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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**SPS ACTIVITIES OF THE CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURAL HEALTH
AND FOOD SAFETY AGENCY (CAHFSA)**

REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 8 November 2023, is being circulated at the request of CAHFSA.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) was established by the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to perform a coordinating and organizing role in the establishment of an effective and efficient regime of regional sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and to execute on behalf of member States such SPS actions and activities that can be more effectively and efficiently executed through a regional mechanism.

1.2. CAHFSA is pleased to provide this report to the eighty-seventh regular meeting of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, summarising key activities and providing updates on its SPS work programme.

2 ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

2.1. The agricultural landscape within the CARICOM region continues to grow and adapt to meet various SPS challenges and opportunities and to improve regional food security and sovereignty. As the regional institution tasked with establishing an efficient regime of SPS measures, CAHFSA recognises the need to continuously assess and adjust, as necessary, its position and strategies. As such, the Agency has developed a new five-year strategic plan. Four new strategic pillars support CAHFSA's overall strategy, and the work programme is designed to achieve the strategic objectives relevant to these pillars. The four pillars are:

- a. Strategic Pillar 1. SPS Advocacy and Awareness;
- b. Strategic Pillar 2. Capacity Building of National Bodies;
- c. Strategic Pillar 3. Regional Standard Development;
- d. Strategic Pillar 4. Institutional Development.

2.2. Notably, the CAHFSA Strategic pillars are aligned with the Strategic Priorities of the Community Strategic Plan, including (Priority 1 – Economic Resilience, Priority 6 – Community Governance and Priority 7 – Coordinated Foreign and External Relations). This alignment allows us to contribute to achieving the ultimate outcomes of sustainable economic growth for all CARICOM member States and an integrated community with equity for all.

3 CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

3.1. One of CAHFSA's primary activities involves implementing initiatives to enhance the export development and expansion capacity of member States. These initiatives include delivering or supporting training programs, developing guideline documents, and conducting evaluations of national SPS apacity.

3.2. CAHFSA has begun phase two of the STDF-funded project preparation grant (STDF/PPG/733), "Piloting the Use of P-IMA in the CARICOM Region". The first phase of this pilot project provided virtual training to P-IMA facilitators. In phase two, these facilitators will support the real-time application of the P-IMA tool in two countries of the region. The aim is to develop action plans and scalable, collaborative project proposals that use evidence to prioritize investments in SPS measures.

3.3. CAHFSA is applying the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool in one member State. The PCE tool was developed to help countries assess the phytosanitary systems of the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) and the country. The project, which began in 2020 under a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean, has experienced protracted delays but was resumed in October 2023.

3.4. CAHFSA has recently entered into an agreement with the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Caribbean (BCRC-Caribbean) to create and implement a training and capacity-building programme, along with a virtual guidance tool, that will focus on Good Labelling Practices for Pesticides in Agriculture. This initiative is a vital part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded Implementing Sustainable Low and Non-Chemical Development in Small-Island Developing States (ISLANDS) Programme. The primary goal of this program is to assist Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in adopting a safer chemical development pathway. The projects under this program aim to prevent the accumulation of harmful materials and chemicals that contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and mercury, as well as other hazardous substances in SIDS, by emphasizing the importance of environmental protection.

3.1 The Caribbean Week of Agriculture 2023

3.5. The Caribbean Region celebrated the 17th Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA) on 9-13 October in The Bahamas, under the theme '*Accelerating Vision 25 by 2025*'. The CWA is the premier event on the agriculture calendar in the Caribbean Region. It offers an opportunity to enhance stakeholder engagement and forge partnerships with significant actors and donors in the Caribbean's Agri-Food system. Throughout the week, CAHFSA collaborated with regional and international agencies to host informative events focused on strengthening the resilience of the agricultural sector in the Caribbean. These included sessions on:

- Agro-ecology and the One Health Approach;
- Integrated Approaches to the Implementation of Biosafety Legislation in CARICOM;
- Advancing Movement of Plant Germplasm within CARICOM;
- Transboundary Pest and Disease Status for CARICOM with Emphasis on TR4 and African Swine Fever (CAHFSA Symposium 2023).

3.6. CAHFSA supported and facilitated the Twenty-Third Meeting of the CARICOM Chief Veterinary Officers (CCVOs) held in Jamaica from 11-12 July 2023. Among the decisions and recommendations for the meeting were an agreement to the establishment of an emergency response system to assist member States with future outbreaks of diseases in the region, a recommendation for member States to intensify their surveillance for African Swine Fever (ASF) and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) to prevent their further introduction into the region and an agreement that member States would adopt and implement strategies towards the reduction and use of antimicrobials in animal feed as growth promotants.

4 COLLABORATION WITH INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

4.1. On 14-18 August 2023, CAHFSA collaborated with the IPPC, IICA and the FAO Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean to organise and deliver the 2023 IPPC Regional Workshop for the Caribbean. The workshop was held jointly with the 16th annual meeting of the Caribbean Plant Health Directors' Forum. As usual, the IPPC Regional Workshop aimed to develop capacity in various areas related to the IPPC. In addition, the workshop serves to analyse draft International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and to formulate constructive comments on these drafts.

4.1 Collaboration with the GICSV and the TC-RPPO

4.2. CAHFSA actively supports the international and hemispheric phytosanitary community in coordinated activities to prevent the introduction and spread of plant pests.

4.3. The Agency continues collaborating with the Inter-American Coordinating Group in Plant Health (GICSV). The GICSV is a hemispheric forum for coordination and collaboration in plant protection matters, according to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The Group was created to promote joint actions aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of pests of plants, plant products, and other regulated commodities and encouraging the adoption of appropriate measures for their control.

4.4. As the Regional Plant Protection Organization (RPPO) for the Caribbean Region, CAHFSA plays an essential role in the cooperative endeavour to implement the IPPC. The Technical Consultations among Regional Plant Protection Organizations (TC-RPPOs) encourage inter-regional cooperation in promoting harmonised phytosanitary measures and developing and using relevant international standards for phytosanitary measures. In addition to being a forum for RPPOs to consult as a group, the TC can support regional programmes under the IPPC and contribute to the work programme of the CPM.
