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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)
(MARCH - JUNE 2023)**

COMMUNICATION FROM ITC

The following communication, received on 13 June 2023, 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 Iraq: Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy (SAAVI) (September 2020 - April 2025 / Donor European Union)

1.1. This project aims to support stabilization and governance through building the capacities of key Iraqi institutions to deliver public services, as well as sustainable job creation through the development of human capital and the enhancement of the private sector's competitiveness. The project focuses on the development and implementation of sector strategies for high-potential products, as well as on defining more market-oriented policies to improve predictability and efficiency in the business environment. SAAVI also provides assistance to enhance Iraq's trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process. As part of this latter support, a workshop to help Iraq implement the transparency-related functions of its SPS National Enquiry Point and SPS National Notification Authority was held between 7-18 May 2023. 21 participants attended the workshop which consisted of numerous sessions related to transparency-related obligations, notification formats, coordinating responses and comments to draft measures, the SPS Committee's key related recommendations and decisions, as well as hands-on and live training on the use of the ePing platform including demonstration of how to submit SPS notifications.

1.2. An agri-food based farmer alliance that grows potatoes for domestic consumption is being supported to improve food safety-related standards. The objective is to comply with government regulations and meet standards of large domestic buyers. As a second phase, exports are also targeted at limited scale. The progress in the potato sector will be monitored and shall be replicated for the poultry and tomato sector.

1.3. Meanwhile a Guide on Food Safety for Iraqi small and medium-sized enterprises is also being prepared in Arabic language. Iraq Quality for Trade Platform has been developed and is ready for scaling. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations identified under the project (preliminarily - tomato, poultry and dates) are going to be featured on the Platform. Dates have been identified as the first sector to be mapped on the platform.

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

1.4. 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.

1.5. Activities include biosecurity of fisheries and aquaculture, plant health, animal health and sustainable agriculture practices including GAP, Organic, Green Livestock and agricultural waste management.

1.6. Following a study visit to EU member States, Germany and Netherlands, carried out during 20-24 February 2023 by the Department of Agriculture (DoA) Plant Biosecurity staff to update knowledge and observe on-site practical aspects of best practices in fertilizer production, and learn about administration and enforcement of EU regulations, a meeting session was also organized where Malaysia's DoA team in charge of Malaysia's Fertilizer Act development exchanged with Thai and Vietnamese authorities to learn how fertilizers are regulated/administered/controlled in Thailand and Viet Nam.

1.7. A second round of training and onsite advisory assistance to the Department of Fisheries (DOF) (after those in September 2022) is being organized through a mission in mid-July to early August with two international experts, including site visits related to fish disease surveillance, and practical aspects of implementing EU requirements. Working sessions on EU audits and specific constraints related to exporting to the European Union will also be addressed.

1.8. Assistance related to traceability of eggs and dairy products and veterinary epidemiology modelling has been organized through training workshops and site visits envisaged during August and November of this year respectively. A study visit for three to four Department of Veterinary Service (DVS) officers to see practical implementation of eggs and milk traceability system in the European Union is also being organized. A training attachment for the Department of Agriculture's Plant Biosecurity staff to improve plant protection and pest risk management knowhow and skills with specific reference to EU exports and import protocols used for fresh produce (fresh fruits and vegetables, and horticultural products) is also being organized at a National Plant Protection Office (NPPO) in an EU member State.

1.9. A training on invasiveness screening, related to aquatic alien species, is being organized during the second half of August 2023.

1.10. A series of training sessions to promote the use of climate-smart practices to improve various dimensions of livestock systems, including sustainable sourcing of feeds, carbon sequestration in agricultural landscapes, energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources, animal health and welfare, and better manure management among farmers and processors, enhanced greenhouse gases emission monitoring and reporting capacities, will take place in June and September on Green sustainability, waste management and circular economy in livestock, and agricultural project management and environmental sustainability.

