

**ACTIONS AIMED AT IMPLEMENTING THE AGREEMENT
ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

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

1. At the meeting held in November 2000, it was suggested that the ad hoc observer organizations present information in writing on the actions being taken to implement the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), so that the Members can study them in greater detail.
2. IICA is currently engaged in a series of actions to help its members implement the SPS Agreement. Some of these actions are described below:

Transparency

3. In order to foster transparency, IICA has developed several channels of communication with its member countries. These are used to disseminate information on current sanitary and phytosanitary conditions, the most important developments vis-à-vis the relevant international organizations, and the latest international regulations. These communication mechanisms are also used by specialists and technicians of sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety systems, and of international organizations. Technical information is also provided on animal and plant health and food safety. These mechanisms include:
 - The Andean Sanitary and Phytosanitary Information System (SANINET). Created in 1996, it originally covered only the Andean region (Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia). However, it has since been extended to the hemispheric level.
 - The Andean Agricultural Health Forum (FASA). Also set up in 1996 to meet the needs of the Andean region. This is an important tool for institutional articulation.
 - Caribbean Animal and Plant Health Information Network (CARAPHIN). Covers the Caribbean countries. This year it launched a web site on Internet.
 - Agrifood bulletin of the Southern Cone countries. It has operated since 1998; it covers Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.
 - Agrosalud. Informatics tool used to analyze and distribute information among the actors in agricultural health and food safety. Hemispheric in scope, it has been operating since 1999.
 - ACCESO bulletin. Provides information on the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Hemispheric in scope, it has operated since 2000.

Harmonization

4. IICA's monitoring of, and participation in, the three relevant international organizations and the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures has allowed it to foster harmonization through the programmes under which it provides institutional support to the member countries.

- In the Caribbean countries, specific actions have been carried out regarding the registration of veterinary products and the control of agrochemicals, through cooperation and institution-building efforts for the bodies responsible for regulating these products. Cooperative actions have also been undertaken in this region with a view to implementing harmonized measures and procedures related to risk analysis, inspection and certification, international standards, laboratory diagnoses, etc.
- IICA, the FAO and the Secretariat of CARICOM are exploring the creation of an agency to promote the harmonization of sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety standards in the region.
- A process is also under way in the Caribbean to modernize health systems that could lead to greater harmonization of legislation through a review of existing legislation. The FAO and USDA are also taking part in this project.
- IICA has completed the "Model legislation on animal quarantine for the CARICOM countries", which will be distributed in March 2001.
- IICA is supporting the efforts of the Caribbean countries to harmonize standards on Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy.
- In Paraguay, manuals of procedures have been harmonized with the guidelines of the international technical organizations referenced by the WTO. The procedures have been implemented since 2000.

The communication mechanisms established by IICA have also allowed the interested parties to discuss the issue on a permanent basis.

Pest- or Disease-Free Areas and Areas of Low Pest or Disease Prevalence

5. Through technological improvements and the creation of specific programmes, IICA has encouraged the development of pest- or disease-free areas and areas of low pest or disease prevalence.

- The support provided in relation to diagnostic laboratories and veterinary control has helped to strengthen the services for the control and eradication of diseases that are important for international trade (e.g. in the Caribbean countries and Paraguay).
- Programme for the eradication of the fruit fly and modernization of plant protection services. This project will get under way around the middle of this year, in collaboration with a number of agencies, including USDA, IAEA and FAO. It will also be implemented soon in Central America, Panama and Belize.
- Programme for the reestablishment of the cultivation of coconut palm, through the eradication or prevention of the lethal yellowing of coconut in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. Ongoing.
- Programme for the control of the fruit fly. Based on the bi-national cooperation experience of Chile and Peru, for the control and eradication of the fruit fly. The target countries will be Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia.
- IICA currently has a programme in Guyana, French Guyana, Suriname and Brazil aimed at eradicating the carambola fruit fly (*Bactrocera carambolae*). Guyana was declared free of the pest in October 2000, and it is hoped that Suriname will follow suit in 2003.

- IICA has provided support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of Guyana and PANAFTOSA in their efforts to declare the country free of foot-and-mouth disease with recognition by the OIE.

Risk Analysis and Equivalence

- Currently in review is the Andean System for Studies on Risk Analysis and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Equivalence. This is an initiative designed to promote trade in the Andean region through the use of these tools. It is being supported by the FAO, APHIS-USDA (USA) and the SAGAR (Mexico) and is targeted at Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.
- Risk analysis units have been strengthened in the Caribbean countries through training courses, the production of manuals and institutional cooperation.
- Since 1999, and in cooperation with IICA, the United States, Canada and Mexico, in conjunction with Mercosur and Chile, have held two symposia on the equivalence of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and how they relate to the Codex Alimentarius.

The issue of equivalence has been promoted and analyzed through training courses and discussion forums involving professionals in this field.

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