

**ACTIONS AIMED AT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT
ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES (SPS AGREEMENT)**

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

The following communication, received on 19 October 2004, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

1. The observer organizations of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to contribute to the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement.

I. INITIATIVE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES (SPS) FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. In conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and with the collaboration of six countries that serve as a steering committee (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico and the United States), the IICA continues to implement the Initiative for the Americas on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures within the framework of the WTO SPS Committee.

3. The Initiative, which began with the meeting of October 2002, has contributed through seven consecutive meetings in two years, to supporting the participation of the countries of the Americas and promoting the development of their national capabilities.

4. A total of 34 countries are involved in the initiative. By the end of the sixth SPS Committee meeting held in June 2004, the initiative had helped 148 specialists from 32 countries take part. Participants have come from the ministries of agriculture, health, trade or foreign affairs, where they have been responsible for the WTO trade negotiations and issues. The initiative promotes the implementation of the SPS Agreement in a coordinated way between the different national institutions, also encouraging coordination with the private sector at meetings held in the capitals before and after the SPS Committee meetings. Twenty-eight of the 34 countries of the Americas (82 per cent) now have an internal mechanism (formal or informal) for discussing and following up the issues dealt with by the SPS Committee.

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II. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES BY DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION AND JOINT ACTIONS FOR THE COUNTRIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

5. The Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument, developed jointly by the OIE and the IICA, was recently applied to the national veterinary services in six countries of Central America. The preliminary results were presented to the region's ministers of agriculture on 14 October 2004. These results could make it possible to establish a cooperation agenda for the agencies and countries participating in this effort, based on the priorities and needs identified by the public and private sectors. The PVS instrument will be applied to other countries in the Americas in the near future.

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III. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION (IPPC) AND CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

6. To support the work of the IPPC the IICA, with the financial backing of NAPPO, hosted an IPPC workshop to review draft international standards for phytosanitary measures. The workshop was held in Costa Rica in September, and was attended by 13 countries in the region each of which, in the course of the week-long session, provided the International Standards Commission with contributions and comments. The effort is part of the IPPC standards review and approval process.

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7. To support training and dissemination in connection with IPPC standard No. 15, the IICA helped organize and implement the Workshop on Regulations Governing the Wood Packaging Materials Used in International Trade, held in Mexico in September. Similar events are planned for South America (17-19 November in Argentina) and the Caribbean.

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8. The IICA office in Argentina and the Argentine Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA) recently signed two agreements, one involving technical cooperation with the Chair of the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), and the other concerning the SPS Enquiry Point.

9. Under the agreement with the CCLAC, assistance will be provided to identify regional needs and sources of cooperation to strengthen the capabilities and participation of national enquiry points, and achieve greater interaction and regional coordination on Codex and related subjects (SPS and TBT). This will be supplemented with technical evaluations of documents, research on specific subjects, the preparation of technical justifications, the design of surveys on national and regional needs, and technical assistance in meetings of the national commissions and technical committees on specific topics.

10. Cooperation with the SPS Enquiry Point in Argentina will focus on the study of proposed standards notified by the countries to the WTO SPS Committee and draft IPPC/FAO International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs).

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IV. SUPPORT FOR WTO TRAINING WORKSHOPS

11. To support the training workshops that the WTO implements in the regions of the Americas, the IICA will take part in, and help with, the regional workshop for Central America and selected other countries scheduled to be held in Nicaragua in November.

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V. OTHER ACTIVITIES

12. Colombia's Center for Phytosanitary Excellence (which receives support under the USAID-USDA-IICA agreement) has now been in operation for three years and has achieved positive results. Through the IICA office, the Center has signed an agreement with the Salvadoran Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock for the preparation of four pest risk analyses (PRA), the training of professionals from the Ministry of Agriculture, and the submission of a proposal for the establishment of a similar center in El Salvador. The Center is also negotiating the preparation of a PRA with Ecuador's private sector, and staff training in PRA and geographic information systems with the Ecuadorian Agricultural Health Service.

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13. The IICA provided support to Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture at a recent conference on food traceability held in September. The objective of the conference was to share experiences on food certification and traceability systems, to establish technical cooperation initiatives between institutions for which technology and marketing are strategic and priority areas, to improve identification and implementation for the harmonization of requirements, and to identify areas of future strategic priority.

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14. To support training and upgrading programmes in connection with risk mitigation practices, the IICA has signed agreements and conducted training activities related to good agricultural practices (GAP) and quality assurance. In Colombia, the IICA has worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and various private producers' organizations in the fruit, vegetable and animal products subsectors on GAPs. In Guyana and Suriname, seminars on HACCP and GAPs have been held for the livestock, dairy, fruit and other subsectors.

15. Regarding standards, the IICA has supported initiatives in Guyana and Suriname aimed at reviewing and harmonizing standards in the areas of animal health, plant protection and food safety. It also supported the regional harmonization standards for the production and processing of different agri-food products.

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16. Together with the University of the West Indies (UWI), CAB-International, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), and the University of Florida, the IICA continues to promote the strategy aimed at the control of invasive species in the Caribbean Basin. The draft Caribbean Regional Invasive Species Strategy (CRISIS) was presented to the 17th Meeting of the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED).

17. The ninth meeting of the Coordinating Group of Pesticides Control Boards of the Caribbean (CGPC) was held in St. Kitts in July on the theme "Improving Management and Use of Pesticides for

a Safer Caribbean Environment". The IICA operates as technical secretariat for the CGPC. The meeting adopted a proposal for the harmonization of the registration process and the promotion of a strategy for improved use and management of agro-chemicals in the Caribbean. The strategy covers the need for harmonized legislation throughout the region, the incorporation of GAPs and other similar practices, public health, environmental monitoring, research, and socio-economic studies.

18. Finally, the IICA has supported public awareness activities for the Black Sigatoka disease in bananas and cooperated in the organization of a national quarantine workshop in Saint Lucia.

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