1.11. The project is also supporting the Plant Biosecurity Division of DOA on the identification and pest management of EU-quarantined pests for vegetables, flowers, tropical plants and aquatic plants. A series of four training courses will take place between June and September, to train officers from Plant Biosecurity Divisions, state agricultural officers of DOA. The compilation of information for ten important species of pest and diseases of: a) rice, leafy and fruity vegetables grown in the glasshouse and fields, and their natural enemies; and b) quarantine importance in EU countries, and natural enemies will be prepared in advance and used during the training sessions. The courses will take place on:

- 19-21 June - Training on the General Concept and Basic Principles of Integrated Ecological Pest Management (IEPM)
- 10-14 July - Training on IEPM and Biological Control in Rice
- 7-11 August - Training on IEPM and Biological Control in Vegetables and Flowers
- 18-22 September - Training on IEPM with a focus on Biological Control in Vegetables and Flowers under Glasshouse Conditions (EU experiences)

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

1.12. The project aims to foster inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the Philippines through improved trade performance and competitiveness, and specifically by putting in place a National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that promotes export competitiveness, and a quality

management and control systems for exported food products better aligned with international best practices.

1.13. During the reporting period, training of the Competent Authority, i.e., FDA's Common Services Laboratory (CSL) personnel was completed through the 3rd and final workshop on chemical testing of processed foods. Consisting of theoretical and practical sessions, these covered test method implementation and validation; analysis of pesticides, veterinary drugs residue, mycotoxin, and food additives using LC/MS/MS and GC/MS/MS techniques. Moreover, training on risk-based sampling and analysis, microbiological testing and commercial sterility are being planned.

1.14. Following the development of guides consisting of risk-based inspection checklists, guidelines, procedural manuals, and SOPs in fresh fruits and vegetables, processed coconut and fisheries sectors, a first training on implementing the protocols developed in the fisheries sector is being held for officers of the Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in June 2023. BFAR's regional laboratories are also being supported for accreditation against ISO 17025: 2017 to test for veterinary drug residue analysis aiming at expanding BFAR's capacity to the many regions in the Philippines.

1.15. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations identified under the project (Virgin Coconut Oil, Coconut Water, Coconut Flour) are scheduled to be made available in 2023 on the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform. Mappings of coffee and cocoa to the European Union have already been made available.

1.16. A launch event for the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform was held in Manila on 18 May 2023, attended by key beneficiaries, SMEs, experts, quality institutions and partners. Profiles of Quality Champions (QCs) were shown, in addition to the quality requirements mappings of coffee and cocoa. These QCs will help SMEs in the Philippines in quality improvement projects, some of which are based around food safety.

1.4 Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - May 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.17. 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.

1.18. Work is advancing on the Myanmar Platform on Quality and Food Safety. The site already contains information on SPS and quality requirements for selected product-market combinations (avocado, coffee, honey, and tea targeting EU markets) and will soon feature similar requirements for dried mango and dried pineapple. The site also features 25 expert (Trainer-cum-Counsellor and Quality Champion) profiles and ten service provider institutions in Myanmar.

1.19. The project has supported the submission of the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP). Following the most recent submission of the NRMP in 2023, a training programme customized to non-compliant cases of honey samples is being designed and will be implemented during the final year of the project. Several brochures and guides on hygiene and food safety in honey production were developed and translated to Myanmar language. Companies in the honey, tea, coffee and fruit/vegetable sector are being supported for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) implementation.

1.20. Two private food testing labs are being supported for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025. The laboratories were assisted in demonstrating their capability through proficiency testing. Several lots of equipment to further strengthen the laboratories are being procured. A training course on EU RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) and ASEAN RASFF will be conducted in July.

1.5 SYMST: Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam) (December 2018 – October 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.21. 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.

1.22. The Viet Nam Quality for Trade Platform was made available, where users can discover quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations identified under the project (such as pomelo, dragon fruit, black pepper to the European Union), as well as coffee to the European Union, the Republic of Korea and Thailand).

1.23. The Plant Protection Lab under DOA, Lao People's Democratic Republic is being supported for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 2017. Training will take place in August on understanding the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and identification of documentation required for implementation of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 requirements.

1.24. In Viet Nam, training was provided to the National Plant Protection Department on 5 June on the regulatory needs of an import tolerance dossier, and coordination with manufacturers/producers/associations/consultancies. Training also included work done by countries on Codex MRLs.

1.6 Lao ARISE Plus Project (2018-2023 / Donor European Union)

1.25. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations identified under the project (coffee to the European Union, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam) are available on the Lao People's Democratic Republic Quality for Trade Platform. In addition, through synergies with the SYMST project, requirements for basil, rice, and chillies to the European Union, and watermelon to China are also mapped.

