

PRESENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Statement by Antigua and Barbuda at the Meeting of 17-18 March 2004

1. Antigua and Barbuda hereby submits its technical assistance requirements based on the questionnaire developed by the WTO Secretariat as a result of discussions at the 9 July 2001 informal meeting of the SPS Committee on technical assistance. At this meeting the Secretariat was requested to circulate a new questionnaire on technical assistance activities that focused on ascertaining developing countries' technical assistance requirements. This request for technical assistance also complies with Article 9 of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement).
2. Antigua and Barbuda is a small island developing state with a population of 70,000 persons. The economy is based on tourism with about 0.5 million visitors per annum. The country is highly dependent on imports and is a net importer of vegetables, fruit, meat and processed foods.
3. As a small economy, capability for inspection, testing and verification is very limited. For example, we have five (5) part-time meat inspectors. The Government operates one poorly outfitted testing laboratory with three (3) graduate staff members. In addition there is only one (1) graduate plant protection officer and two (2) government veterinarians.
4. Antigua and Barbuda has therefore a limited human, financial and infrastructural resource capacity to enable her to participate fully in the implementation of the SPS Agreement. The human resource capacity is limited to the extent that the same technical persons end up serving in multiple committees, thereby diminishing their capacity to participate fully in meaningful dialogue.
5. Antigua and Barbuda is highly vulnerable to the entry of plant pests and animal diseases being a net importer of goods, having a high volume of movement of tourists in and out of the country (approximately seven times the resident population) and also due to the current inadequacies of its quarantine and other facilities.
6. In presenting Antigua and Barbuda's technical assistance request, as noted in document G/SPS/GEN/295/Add.35, the delegation wishes to highlight three challenges:
 - Investment in laboratory capacity is urgently needed. We wish to strengthen and develop the current laboratory into a multipurpose laboratory capable of serving the areas of plant health, animal health and food safety. Such a laboratory should have the capacity to conduct testing in the areas of microbiology, toxicology, pathology, virology and parasitology. There is also scope for some specialized testing to be conducted at regional reference institutions and therefore the need arises for the strengthening of regional laboratory capacity.
 - The need to strengthen port quarantine and inspection facilities that are currently non-existent or limited to seating space for inspectors.

- Need for formal technical training in risk analysis. Currently capacity for risk analysis that can withstand international scientific based scrutiny is non-existent.

7. I am sure that other small developing economies have needs parallel to those of Antigua and Barbuda. I hope that with the help of the SPS Secretariat and friendly donor agencies we would be able to resolve these important matters.
