

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from The Gambia

The following communication, received on 27 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of The Gambia.

1. In preparation for the Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement, participants were invited to provide information relating to their experiences in relation to the issues to be discussed.

Question 1

How regularly do representatives of your country participate in meetings of the SPS Committee?

2. Representatives do not regularly participate in meetings of the SPS Committee. As far as we are aware, this is the first meeting to be attended by the country's representatives.

Question 2

What information do you receive regarding meetings of the SPS committee, and how do you receive this information?

3. Information regarding meetings of the SPS Committee are only received through the course of WTO national workshops.

Question 3

Does your country have a SPS national committee?

4. There is no national SPS national committee but a national Food Safety Committee which comprises different food safety implementing agencies.

Question 4

How do your exporters find out about your trading partners new SPS requirements?

5. The requirements of trading partners new requirements are found through contact with national institutions depending on the type of commodities the consignor or consignee intends to export or import.

Question 5

What national mechanism can be created to ensure that stakeholders in your country are informed in the timely manner of new SPS requirements, so that the SPS requirements of trading partners can be evaluated and so the views of relevant stakeholders can be taken into account when responding to SPS notifications?

6. The Commonwealth Secretariat is currently assisting to develop the Standards Bureau to be a functional entity in accordance with international norms. One of the interventions will be to establish an Enquiry Point, which will receive and send SPS notifications and also act as a database for information dissemination to stakeholders. The Agricultural Pest Management Unit will act as the focal point for the International Plant Protection Convention.

Question 6

In establishing such mechanisms, how can Members identify the relevant domestic stakeholders and promote effective interaction among those stakeholders that can be sustained over time?

7. The Bureau, in collaboration with the Agricultural Pest Management Unit, will establish linkages through the Enquiry Point so as to encourage effective and efficient interactions between the members and the relevant domestic stakeholders.

Question 7

How can information about SPS requirements be transmitted to groups outside of capital?

8. Information will be transmitted through:
- Sensitization/ awareness campaigns through the print and electronic media and workshops;
 - Training of phytosanitary inspectors to transmit the information so gained; and
 - Training for all categories of stakeholders.

Question 8

Has there been any national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement in your country? If so, was this planning developed using a particular methodology?

9. There has not been any national planning for the implementation of the SPS Agreement. Nonetheless knowledge gained from the national WTO workshops on TBT and SPS gave guidance as to the way forward.

Question 9**How does your country identify its technical assistance needs?**

10. The different agencies identify core causes of the lapses in the execution of their functions. These are the areas where technical assistance/Technical cooperation programmes (TCP) are requested.

Question 10**What has been your country's experience in both the request and the supply of SPS-related technical assistance?**

11. A request has been made to the FAO to strengthen the technical capacities of the Agricultural Pest Management Unit. This is yet to be realized. Regional Locust Control programmes and the World Bank's Africa Emergency Locust project make interventions to facilitate SPS-related issues, but not as yet to an elaborate dimension.

Question 11**How can the technical assistance supply and demand be most effectively measured, priority areas identified and the duplication of donor efforts avoided?**

12. Technical assistance supply and demand can most effectively be measured through constant monitoring, supervision and appraisal in a coordinated national programme. This approach will identify gaps and achievements, pinpoint priority areas and detect overlaps or duplication of donor efforts in existence at all institutions.