1.26. Posters developed by Codex, WHO and others to sensitize on COVID-19 and hygiene have been translated, printed and distributed to the district offices of the Food and Drug Department for placement in public spaces.

1.27. A launch event for a guide on the new ePing system was held with key stakeholders, including the SPS and TBT National Enquiry Points and the National Notification Authority.

1.28. The National Centre for Food and Drug Analysis (NCFDA) of the Ministry of Health has obtained accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 for a limited scope within its food microbiology lab, and the project is providing support for extending the scope of accreditation covering heavy metals in water. In collaboration with the Bureau of Quality and Safety of Food (BQSF), the Department of Medical Sciences (DMSc), and the Ministry of Public Health in Thailand, a five-day onsite training took place during 8--12 May in the NCFDA lab on method verification on determination of metals in water by atomic absorption spectroscopy technique. This training will be followed by a knowledge-sharing mission for NCFDA hosted by the BQSF in Thailand from 14-16 June.

1.29. Support is also being provided to exporters in Lao People's Democratic Republic exporting fresh and agricultural products to Thailand to understand and implement the requirements of Thailand's regulation Notification of the Ministry of Public Health No. 420 of B.E. 2563 (2020) (General requirement) and No. 386 of B.E. 2560 (2017). A series of three 3-day training workshops on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) will be conducted for a total of 66 exporters in three different provinces (Champasak, Savannakhet, and Xayaboury) between 13 and 29 June.

1.30. The training will also support Food and Drug Department (FDD) food inspectors to improve inspections carried out at the establishment in order to ensure compliance with GMP GHP requirements and issue audit certificates. A train the trainer workshop will take place on 3-7 July in Vientiane Capital for FDD food inspections, this workshop will focus on the enforcement of the Thai regulations by food inspectors including the principles of auditing and managing an audit programme.

1.7 Uzbekistan: Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO (February 2020 – October 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.31. Under this project, a series of trainings to reinforce pest risk analysis and integrated pest risk management capacities of Uzbekistan's Agency for Plant Protection and Quarantine are being organized through June to August 2023. First among these, on registration and import requirements as per EU Plant Protection Products Regulation, Good practices and challenges in the regulation implementation, is being held between 19 and 23 June 2023. Moreover, a workshop on "SPS National Enquiry Point (NEP) procedures, organization and functioning" is being held on the same dates, aimed at relevant policy makers and representatives of SPS-related agencies. In response to a request by Uzbekistan's San-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health Committee, relevant chapters of the World Organisation for Animal Health's latest revised version of the Aquatic and Terrestrial Codes are being translated into the Uzbek language towards improved implementation of standards for animal health and welfare. Forthcoming work will inter-alia cover animal traceability and preparation of a national residue monitoring plan.

1.8 Pakistan: Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) (June 2019 to December 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.32. In the Sindh province, a fully equipped Mobile Laboratory Van was handed over to the Sindh Food Authority (SFA). The handing over ceremony was held at the Ministry of Food Offices. The ceremony was attended by the EU Ambassador, the Minister for Food, the Secretary for Food, the DG for Food, and other relevant stakeholders. The SFA team is regularly visiting the field and ensuring food safety compliance. Moreover, SFA has developed a monitoring framework for the Mobile Lab Van visits and to capture its success and impact.

1.33. In Balochistan, GRASP provided capacity building support to various government departments, including livestock, agriculture and food. More specifically, during the reporting year, major capacity building support was provided to Balochistan Food Authority (BFA) by providing the latter with a state-of-the-art, well-equipped mobile lab van, equipping BFA's main laboratory, and training as many as 33 laboratory and field staff on the use of the lab equipment and mobile lab van. Moreover, SPS compliance capacity building trainings were provided to the officers of the Directorate of Plant Protection and the Directorate of Soil Fertility, which function under the supervision of the Directorate General of the Agriculture Extension, Government of Balochistan. Support related to livestock was provided to the Directorate General Animal Health, by training 15 of its officers in the Animal Health Information System.

1.34. Additionally, a fresh needs assessment has been carried out with the provincial food safety, plant protection and animal health authorities to identify activities that will be implemented during the rest of the project which include further capacity building, accreditation of laboratories, equipment and advisory services to develop policies and strategies.

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