



Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**WTO SPS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2016:
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 2016. These activities include: the SPS E-Learning course, national SPS seminars, a thematic SPS workshop in Geneva, regional SPS workshops² and an advanced SPS course.³ 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/sps/ta>.

2. This document provides detailed information about SPS-specific WTO technical assistance activities planned for 2016, including information on dates, venues, eligibility and selection criteria of participants, instructions for submission of applications, deadlines and pre-requisites when required.

3. 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
- Advanced SPS Course, including the Follow-up Session

4. A chronological table with the dates and steps for application for all the SPS-specific technical assistance activities in 2016 can be found in Annex I.

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 2016 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 2016: 16-17 March; 6-7 July; and 26-27 October. 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 II.

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), so as 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. While a brief introduction to the SPS Agreement is included in the E-Learning course "Introduction to the WTO", this online course on the SPS Agreement is the most introductory-level training available specifically on the SPS Agreement.

7. The course is available in all three WTO working languages (English, French and Spanish) and is divided into nine modules which must be completed within two months. At the end of each module, participants are required to take a short online test. The completion of all of these tests (with an overall average of 60%) is required for the successful completion of the course.

8. Successful completion of the SPS E-Learning Course is a pre-requisite for participation in other SPS technical assistance activities, such as the Advanced SPS 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. The WTO E-Campus (<http://ecampus.wto.org>) offers the SPS E-learning Course throughout the year.

10. While the WTO E-Learning material can be freely requested through the WTO E-Campus website, participants have to register and submit a nomination form in order to participate in a monitored course, access the module exams and obtain a WTO certificate.

11. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers wishing to register for the SPS E-Learning Course must access the WTO E-Learning website (<http://ecampus.wto.org>). In order to register for a course, two forms are to be filled-in and submitted:

- a. **Online Registration Form:** available at <http://ecampus.wto.org>. This registration form needs to be completed online, and the system will generate a registration number that will be used in the "nomination form";
- b. **Nomination Form:** the candidate should be confirmed by the responsible government authorities. The nomination form is also available at <http://ecampus.wto.org>. The completed nomination form must be sent either by email (scanned) to elarning.registration@wto.org or by fax to +41 22 739 5191.

12. Further information and instructions about the registration process for the SPS E-Learning Course can be found on the website <http://ecampus.wto.org>.

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.

2 NATIONAL SPS SEMINARS

Level of this activity: 1 3

13. 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, in a single national seminar.

14. 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. 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 form which is available online at: https://wto.formstack.com/forms/national_ta_requests.

16. The formal request must be submitted along with the official requesting letter, addressed to the Director of the Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC). The form and the official requesting letter should be submitted online via the weblink (https://wto.formstack.com/forms/national_ta_requests).

17. Due to the increased number of requests received for national SPS seminars in recent years, the Secretariat encourages Members and Observers to submit any request 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.⁶

3 THEMATIC SPS WORKSHOP

Level of this activity: 1 3

18. The Secretariat will organize a special SPS thematic workshop, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland. The specific topic of this thematic workshop will be confirmed following discussions in the 2016 March SPS Committee meeting.⁷ The workshop will take place on Monday, 24 October and Tuesday, 25 October 2016. The SPS informal and regular meetings will be held on 26-27 October 2016.

19. The workshop will be open to participation by all delegates from WTO Members and Observers attending the SPS Committee meeting in October 2016.

20. The WTO, with the financial assistance of the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund (DDAGTF), will sponsor the participation of government officials from developing country Members and Observers. The Secretariat will select participants to be sponsored from applications received from capital-based officials holding direct responsibilities in the SPS area.

21. Preference will be given to applications from least-developed countries (LDCs), and from developing country Members and Observers that have not been sponsored to participate in a thematic workshop on the SPS Agreement in the recent past. No more than **one** participant from each country will be selected.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Following the March SPS Committee, the Secretariat will circulate additional information on this workshop via an addendum to G/SPS/GEN/997/Rev.6.

22. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers meeting the above-mentioned criteria and wishing to apply for the thematic workshop must consult the instructions provided in Annex III, and complete and submit the online application form available at: <https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.eu/forms/2016-wto-sps-technical-assistanceapplication-form/>.

23. An economy-class round-trip air-ticket (excursion fare, if applicable), accommodation, daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses will be provided to the selected participants as of the opening day of the activity. Other administrative arrangements shall be communicated directly to the selected participants in advance of the workshop.

4 REGIONAL SPS WORKSHOPS

Level of this activity: 1 3

4.1 Overview

24. The Secretariat of the WTO 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.

25. The 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.

26. 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 2016

27. 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 2016, upon request from regional organizations.

28. 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 and the proposed dates. This formal request should be addressed to the Director of the Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC) and sent by fax to: +41 22 739 57 64.

29. Programmes, prerequisites and selection criteria will be defined for each requested activity.

5 ADVANCED SPS COURSE AND FOLLOW-UP SESSION

Level of this activity: 1 3

5.1 Overview

30. The 2016 Advanced SPS Course will be held from **17 October to 4 November 2016** in Geneva, Switzerland, in **French**. This course is an in-depth and "hands-on" training activity on the SPS Agreement conceived 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 also seeks to assist government officials from developing countries in enhancing their participation in the SPS Committee.

