

**ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE WTO AGREEMENT ON
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

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

The following communication, received on 25 March 2008, is being distributed at the request of IICA.

1. The observer organizations of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are invited to submit reports on activities they have accomplished to foster an understanding of the SPS Agreement and to promote its implementation. IICA wishes to put forward a number of actions or activities which it considers to be of interest to this Committee.

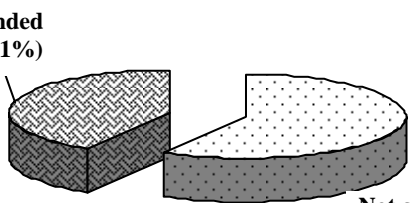
I. SPS INITIATIVE FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. IICA is continuing to implement the SPS Initiative for the Americas. This 41st meeting of the WTO SPS Committee is the 17th consecutive one for which Member Countries of IICA have benefited from support under the Initiative. Seventeen meetings account for 41 per cent of the meetings held by this Committee to date.

3. In accordance with the objective of gradually transferring financial responsibility to the countries, beginning with this meeting the financial assistance granted to the countries is again being reduced. Only air travel will be funded. As a result, of the 28 countries that are part of the Initiative, 15, that is to say, 53 per cent, attended this Committee meeting through capital-based experts.

4. Since October 2002, the Initiative has facilitated participation by a total of 223 capital based experts from 32 countries. This has made it possible to strengthen the existing institutional framework or to create a new one, thus promoting the development or upgrading of an international agenda in the countries and coordinating the work of the WTO SPS Committee and that of the three international reference organizations (Codex Alimentarius, ICCP and OIE).

5. For further information, kindly contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), or mariela.madrigal@iica.int (Mariela Madrigal).

<p>41st meeting of the WTO SPS Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 countries supported • 20 capital-based experts participating <p>The full programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 meetings supported • 223 specialists involved • 32 countries benefited • 6 countries on the Steering Group • Countries upgrade their institutional framework 	<p>Meetings of the WTO SPS Committee that have been attended under the SPS Initiative for the Americas</p>  <p>Attended 17 (41%)</p> <p>Not attended 24 (59%)</p>
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II. IICA-STDF PROJECT

6. As a follow up to the development of institutional capabilities in the countries of the Americas, IICA has initiated implementation of the IICA-STDF-108 project. For this initial information-gathering phase, IICA developed a Performance, Vision and Strategy instrument for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (PVS-SPS). This tool is in addition to other versions developed earlier by IICA for veterinary services (animal health), phytosanitary services (plant health) and food safety systems.

7. Implementation of the IICA-STDF-108 project is being supported by the six countries that are also members of the SPS Initiative for the Americas Steering Group (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, United States of America).

8. In this initial phase, institutional performance in addressing the SPS international agendas in 28 countries will be characterized. The countries will also be able to identify their needs and strengths from the institutional and international standpoints.

9. Application of the SPS-PVS instrument in the countries will make it possible to obtain information broken down into three fundamental components. These components have several competencies that represent actions or processes that enable the countries to develop and administer an SPS national and international agenda adequately.

10. The three fundamental components and their competencies are:

(a) Ability of the national service to enlist the cooperation and active participation of the private sector in the implementation of programmes and activities.

- Information
- External and internal communication
- Official representation
- Coordination mechanisms
- Coordination between the capital and the Mission in Geneva

- Relevance of the topic
- (b) Ability and degree of authority of the national services to promote access to international markets and retain them.
- Compliance with regulatory standards
 - Setting of regulatory standards
 - Harmonization
 - Transparency
 - Technical cooperation and special and differential treatment
- (c) Institutional and financial sustainability based on available human and economic resources.
- Updating
 - Technical independence
 - Financial and technical resources
 - Human resources devoted to SPS issues

11. For further information, kindly contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), or mariela.madrigal@iica.int (Mariela Madrigal).

III. TRAINING PROGRAM TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE THREE INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE ORGANIZATIONS

12. Four regional courses (Southern, Andean, Central and Caribbean IICA regions) on each of the standard-development processes of the Codex Alimentarius, the OIE and the IPPC will be conducted as part of the training programme developed by IICA on SPS. The courses on the OIE will be conducted in May, those on the Codex in June, and those on the IPPC in July or August. Each course will be taught in 32 countries of the Americas and the expectation is to provide training for a total of 20 specialists per country, 10 of whom would be from the public sector and the other 10 from the private sector. IICA's new Distance Training Center will be used for the courses, which will be taught by staff members from the Codex, the OIE and the IPPC via Internet from IICA Headquarters in Costa Rica. For further information, kindly contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins).

