



SADC SECRETARIAT REPORT ON SPS ACTIVITIES

SADC REPORT TO THE WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

The following communication, received on 14 November 2023, is being circulated at the request of the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

1 BACKGROUND

1.1. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) region consists of 16 member States namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The region has a population of 363 million people and therefore has a high responsibility to meet the international sustainable development goals for the betterment of the lives of the people through safe intra-SADC and international trade through the application of relevant international standards.

1.2. To reduce the risks associated with the movement food and agro-products without unduly restricting regional or international trade, the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Annex to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Trade allows SADC member States to adopt harmonized or scientifically justified SPS measures. This is in line with the implementation of the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of SPS Measures, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

2 UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS ANNEX TO THE SADC PROTOCOL ON TRADE

2.1 SADC SPS Coordinating Committee

2.1. The SADC SPS Coordinating Committee is established by Article 14 of the SPS Annex to the SADC Protocol on Trade. However, this body has not met physically in the last five years due, in part, to the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and funding constraints. The body is mandated under the SPS Annex to the SADC Trade protocol to report on SPS-related non-tariff barriers; the implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area; the African Continental Free Trade Area; and the implementation of regional activities of WOA and FAO aimed at facilitating safe trade.

2.2. The SADC secretariat managed to secure partial funding from the African Union to support a meeting of the Food Safety Subcommittee of the SADC SPS Coordinating Committee, convened in Lusaka, Zambia in October 2023 to continue the coordination work in the field of food safety. The meeting was attended by representatives of food safety focal points and the private sector in 13 of the 16 SADC member States. At the meeting two validation workshops were held to receive the work of short term experts dealing with *Guidelines for the harmonization of SPS measures by SADC member States as they relate to food safety*, and a *Framework/Guidelines for imported products at the point of inspection (POI) sampling on-site resolution of trade barriers at ports of entry*, respectively.

2.2 Transparency

2.3. The SADC secretariat is in the process of developing a database for non-tariff measures (NTMs). It is often difficult and costly to find the NTMs of some member States whose trading partners might desire to access their market. Thus, the collection and classification of national NTMs into a database would provide an open and systematic source of information for trading partners. The database would give information on each SADC member State in terms of the product category, associated regulations and conformity assessment requirements. It would also help a member State to use this collection of information to formulate important national strategies that will assist them in measuring if they are meeting their obligations under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as well as WTO SPS Agreement transparency provisions. The system was successfully piloted in five SADC member States in 2023 with full implementation planned for the latter half of the financial year.

The SADC secretariat is facilitating resolution of online reported NTBs and the establishment and capacity development of National Focal Points (NFPs) is being supported as part of the development programmes mentioned in 3.1. below. (<https://www.tradebarriers.org/about>). Currently there are no active unresolved SPS-related NTBs.

3 UPDATES ON SPS-RELATED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

3.1 The SADC-EU Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP)

3.1. The TFP addresses regional implementation issues in the areas of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures; Customs technical assistance support; and the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs). The Programme supports implementation of activities under these areas in order to improve free movement of goods within the SADC Free Trade Area while at the same time reducing the cost of doing business. It also ensures that goods from the SADC region are traded competitively in the global market. In the last six months, the TFP has commissioned successfully concluded studies and several short-term activities of interest to SPS matters, which include: the prioritization of standards and technical regulations with the associated conformity assessment requirements for regional harmonization in the advent of the operationalization of the Africa Free Trade Area; the investigation of the standards and conformity assessment needs along key SADC economic corridors (notably work on Fisheries and Aquaculture related standards and regulations) and the development of model regulations for possible alignment of the technical regulations required to support his fledgling industry; the training of small-scale farmers and farmer organisations on SPS compliance to animal health related measures; training of medium and small enterprises and business development organisations on the identification, monitoring and resolving of non-tariff barriers to trade (NTBs), and the establishment of national focal points and information centres in all SADC member States. Work was also well advanced in the development of good regulatory practice with particular focus on SPS measures by developing capacity in regulatory impact assessment and developing a common, systematic approach to the development of necessary non-tariff measures to achieve regulatory objectives and a systematic approach to measuring and monitoring these measures to prevent them from becoming unintended barriers to trade.

3.2. Short term experts have been engaged for assignments in the next six months to train competent authorities in food safety, animal health and plant protection on the application of a scientific, risk-based approach to the implementation of protection measures often required to achieve their mandated objectives; the training of small scale farmers and food producers on the need for, and compliance to, food safety measures when accessing international markets; the development of and implementation of a common approach to the recognition of food safety certificates in support of intra-regional trade, and training for National Notification Authorities and national focal points with respect to their transparency obligations under the WTO SPS agreement and other regional and international trade agreements applicable to SADC member States.

Report by: Dr. Geoff Visser
SADC Key Expert on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
