

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

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

1. The observer organizations of the SPS Committee are invited to present reports on the activities they have carried out to promote the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. The following is a description of some initiatives implemented or planned for this purpose.

Support for the active participation of the countries of the Americas in the SPS Committee

2. In tandem with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), IICA is implementing the second stage of the "Program to Support the Active Participation of Latin American and Caribbean countries in the WTO SPS Committee". As was the case during the first stage, carried out in November 2002, the two agencies facilitated the participation of 64 experts from the capitals of 32 countries in SPS Committee meetings. With the WTO's participation and assistance, a seminar was also held to improve the capacity of countries in various aspects of international meetings. The objective of this effort is to foster dialogue on the topic within the member countries and encourage them to play a more active role in the SPS Committee.

Activities implemented in the Caribbean

3. In May, IICA will be presenting a status report on the proposal for the creation of the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA) to both the Council on Development and Trade and the ministers of agriculture of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

4. Since October 2002, the European Union has been implementing the project "Strengthening Agricultural Quarantine Services in the Caribbean" (SAQS). With IICA's assistance, national consultations were held on the modernization of the agricultural health and food safety services of 15 Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) member countries. In 13 of these countries, terms of reference were drawn up for the coordination of agricultural health and food safety committees.

5. Sponsored by the SAQS project, IICA has begun to prepare national plans for tackling bovine diseases with the governmental veterinary services of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Similar work will get under way in April with the veterinary services of Belize, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

6. In collaboration with the private and academic sectors of the Caribbean, IICA held a seminar-workshop on 12-15 November in Trinidad and Tobago, entitled "Improving the Competitiveness of the Poultry Sector in the Caribbean". At this event, sanitary protocols were developed for egg production and the first steps were taken in developing labeling and quality standards for Caribbean eggs and poultry health programs. The US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

(USDA/APHIS), the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency (CEMA) provided technical support for the workshop.

Support for the Inter-American Group for Coordination on Plant Protection (GICSV)

7. At a meeting of the GICSV held in Bogotá, Colombia, in February, IICA was asked to serve as the organization's Technical Secretariat. The GICSV was established to coordinate hemisphere-level efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of pests and promote measures for their control. The GICSV is made up of the regional phytosanitary protection organizations of the Americas, including the Southern Cone Plant Protection Committee (COSAVE), the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO), the International Regional Organization for Agricultural Health (OIRSA) and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN).

Training in HACCP

8. IICA continued to implement HACCP training programs, holding events in November 2002 and March 2003, respectively. The two courses took the form of videoconferences that connected eight countries and trained 125 people.

9. These course are being carried out with the support of the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network (GDLN). IICA is in the process of producing this same course on an interactive CD-ROM. This tool will be used to support the training process by means of local tutors and allow a greater coverage of HACCP training in the Americas. The next course will be held in May, connecting five different countries. Texas A&M University provides technical support for these training programs.

Information

10. Press releases, publications and weekly bulletins are disseminated via the Andean Agricultural Health Information Network (<http://www.iicasaninet.net/>) and the Agrosalud XXI Network (www.infoagro.net/salud) that provide important information about animal health, plant protection and food safety. The websites of these two networks currently receive over 3000 hits per day, have nearly 4000 registered users and reach 48 countries.

11. For more information about these initiatives, contact:

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