IV. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BY COUNTRY OR REGION

13. IICA and the Standing Veterinary Committee of the South (SVC), which groups the heads of veterinary services of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia, renewed their cooperation agreement for strengthening ties between the two organizations over the next two years. The SVC is the highest official animal health entity in the region.

14. IICA participated in a national work session in Panama where technical cooperation needs and priorities in food safety and quality were discussed. Technical cooperation areas established by

the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Regional International Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health (OIRSA) and IICA were presented. A work plan for the biennium 2008-2009 to promote joint action by the organizations was prepared.

15. On 8 and 9 November 2007, IICA supported the event "Sanitary Control of Cattle in Ecuador" organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries. Participants in this event included specialists from FAO, PAHO and Colombia's private sector. IICA made a presentation on the importance of sanitary control based on the upgrading of veterinary services.

16. IICA and USDA-APHIS organized a workshop on Emergency Preparedness and Response in Miami, Florida, from 26 to 30 November. Participants included representatives from the veterinary services and health sector of Belize, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Saint Lucia. Technical subjects, such as the Incident Command System methodology were explained and discussed and the representatives of each country described their emergency plans.

17. On 5 and 6 November 2007, IICA contributed to the National Traceability Workshop in Honduras, in which the public and private sectors joined forces to structure a nation-wide traceability system for those agricultural chains that are most important to trade.

18. From 14 to 16 November, IICA provided support for the Second Subregional Workshop on Geographic Risk Analysis of Avian Flu for Countries of Central America, held in Guatemala City. The workshop was organized jointly by PAHO, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), IICA and OIRSA. Personnel from the government sector working on epidemiological surveillance received training in the use of software for standardization of geo referencing.

19. From 19 to 23 November, IICA conducted a multi-purpose cooperation mission to Uruguay. The mission was conducted with a view to the future application of the PVS instrument on food safety and distribution of educational material on food safety basics through the Uruguayan primary school system.

20. The Joint FAO/IICA Regional Workshop on Enhancing Food Safety in the Tourism Sector through the Application of Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) was held in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 7 to 9 November 2007. Twenty participants from ten countries and from the public and private sectors received training that was based on new FAO guidelines for the use of HACCP procedures in small or developing businesses.

21. IICA provided logistic support to the national SPS workshops conducted by the WTO in Costa Rica and Belize in January and March 2008, respectively.

22. The project documents on modernization of the National Animal Quality and Health Service (SENACSA) of Paraguay and the National Animal Health Service (SENASA) of Costa Rica were completed, as was a project profile on modernization of Jamaica's veterinary service, following application of the PVS in all three countries, and the evaluation of these services in Costa Rica and Jamaica by the OIE. In addition, a project for modernization of the National Plant and Seed Quality and Health Service (SENAVE) in Paraguay is currently being prepared.

23. Three PVS instruments (veterinary, plant health and food safety services) were applied in Argentina; the food safety PVS instrument was applied in Paraguay, and the veterinary services PVS instrument was applied in several Brazilian states.

V. SUPPORT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

24. IICA uses several bulletins and communication systems to promote an exchange of information on the SPS and on the work accomplished by the WTO, the relevant international organizations and the regional organizations.

25. The electronic bulletin **CODEX-MSF *Foro de Opinión*** (CODEX-SPS Opinion Forum) focuses on developments in the Codex Alimentarius and the WTO SPS Committee. The bulletin publicizes and analyses standards and ongoing developments, and its purpose is to increase communication and the study of these topics. Its main clientele consists of countries in South America, but it is available to all members at www.iica.org.ar. For further information, kindly contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

26. The **AGRIHEALTH** information system focuses on the distribution of information related to agricultural health and food safety, in particular standards developed and actions carried out in the WTO and the international reference organizations. This information system is currently launching an observatory on emerging issues and emergencies in the areas of animal and plant health and food safety (www.agrihealth.ws for English and www.infoagro.net/salud for Spanish). For further information, kindly contact: ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

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Agricultural Health and Food Safety

<http://www.infoagro.net/salud>

<http://www.iica.int>
