

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**WTO SPS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2021:
GENERAL INFORMATION, SELECTION PROCESS AND APPLICATION FORM**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT¹

Revision

1. The Secretariat of the WTO plans to organize a number of specific technical assistance activities on the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) in 2021. Please note that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all activities currently planned for 2021 are scheduled to be delivered through videoconference or virtual platforms. These activities include: the SPS e-Learning course, national SPS seminars, a thematic SPS workshop, regional SPS workshops² and the SPS In-depth Virtual Course.³

2. These activities will primarily focus on the provisions of the SPS Agreement, implementation matters and the latest discussions taking place in the SPS Committee.⁴ The overall objective of the SPS technical assistance activities is to enhance the knowledge and expertise of government officials from WTO developing country Members and Observers, so they can better understand and implement the SPS Agreement, benefit from its provisions, and strengthen their capacity to engage in the work of the SPS Committee. For additional information on technical assistance activities related to the SPS Agreement, please consult the WTO website at <http://www.wto.org/sp/ta>.

3. This document provides detailed information about SPS-specific WTO technical assistance activities planned for 2021, including information on dates, and where applicable, eligibility and selection criteria of participants, instructions for submission of applications, deadlines and pre-requisites when required.

4. This document is structured according to the different types of SPS-specific technical assistance activities provided by the WTO:

- e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement
- National SPS Seminars
- Thematic SPS Workshop
- Regional SPS Workshops
- Other SPS Workshops
- SPS In-depth Virtual Course

¹ This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

² Regional SPS Workshops will be organized in 2021 upon request from regional organizations. Please refer to additional details in Section 4 of this document.

³ In addition to these SPS-specific technical assistance activities, the WTO offers general training courses where the SPS Agreement is taught, such as Introduction Courses for Least-Developed Countries, Regional Trade Policy Courses and Advanced Trade Policy Courses.

⁴ The SPS Committee is scheduled to meet three times in 2021: 25-26 March; 15-16 July; and 4-5 November. Informal meetings of the SPS Committee and other SPS-related workshops might be scheduled during the weeks when the SPS Committee meetings take place. These dates are subject to change.

5. The structure, content, target audience, pre-requisites, exercises and materials of these SPS-specific activities will follow the WTO Progressive Learning Strategy (PLS).⁵ Therefore, each activity is identified according to a scale ranging from "Level 1" (the least advanced, introductory activities) to "Level 3" (the most advanced, in-depth training activities). This measurement will, *inter alia*, assist in making candidates aware of the expected level of the activity before they apply, and facilitate the Secretariat's assessment of whether a candidate's profile and experience match the level of the activity when carrying out the selection process. This will ultimately help ensure that the participants in a particular activity are able to most effectively follow and contribute to the discussions, and that they have a harmonized level of understanding of the SPS Agreement. Further information on the WTO PLS and a table with the level of each of the SPS-specific technical assistance activities can be found in Annex I.

1 E-LEARNING COURSE ON THE SPS AGREEMENT

Level of this activity: 1 3

6. The WTO offers an e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement (SPS e-Learning Course) throughout the year, via the WTO e-Learning Platform (<https://wtolearning.csod.com>). This course aims to enable government officials from around the world to learn, through an interactive tool, about the basic provisions and principles of the SPS Agreement, the work of the SPS Committee and the SPS disputes brought to the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism. During the entire course, participants receive personal tutoring from an assigned staff member of the WTO Secretariat who is responsible for clarifying and responding to any SPS-related question.

7. In addition to the existing e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement (available in French and in Spanish), the WTO e-Learning platform offers a set of four new interactive courses on the SPS Agreement in English⁶ entitled:

- a. SPS Course Series 1 - Overview of the SPS Agreement and Committee;
- b. SPS Course Series 2 - The SPS Agreement and Science;
- c. SPS Course Series 3 - Trade Facilitating Operational Provisions of the SPS Agreement;
- d. SPS Course Series 4 - Implementation, Administration and Enforcement.⁷

8. Successful completion of the SPS e-Learning Courses (in either of the WTO working languages)⁸ is a pre-requisite for participation in other SPS technical assistance activities, such as the SPS In-depth Virtual Course. However, successful completion of the SPS e-Learning Course **does not guarantee** selection for SPS-related training events. Government officials who have already successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course, in any of the available languages, are not required to undertake it again.

