

**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

**WTO SPS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2023:  
GENERAL INFORMATION, SELECTION PROCESS  
AND APPLICATION FORM**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT<sup>1</sup>

*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 2023. These activities include: the SPS e-Learning Course, national SPS seminars, regional SPS workshops<sup>2</sup>, other SPS workshops, and a revamped Advanced SPS Course.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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/sps/ta>.

3. This document provides detailed information about SPS-specific WTO technical assistance activities planned for 2023, 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
- Regional SPS Workshops
- Other SPS Workshops
- Advanced SPS Course

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Regional SPS workshops will be organized in 2023 upon request from regional organizations. Please refer to additional details in [Section 3](#) of this document.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> The SPS Committee is scheduled to meet three times in 2023: 22-24 March; 12-14 July; and 15-17 November (also see document [G/SPS/GEN/2036/Rev.1](#)). Informal meetings of the SPS Committee and other SPS-related workshops/thematic sessions 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).<sup>5</sup> 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 Series on the SPS Agreement (SPS e-Learning Course) comprising four interactive courses:

- 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.<sup>6</sup>

7. The online course series is freely accessible at all times via the WTO e-Learning Platform (<https://www.learning.wto.org>). Each course of the series includes a final exam and a WTO certification upon its successful completion. Participants who successfully complete the four courses of the series receive in addition a "Specialization Award".

8. Successful completion of the SPS e-Learning Courses (in either of the WTO working languages)<sup>7</sup> is a pre-requisite or recommendation for participation in some of the SPS technical assistance activities proposed in 2023. 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. Government officials from eligible<sup>8</sup> developing WTO Members and Observers wishing to enrol in the SPS e-Learning Courses must:

- a. **Create an account on the WTO e-Learning Programme:** the online registration is available at <https://www.learning.wto.org>; and
- b. **Submit the Nomination Form:** participants wishing to have full access to the e-Learning programme (i.e., access to courses' exams and certification) must be nominated by their government authorities. The nomination form is available for download on the e-Learning platform (<https://www.learning.wto.org>) in the participant's Dashboard upon log in. The completed nomination form, duly signed and stamped by the candidate's government

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> This new set of four courses is currently only available in English; French and Spanish versions are forthcoming. In the meantime, the French and Spanish versions of the previous SPS e-Learning Course are still available for interested participants.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Eligible participants are government officials from WTO Members and Observers who are beneficiaries of WTO Technical Assistance and who are not subject to WTO Administrative Measures. The WTO e-Learning programme is also freely accessible to the public (non-eligible participants) on a self-study basis; these participants have access to the e-Learning courses but not to the courses' exams and certification.

authorities, must be submitted (uploaded on the WTO e-Learning platform) to complete the candidate's registration process.

10. For further information and help about the registration process for the SPS e-Learning Course, the WTO e-Learning team can be contacted at [elarning@wto.org](mailto:elarning@wto.org). Please also consult the [WTO e-Learning Quick Guide](#), available in English, French and Spanish.

## 2 NATIONAL SPS SEMINARS

Level of this activity: 1    3

11. 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.

12. 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 organized in the form of a targeted training on the use of SPS online tools, e.g. online submission of notifications, searching for specific trade concerns and/or notifications, receiving notification alerts, etc.

13. 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.

14. 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://tams.wto.org>.<sup>9</sup>

15. 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 Cooperation (ITTC). The request and the official letter should be submitted online via the weblink <https://tams.wto.org>.

16. 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.<sup>10</sup>

## 3 REGIONAL SPS WORKSHOPS

Level of this activity: 1    3

### 3.1 Overview

17. 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

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<sup>9</sup> 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. WTO Members must connect using their WTO credentials through the WTO sign in button on <https://tams.wto.org>

<sup>10</sup> 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.

implications at the regional and national levels. Funding is available through the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund (DDAGTF) for these workshops.

18. 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.

19. These regional workshops may include representatives from Codex, IPPC and WOAHA 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.

### 3.2 Regional SPS Workshops in 2023

20. 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 2023 upon request from regional organizations.<sup>11</sup>

21. 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 ITTC Director and sent by e-mail to [ittcregionaldesk@wto.org](mailto:ittcregionaldesk@wto.org).