31. The course comprises a series of sessions and practical exercises related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement. The first week of the course includes sessions aimed at deepening participants' understanding of the SPS Agreement. In the second week, participants will take part in the thematic workshop, and attend the SPS Committee meetings, with a view to learning how the Committee works in practice, so as to become familiar with the rules and procedures of the Committee and to participate in its discussions. In the third week, participants will share their experiences and will 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 is complemented by briefing sessions with SPS delegates. Former participants of the course, attending the SPS Committee, will also share their experiences with current participants in relation to the development and implementation of their own action plans. A number of external experts, including from Codex, IPPC and OIE, will participate in parts of the course.

32. Each participant will be required to elaborate an action plan with the assistance of coaches. This plan should address one or two specific implementation and/or market access challenges encountered in their countries. During the course, participants will regularly meet with their coaches to discuss and develop their action plan. On return to their countries, participants will be required to implement their action plans and submit periodic reports on their progress.

33. A follow-up session will be organized in June/July 2017, where participants to the Advanced SPS Course will report on the implementation of their action plans.

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

5.2 Selection Process

35. The Secretariat will select a maximum of twenty-five 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 French.

36. Government officials from WTO Members and Observers wishing to apply for the Advanced SPS Course must consult the instructions provided in Annex IV, and complete and submit the online application form available at: <https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.eu/forms/2016-wto-sps-technical-assistanceapplication-form/>.

37. 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.

38. Selected participants will receive an economy-class round-trip air-ticket (excursion fare, if applicable), accommodation, daily subsistence allowance for the duration of the course and terminal expenses at the applicable WTO rate. These will be provided to the participant by the WTO during the activity. Other administrative arrangements will be communicated directly to the selected participants in advance of the course.

5.3 Pre-requisites for Participation

39. 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

SPS-SPECIFIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2016 – CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Activity	Pre-requisites	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
E-Learning Course on SPS (English, French and Spanish)	WTO Certification only for registered Government officials from WTO Members and Observers	<i>Courses available throughout the year</i> →												
2016 Advanced SPS Course (in French)	SPS E-Learning Course* Completion and submission of pre-course questionnaire	<i>Applications accepted until 3 June.</i> →						Results of selection		Submission of response to the questionnaire	Course from 17 Oct.- 4 Nov.			
Thematic SPS Workshop (Specific topic to be confirmed)	Only for government officials holding direct responsibilities in the SPS area	<i>Applications accepted until 3 June.</i> →						Results of selection			Workshop 24-25 Oct.			

° Although the E-learning courses are available throughout the year, its completion must take place within two months of having started the process.

ANNEX II

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 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.

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

- a. **"Generalists"** are those 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 those government officials that will require in-depth knowledge in a specific area, such as those 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, in Geneva
2 and 3	Regional SPS Workshops ⁴
3	Advanced SPS Course, in Geneva

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", this online 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 III**THEMATIC SPS WORKSHOP IN 2016**

Title of the activity	Thematic SPS Workshop (<i>Specific topic to be confirmed</i>)
Dates	24 to 25 October 2016
Venue	Geneva, Switzerland
Eligible WTO Members and Observers	WTO least-developed and developing country Members and Observers
Pre-requisites for funding	<p>Only for government officials holding direct responsibilities in the SPS area.</p> <p>Preference will be given to applications from least-developed countries (LDCs), and from developing country Members and Observers that have not been sponsored to participate in a thematic workshop on the SPS Agreement in the recent past. No more than one participant from each country will be selected.</p> <p>Fluent in either English, French or Spanish.</p>
Application	<p>Candidates must fill-in and submit the online application form which is available at:</p> <p>https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.eu/forms/2016-wto-sps-technical-assistanceapplication-form/</p> <p>Candidates should complete and submit the online application form before <u>3 June 2016</u>.</p> <p>Incomplete forms or forms sent after the deadline will not be considered.</p>
Results of the selection	<p>Only selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection during July 2016.</p> <p>Administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p> <p>Selected candidates will be required to immediately provide their passport information, including number, place and date of issue, and date of expiry.</p>

ANNEX IV**2016 ADVANCED SPS COURSE**

Title of the activity	2016 Advanced SPS Course (in French)
Dates	17 October to 4 November 2016
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. Applications from candidates who have not successfully completed the SPS E-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement will not be considered. The E-Learning Course is available at: http://ecampus.wto.org.</p> <p>Completion and submission of the responses to the questionnaire is compulsory for participation in the course.</p> <p>Short-listed candidates may be required to submit a letter of motivation.</p> <p>Fluent in oral and written French.</p>
Application	<p>Candidates must fill-in and submit the online application form which is available at:</p> <p>https://worldtradeorganization.wufoo.eu/forms/2016-wto-sps-technical-assistanceapplication-form/</p> <p>At the time of their application, candidates will also be asked to provide preliminary ideas for an action plan which they will undertake during the course, 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 before <u>3 June 2016</u>.</p> <p>Incomplete forms or forms sent after the deadline will not be considered.</p>
Results of the selection	<p>Only selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection during July 2016.</p> <p>Administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p> <p>Selected candidates will be required to immediately provide their passport information, including number, place and date of issue, and date of expiry.</p>