9. While the WTO e-Learning material can be freely accessed in the WTO e-Learning Platform by the public once registered, eligible participants can participate in a monitored course, access the module exams, obtain a WTO certificate and take part in the interactive activities.

10. Government officials from developing WTO Members and Observers wishing to register for the SPS e-Learning Course must access the WTO e-Learning Platform (<https://wtolearning.csod.com>). In order to register for a course, two forms are to be filled-in and submitted:

- a. **Online Registration Form:** available at <https://wtolearning.csod.com>. This registration form needs to be completed online;

⁵ The primary aim of the PLS is to promote higher levels of learning and to encourage the development of participants' autonomy, with a view to building and sustaining the long-lasting human and institutional capacity of beneficiary countries to participate most effectively in the rules-based multilateral training system.

⁶ As announced in document [G/SPS/GEN/997/Rev.10/Add.2](https://wtolearning.csod.com).

⁷ This set of four new courses are currently only available in English; Spanish and French versions are forthcoming.

⁸ In the case of the English version, this would require completion of the set of four Courses. Please note that the content of the set of Courses is equivalent to that of the existing French and Spanish versions.

- b. **Nomination Form:** the candidate should be confirmed by the responsible government authorities. The Nomination Form is available in the Platform (<https://wtolearning.csod.com>) once a participant has registered in the section "My Nomination Form" under "My Courses". The completed Nomination Form must be uploaded in the Platform (<https://wtolearning.csod.com>) in the same section.

11. For further information and instructions about the registration process for the SPS e-Learning Course, the WTO e-Learning team can be contacted at elarning@wto.org.

2 NATIONAL SPS SEMINARS

Level of this activity: 1 3

12. WTO developing country Members and Observers are entitled to request national seminars with a view to address specific training needs on the SPS Agreement and its implementation. In this regard, the programmes for national seminars are elaborated by the beneficiary country in consultation with the WTO Secretariat. It is possible to address both the SPS and TBT Agreements, or the SPS Agreement and the Agreement on Agriculture or the Trade Facilitation Agreement, in a single national seminar.

13. National SPS seminars may have a lower (more introductory) or higher (in-depth, advance training) level, depending on the training needs identified by the requesting Member, and the level of knowledge and experience of the participants. It is also possible to organize two national activities back-to-back for different participants, for example, one at an introductory level and another at an advanced level. A national seminar can also be organised in the form of a targeted training on the use of SPS online tools, such as the SPS Notification Submission System (SPS NSS); the SPS Committee eAgenda; or the ePing alert system.⁹

14. The Secretariat will aim to tailor the structure and content of these seminars according to each specific request and through consultations with the beneficiary Member during the preparation phase of the seminar. In addition, the Secretariat encourages Members to clearly outline the objectives of national seminars in the submitted training requests, in order to allow the Secretariat to respond more effectively to the training needs of Members.

15. To request a national seminar on the SPS Agreement, Members and Observers must complete and submit a Technical Assistance National Request through the Technical Assistance Management System, which is available through the weblink <https://tamis.wto.org/user/login>.¹⁰

16. The Technical Assistance National Request must be submitted along with an official letter of request by the contact point to the WTO (e.g. mission in Geneva), addressed to the Director of the Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC). The request and the official letter should be submitted online via the weblink <https://tamis.wto.org/user/login>.

17. The Secretariat encourages Members and Observers to submit their requests for national SPS seminars as early as possible (preferably in the first half of the year) to ensure proper coordination and preparation for these activities.¹¹

3 THEMATIC SPS WORKSHOP

Level of this activity: 1 3

18. The Secretariat will organize a special Thematic SPS Workshop, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland. The workshop will focus on risk assessment, risk management and risk communication. The workshop will take place on Monday, 12 July and Tuesday, 13 July 2021, immediately prior to the SPS informal and regular meetings to be held during the same week.