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

### 3.3 Regional SPS Workshop for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus (CEEAC) Countries

23. A Regional SPS Workshop for CEEAC countries, co-organized with the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI), is scheduled to take place during the week of 17 July 2023. This workshop is expected to be held in Vienna, Austria, and will be delivered in English.

#### 3.3.1 Selection Process

24. The Secretariat will select participants for this regional workshop. The target audience are government officials:

- a. holding direct responsibilities in SPS areas, i.e. SPS notification authority or enquiry point; Codex, IPPC or WOAHA contact points; officials from a relevant Ministry in charge of coordinating SPS matters and international trade;
- b. possessing a good 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.

25. All candidates are strongly encouraged to complete the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application: <https://www.learning.wto.org>. Priority may be given to those candidates who have successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course. See [Section 1](#) regarding enrolment in the e-Learning Course. In addition, candidates must be government officials at the time of applying for the workshop and during the workshop.

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

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

27. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers wishing to apply for participation in the regional workshop must consult the instructions provided in [Annex II](#), and complete and submit the online application form available at: <https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form>.

28. 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.

29. Administrative arrangements will also be communicated directly to the selected participants in advance of the activity.

#### 4 OTHER SPS WORKSHOPS

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

#### 5 ADVANCED SPS COURSE

Level of this activity: 1  2  3

##### 5.1 Overview

31. A newly designed Advanced SPS Course will be held during the weeks of 9 and 16 October 2023 (dates to be confirmed) in Geneva, Switzerland, in English. This course will be an in-depth and "hands-on" training activity on the SPS Agreement to encourage the active involvement and leadership of participants in SPS-related matters, ranging from addressing national implementation problems to the identification of SPS-related market access difficulties and how to develop strategies to overcome these. The course will also seek to assist government officials from developing countries in enhancing their participation in the SPS Committee.

32. The course will comprise a series of sessions and practical exercises related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement. The course will include sessions aimed at deepening participants' understanding of the SPS Agreement as well as of the work and functioning of the Committee. Participants will share their experiences and strengthen their knowledge on how to improve the implementation of specific provisions of the SPS Agreement, including the application of concepts and principles such as risk analysis, harmonization, equivalence, regionalization, and transparency. Dispute settlement, technical assistance and cooperation, and special and differential treatment will also be addressed. The course will be complemented by briefing sessions with key SPS actors and external experts, including from Codex, WOA, and IPPC.

33. Each participant will be invited to elaborate an action plan. This plan should address one or two specific implementation and/or market access challenges encountered in their countries. Participants will be required to implement their action plans in their respective countries. Virtual follow-up sessions may be subsequently organized to take stock of participants' action plans.

34. At the time of their application for this course, candidates will be asked to provide preliminary ideas for an action plan.

##### 5.2 Selection Process

35. The Secretariat will select a maximum of twenty participants for the Advanced SPS 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 willing to take initiative and leadership; and
- c. fluent in oral and written English.

36. Eligible candidates must be government officials at the time of applying for the course, during the course, and envisaged to continue as such during the action plan implementation phase (see para. 5.1 33. above).

37. Candidates will be selected using criteria such as the fulfilment of prerequisites below, prior selection of other candidates from the Member, as well as balance among the selected candidates in terms of region, gender, years of experience, and specialization.

38. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers wishing to apply for the Advanced SPS Course must consult the instructions provided in [Annex III](#), and complete and submit the online application form available at: <https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form>.

39. 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.

40. Other administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.

### **5.3 Pre-requisites for Participation**

41. There are two pre-requisites for participation in the Advanced SPS Course:

- a. 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.
- b. Before the start of the course, the selected candidates will receive a questionnaire to assess the level of implementation of the SPS Agreement in their countries. Completion and submission of the responses to the questionnaire is compulsory for participation in the course.

