

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Benin

The following communication, received on 29 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Benin.

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

Point 1: Participation in SPS Committee meetings

2. Benin has not participated in any SPS Committee meetings. Capital-based experts should participate. Having never participated, our only means of receiving information are the sub-regional training workshops organized by the WTO in our sub-region.

Point 2: National SPS Committee

3. Benin does not yet have a national SPS committee. It has only a SPS enquiry point within the Plant Protection Unit of the Department of Agriculture, which was set up in 2005. This enquiry point could be strengthened.

4. There are very few food product exporters in Benin. Only certain fish (shrimps and cuttlefish) products and cashew nuts are formally exported. Special efforts are currently being made not only to obtain approval for these products, but to include pineapple and shea butter on the list of exports. Exporters of these products can find out about trading partners' new SPS requirements by contacting the Directorate of Food and Applied Nutrition (DANA), which is the permanent secretariat of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee.

5. The National Codex Alimentarius Committee, which encompasses seven ministries (including the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research) as well as the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Association of Agri-Food Processing Enterprises, and the Consumers' Association, could be strengthened so that stakeholders are informed of new SPS requirements.

6. In the future national SPS committee, Government representatives and economic operators in the agri-food processing industry who already form part of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee, the OIE and the IPPC, will exchange views.

7. The institutionalization of periodic meetings and training courses, and the setting up of a documentation centre could promote effective and sustainable interaction.

8. Groups outside of capital which are members of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee (agri-food processing enterprises of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Consumers' Association) will be kept up to date on SPS requirements.

Point 3: National planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement

9. In Benin, the implementation of the SPS Agreement is the responsibility of the following Departments:

- Department of Food and Applied Nutrition (DANA) for all foods of plant or animal origin;
- Department of Fisheries;
- Department of Agriculture (Plant Protection Unit); and
- Department of Quality and Packaging Promotion for Agricultural Products.

10. The activities of these various structures are normally coordinated within the National Codex Alimentarius Committee; however, in 2005, an enquiry point was set up within the Plant Protection Unit of the Department of Agriculture.

11. All in all, specific planning is needed on how to implement the SPS Agreement, as no planning of this sort has yet taken place.

Point 4: Identification of material and human needs

12. In Benin, the various institutions involved in food quality identify separately their technical assistance and material resource needs.

13. A survey could be carried out among agri-food processing enterprises in order to identify priority areas for technical assistance, as irregular practices are often used to misdirect assistance.

14. In order to avoid any duplication of donor efforts, formal and informal surveys and consultations must take place before any decisions are made.
