

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Egypt

The following communication, received on 23 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Egypt.

1. In preparation for the Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement, Members were invited to submit information on their experiences or their suggestions and to identify models of "best practices" for the issues to be discussed.

Issue 1

What tools currently exist and how best can they be used to ensure the effective implementation of the SPS agreement at the national level? Is there a need for the development of additional tools?

2. The SPS Agreement as well as other related organizations (OIE, IPPC and Codex Alimentarius) provide Members with the necessary guidelines to help them fulfil their obligations under the WTO, harmonize their national legislation and use international standards as a reference in developing relevant national measures.

(a) The SPS Agreement

3. The SPS Agreement in itself contains the significant tools that a Member can depend on in the implementation of the Agreement at the national level. As an example, Article 2 highlights some important points with regard to the rights and obligations of Members in adopting SPS measures.

4. Also, it is important to note that the SPS Committee helps Members to better understand the SPS rules and practices through the effective interactions that take place in the Committee with either Members or other related organizations. In our view it is important for developing countries to participate in the meetings of the SPS Committee.

(b) The relevant international organizations

5. OIE, IPPC and Codex Alimentarius, as the international standard-setting bodies, play an important role in assisting Members to fulfil their obligations under the SPS Agreement through the establishment of the reference international standards that the Members can rely on when developing their national measures. Based on this, it is important to strengthen the link between these

international standard-setting bodies and developing countries as a step to help these countries to better comply with SPS requirements.

Issue 2

What national mechanisms can be created to ensure that stakeholders are informed in a timely manner of new SPS requirements, so that the SPS requirements of trading partners can be evaluated and so that the views of relevant stakeholders can be taken into account when responding to SPS notifications? In establishing such mechanisms, how can Members identify the relevant domestic stakeholders and promote effective interaction amount those stakeholders that can be sustained over time? How can information about the SPS requirements be transmitted to groups outside of capital?

6. The relevant stakeholders in Egypt, including the private sector, are being informed of new SPS requirements through two channels. The first one is the SPS national sub-committee at which the new SPS requirements are being discussed and analyzed. The second channel is the SPS national enquiry point as it takes the responsibility to inform the private sector regularly of the newly adapted SPS requirements.

7. Moreover, each competent authority has established a web site, respectively www.tas.gov.eg, and www.epq.gov.eg, at which it includes its laws, decrees and related SPS measures so as to help the private sector and other stakeholders to get familiar with the SPS related issues.

8. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, a Notification Coordination Mechanism (NCM) was established aiming to share SPS-related information with all relevant parties (public, private sector) and to support the national enquiry point in feeding stakeholders with all the information they need in a timely manner.

Issue 3

How can developing country Members most effectively request SPS-related technical assistance? Can best practice in both the identification and the provision of technical assistance be identified? How can technical assistance supply and demand be most effectively matched, priority areas identified and duplication of donor efforts avoided?

9. There is a clear and obvious gap between Members' expectations and the technical assistance they receive from other Member countries. A number of developing country Members have indicated that much of the assistance they have received has not had the desired effect of allowing them to maintain or achieve export opportunities within the frame of new or existing SPS requirements.

10. This concern underlies a desire to find more effective means to ensure the better overall performance of technical assistance.

11. The core issue in technical assistance is that Members should efficiently, effectively and precisely identify at the earliest possible stage their technical assistance needs based on a relevant needs assessment that covers all the SPS-related stakeholders in that country.

12. With regard to the provision of technical assistance, Egypt is of the view that the provision of technical assistance in the SPS field should be based on the real needs of the recipient countries (demand driven), and should not be limited to certain types of technical assistance but vary according to the specified needs. At this stage, we may find some developing countries still need specific technical assistance in the fields of risk assessment, risk analysis and risk management, as well as effective surveillance and monitoring services.

13. The provision of technical assistance should also cover areas like establishing accredited laboratories to accurately diagnose diseases and pests, identify toxic residues, and verify the quality of agricultural chemicals and veterinary products.
