

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

DISCUSSION ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION

Informal Meeting of the SPS Committee of 9 July 2001

Report by the Chairman

1. The Committee had a useful discussion of technical assistance at the informal meeting based on the typology of technical assistance prepared by the Secretariat (G/SPS/GEN/206), a document on innovations in technical assistance submitted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) (G/SPS/GEN/255), and an update of technical assistance activities of the United States (G/SPS/GEN/181/Add.1. The discussion considered both a more general approach to the analysis of technical assistance and how to progress with this analysis, and more specific ideas on some of the areas that require attention within any technical assistance programme.

2. With respect to the more general approach, some delegations suggested a series of steps starting with a diagnosis of the national situation to identify existing capacities, problems with internal coordination, and articulation with the private sector; and subsequently identifying the best forms of technical assistance to address the issues and the required follow-up. This could be completed by the identification of the most successful experiences with technical assistance. The information thus gathered could provide a good basis from which to progress to more in-depth discussions in the future. Some stressed that the best way forward was to design a total approach to technical assistance that covers its institutional, technical and economic aspects.

3. Many of the specific ideas complemented the broader approach mentioned above. These ideas include:

- focussing on the development of human resources;
- linking the private sector to all initiatives to ensure their requirements are part of any project or programme;
- helping developing countries to ensure inter-departmental or inter-institutional cooperation and coordination (developed and other countries that have managed this area successfully could contribute their experience);
- targeting assistance both to help developing countries comply with measures in their export markets, as well as to develop their own regulatory control systems to ensure the safety of their domestic food supplies;
- taking a regional approach;
- integrating all forms of assistance into a coherent programme regardless of the source of the assistance; and
- specifically and concretely identifying sanitary and phytosanitary elements in more general technical assistance programmes.

4. In order to develop a framework for technical assistance and deepen the discussions it was felt that active participation and contributions from the developing countries themselves were essential to ensure that the system be demand driven.

5. In conclusion, it was suggested that the issue of technical assistance and cooperation remain on the agenda and, if new contributions were received, a further informal meeting be organized at the time of the next regular meeting of the Committee. To this end all Members, but in particular the developing countries, are encouraged to submit further written ideas in order to develop this issue. The Secretariat will reformulate and refine the questionnaire on technical assistance (G/SPS/W/101) to help structure the information being sought from Members.