⁹ Please see document [G/SPS/GEN/521/Rev.15/Add.1](https://www.wto.org/gsp/SPS/GEN/521/Rev.15/Add.1) for examples of targeted training sessions.

¹⁰ The system is available in the three WTO working languages, English, French and Spanish. Login usernames and passwords are the same as for the WTO website.

¹¹ While every effort will be made to accommodate the requests of Members and Observers, the Secretariat cannot guarantee that it will have the necessary resources to undertake all national seminars requested during the year.

19. The objective of the workshop is to bring together officials responsible for participation in and implementation of the SPS Agreement, the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for an in depth discussion, on risk assessment, risk management and risk communication.

20. The workshop will be open to participation by all delegates from WTO Members and Observers attending the SPS Committee meeting in July 2021, as well as government officials through their respective delegations.

4 REGIONAL SPS WORKSHOPS

Level of this activity: 1 3

4.1 Overview

21. The WTO Secretariat organizes regional workshops on the SPS Agreement with the purpose of making participants fully aware of the WTO SPS Agreement, its implementation, and the possible implications at the regional and national levels. Funding is available through the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund (DDAGTF) for these workshops.

22. Regional workshops also serve as an opportunity for government officials working on SPS matters in different developing countries to establish contact with their counterparts in other developing countries of the region, facilitating the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement.

23. These regional workshops may include representatives from Codex, IPPC and OIE as resource persons contributing their knowledge and experience in their areas of expertise. In addition, relevant international organizations, international and regional development institutions and organizations, as well as other technical assistance organizations and bilateral donors involved in SPS matters, may be invited to inform participants of their latest activities.

4.2 Regional SPS Workshops in 2021

24. In order to deliver more effective and tailored regional workshops, the WTO Secretariat will be working collaboratively with regional organizations to specifically address SPS-related training needs identified within regions. Using this approach, the WTO Secretariat will schedule regional SPS workshops in 2021 upon request from regional organizations.¹²

25. To request a regional workshop on the SPS Agreement, regional organizations (or a Member in conjunction with a regional organization) must submit an official letter indicating the purpose and expected outcome of the workshop, their expected contribution, as well as the proposed dates and venue. This formal request should be addressed to the Director of the Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC) and sent by e-mail to ittcregionaldesk@wto.org.

26. Regional SPS workshops that are requested during the year will be made available on the WTO website at <http://www.wto.org/sps/ta>. Programmes, pre-requisites and selection criteria will be defined for each requested activity.

5 OTHER SPS WORKSHOPS

27. The WTO Secretariat will participate in other SPS technical assistance activities at the request of other organizations, where possible.

¹² While every effort will be made to accommodate the requests of regional organizations, the Secretariat cannot guarantee that it will have the necessary resources to undertake all regional workshops requested during the year.

6 SPS IN-DEPTH VIRTUAL COURSE

Level of this activity: 1 3

6.1 Overview

28. The 2021 SPS In-depth Virtual Course will be held in English during September-October 2021.

29. The course will be comprised of a series of virtual sessions dedicated to an in-depth analysis of aspects related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement and topical SPS issues. In addition, participants will engage in group discussions and joint work.

A number of external experts, including from Codex, IPPC and OIE, will be invited to participate in these sessions.

6.2 Selection Process

30. The Secretariat will select participants for the SPS In-depth Virtual Course. The target audience for this course are government officials, in particular those:

- a. holding direct responsibilities in SPS areas, e.g. specialists on food safety, animal health, plant protection or officials from a relevant Ministry in charge of coordinating SPS matters and international trade;
- b. possessing a proven advanced level of understanding of the provisions and structure of the WTO, and the principles and provisions of the SPS Agreement; and
- c. fluent in oral and written English.

31. All candidates are required to have successfully completed the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application. Applications from candidates who have not successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course will not be considered. See Section 1 regarding enrolment in the e-Learning Course. In addition, candidates must be government officials at the time of applying for the course and during the course.