## ANNEX I

### PROGRESSIVE LEARNING STRATEGY<sup>1</sup> SPS-SPECIFIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) ACTIVITIES

1. In order to respond to the need for greater coherence and complementarity in WTO capacity-building, 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).

| <b>Progressive Learning Strategy</b> |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Level</b>                         | <b>SPS-specific TA Activity</b>                     |
| <b>1 and 2</b>                       | e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement <sup>2</sup> |
| <b>2</b>                             | National SPS Seminars <sup>3</sup>                  |
| <b>2 and 3</b>                       | Regional SPS Workshops <sup>4</sup>                 |
| <b>3</b>                             | Advanced SPS Course                                 |

<sup>1</sup> Additional information on the WTO's progressive learning strategy (PLS) is available in [JOB/TC/7](#).

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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**

## REGIONAL SPS WORKSHOP IN 2023

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| <b>Title of the activity</b>              | <b>Regional SPS Workshop for Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus countries, (co-organized with the Joint Vienna Institute) (in English)</b>   |
| <b>Dates</b>                              | <b>Week of 17 July 2023</b>   |
| <b>Venue</b>                              | <b>Vienna, Austria</b>  |
| <b>Eligible WTO Members and Observers</b> | Afghanistan; Albania; Armenia; Azerbaijan; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Georgia; Iran; Israel; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Moldova, Republic of; Montenegro; North Macedonia; Serbia; Tajikistan; Turkey; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; Uzbekistan   |
| <b>Pre-requisites</b>                     | <p>Only for government officials holding direct responsibilities in the SPS area. Preference will be given to candidates with direct responsibilities in the implementation of the provisions of the SPS Agreement.</p> <p>Candidates are strongly encouraged to complete the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application, in any of the WTO working languages.<sup>1</sup> Priority may be given to those candidates who have successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course.</p> <p>The e-Learning Course is available at: <a href="https://www.learning.wto.org/">https://www.learning.wto.org/</a></p> <p>Fluency in oral and written English.</p> |
| <b>Application</b>                        | <p>Candidates must fill-in and submit the online application form which is available at:</p> <p><a href="https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form">https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form</a>.</p> <p>Candidates should complete and submit the online application form by <b>19 May 2023</b>.</p> <p>Incomplete forms or forms sent after the deadline will not be considered.</p>   |
| <b>Results of the selection</b>           | <p><u>Only</u> selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection by May/June 2023.</p> <p>Administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p>  |

<sup>1</sup> 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.



**ANNEX III****2023 ADVANCED SPS COURSE**

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|---|--|
| <b>Title of the activity</b>              | <b>2023 Advanced SPS Course (in English)</b>   |
| <b>Dates</b>                              | <b>Weeks of 9 and 16 October 2023 with a possible virtual follow-up session</b>  |
| <b>Venue</b>                              | <b>Geneva, Switzerland</b>   |
| <b>Eligible WTO Members and Observers</b> | WTO least-developed and developing country Members and Observers   |
| <b>Pre-requisites</b>                     | <p>Successful completion of the WTO e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement. Candidates are required to have successfully completed the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application.<sup>1</sup> Applications from candidates who have not successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement will not be considered. The SPS e-Learning Course is available at: <a href="https://www.learning.wto.org">https://www.learning.wto.org</a>.</p> <p>Before the start of the course, the selected candidates will receive a questionnaire to assess the level of implementation of the SPS Agreement in their countries. Completion and submission of the responses to the questionnaire is compulsory for participation in the course.</p> <p>Fluent in oral and written English</p> |
| <b>Application</b>                        | <p>Candidates must fill-in and submit the online application form which is available at:</p> <p><a href="https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form">https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.com/forms/2023-wto-sps-technical-assistance-application-form</a></p> <p>At the time of their application, candidates will also be asked to provide preliminary ideas for an action plan, aimed at addressing an implementation and/or market access challenge that they have identified in their country.</p> <p>Candidates should complete and submit the online application form by <b>19 May 2023</b>.</p> <p>Incomplete forms or forms sent after the deadline will not be considered</p>   |
| <b>Results of the selection</b>           | <p><u>Only</u> selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection in June 2023.</p> <p>Administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p>   |

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<sup>1</sup> 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.