% of the requirements in the regulatory framework, 77% in the technological framework and 59% in the institutional framework. (See graph 1.)



8. The countries of this group are characterized by a modern and harmonized regulatory system; effective and balanced participation in the international forums (99%² in the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (CSPM) of the WTO, and 90%³ in the committees of Codex Alimentarius); and the technology needed to respond to emergencies.

9. The remaining 26 countries meet, on average, 36% of the favorable conditions in order to comply and implement the ASPM. They meet 49% of the requirements in the regulatory framework, 44% in the technological framework and 16% in the institutional framework.

10. The level of development of the SPFSS in the 26 countries varies. Some have invested large sums in technology and infrastructure, but suffer from shortcomings in the regulatory and institutional frameworks. Also, there are also countries in which all three frameworks are underdeveloped, despite

² These percentages come from a study on the participation of the member countries in the CSPM of the WTO, which was conducted using the lists available in the document dissemination system of the WTO, and information from eleven meetings held to date.

³ Information from the meetings of six Codex Alimentarius horizontal committees, five of which were held in 2000 and one in December 1999, was also analyzed.

having economies highly dependent on the agrifood sector. Some of these countries participate on a limited basis in the international organizations, which would suggest that institutional development and articulation between the public and private sectors is minimal.

11. Balance in the SPFSS generates benefits in terms of trade and establishes efficient channels of communication among the actors, regardless of their relative size. For example, one of the seven countries accounts for only 1% of agricultural exports in the Americas; participates effectively in the international forums (90% in the CSPM of the WTO⁴ and 83% in the horizontal committees of Codex Alimentarius⁵); and estimates that it receives some US\$83 in exports for each US\$1 it invests in its sanitary system.

12. This shows that the benefits this country has obtained as a result of a well-planned policy for development in the agricultural health field results both in compliance with and application of the ASPM, as well as tangible benefits in terms of trade and consumer protection.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

13. Based on the results obtained, it is clear that technical cooperation must be implemented in such a way as to incorporate elements of diagnosis, articulation and balance. Also, we should no longer believe that the effectiveness of such cooperation is determined only by the amount of financial resources invested or by granting longer periods of time for the implementation of specific rules.

14. Public/private articulation is key factor in the proper application of the ASPM and, therefore, constitutes a major challenge for those countries that lack efficient mechanisms for communication and intersectoral participation.

15. The greatest weaknesses of the countries of the two groups analyzed were, coincidentally, in the institutional area, which indicates that this should become the new niche for technical cooperation.

16. Balance must be the principal characteristic in the development of SPFSS. However, institutional strengthening is the framework which should be given special attention, since it involves public/private articulation and the proactive participation of the international organizations. At the national level, the framework involves actions of diagnosis and prioritization, and at the international level, actions of implementation.

17. The data obtained at the hemispheric level also showed that balanced and articulated development opens up more possibilities for access to markets and protection of consumers, as shown by the group of seven countries, which account for nearly 88% of agrifood exports in the Americas.

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⁴ See footnote 2

⁵ See footnote 3