32. Candidates will be selected using criteria such as the fulfilment of pre-requisites, prior selection of other candidates from the Member, as well as balance among the selected candidates.

33. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers wishing to apply for the SPS In-depth Virtual Course must consult the instructions provided in Annex II, and complete and submit the online application form available at: <https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2021-wto-sps-indepth-virtual-course/>.

34. The Secretariat will inform Members' and Observers' contact points to the WTO (e.g. mission in Geneva) of the proposed selection of candidates from their government before the final selection.

ANNEX I

PROGRESSIVE LEARNING STRATEGY¹ SPS-SPECIFIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) ACTIVITIES

1. In order to respond to the need for greater coherence and complementarity in WTO capacity-building, the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) has developed a progressive strategy to promote higher levels of learning and encourage the development of participants' autonomy. This is with a view to build and sustain the long-lasting human and institutional capacity of beneficiary countries to participate more effectively in the rules-based multilateral trading system.

2. In this regard, two broad categories of participants in WTO capacity-building have been identified:

- a. **"Generalists"** are government officials who will need a broad knowledge of the WTO to conduct their work, such as capital-based officials dealing with WTO issues or delegates posted to Geneva missions with general responsibility for WTO affairs;
- b. **"Specialists"** are government officials who will require in-depth knowledge in a specific area, such as officials working on a specific issue in a particular Ministry in their capital (for example, those who are dealing with SPS issues).

3. Following this strategy, each SPS-specific technical assistance activity has been categorized based on a scale of three training levels, ranging from "Level 1" (the least advanced, introductory activities) to "Level 3" (the most advanced, in-depth training activities).

Progressive Learning Strategy	
Level	SPS-specific TA Activity
1 and 2	e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement ²
2	National SPS Seminars ³
2 and 3	Thematic SPS Workshop
2 and 3	Regional SPS Workshops ⁴
3	SPS In-depth Virtual Course

¹ Additional information on the WTO's progressive learning strategy (PLS) is available in JOB/TC/7.

² While an introduction to the SPS Agreement is included in the Level 1 e-Learning course "Introduction to the WTO", the e-Learning "Course on the SPS Agreement" is the most introductory-level training available specifically on the SPS Agreement.

³ National SPS seminars may have a lower (more introductory) or higher (in-depth, advance training) level, depending on the training needs identified by the requesting Member, and the level of knowledge and experience of the participants. The Secretariat will aim to tailor the structure and content of these seminars according to each specific request and through consultations with the beneficiary Member during the preparation phase of the seminar.

⁴ The training provided in regional SPS workshops will, in general, be more advanced than the training given in national SPS seminars, as it will also focus on regional challenges and coordination matters. In determining the level of each regional workshop, the Secretariat will take into account the level of implementation of the SPS Agreement by the participating countries (for instance, through participation in the SPS Committee, number of notifications, etc.), as well as the overall level amongst the selected candidates.

ANNEX II**2021 SPS IN-DEPTH VIRTUAL COURSE**

Title of the activity	2021 SPS In-depth Virtual Course (in English)
Dates	September-October 2021
Venue	Geneva, Switzerland
Eligible WTO Members and Observers	WTO least-developed and developing country Members and Observers
Pre-requisites	<p>Successful completion of the WTO e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement.</p> <p>Candidates are required to have successfully completed the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application, in any of the WTO working languages.¹ Applications from candidates who have not successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course will not be considered. The e-Learning Course is available at: https://wtolearning.csod.com.</p> <p>Fluent in oral and written English.</p>
Application	<p>Candidates must fill-in and submit the online application form which is available at:</p> <p>https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2021-wto-sps-indepth-virtual-course/</p> <p>Candidates should complete and submit the online application form by Monday, 26 July 2021.</p> <p>Incomplete forms or forms sent after the deadline will not be considered.</p>
Results of the selection	<p><u>Only</u> selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection by end August 2021.</p> <p>Logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p>

¹ In the case of the English version, this would require completion of the set of four Courses. Please note that the content of the set of Courses is equivalent to that of the existing French and Spanish versions. Government officials who have already successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course, in any of the available languages, are not required to undertake it again.