

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**REPORT OF THE STDF WORKSHOP ON
SPS-RELATED CAPACITY EVALUATION TOOLS¹**

31 March 2008

Note by the Secretariat²

I. SUMMARY

1. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) organized a workshop on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools in Geneva on 31 March 2008, back-to-back with the 2-3 April meeting of the SPS Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the "SPS Committee"). This was the first in a planned series of thematic events organized by the STDF Secretariat. Document [G/SPS/GEN/821](#) provided background information on the tools presented and the programme for the workshop.

2. The meeting was open to all Members, observer governments and organizations with observer status in the SPS Committee. Participants included some 200 delegates from the SPS Committee, as well as 15 officials from developing countries, whose attendance was funded by the STDF.

3. The workshop focused on tools that have been developed by international organizations to evaluate capacity in the areas of food safety, animal and plant health. The objective was to increase awareness and knowledge about the purpose and scope of these tools, as well as the experiences and results of their practical application.

4. The day was organized in four sessions with presentations on capacity evaluation tools developed by international organizations. These included: (i) specific tools that address a particular thematic component of SPS capacity (e.g. plant health); (ii) generic tools that look at the SPS system as a whole; and (iii) related tools that treat one aspect of the SPS area in more general settings (e.g. the interface between food safety, health and trade). At the end of each session, there were opportunities for comments and questions from the floor.

5. Practical aspects related to the use of the different tools was the subject of open discussion during the final session of the workshop. Topics addressed included the merits of specific versus generic tools; the beneficiary's role in the selection of tool, its application and end use; the prioritization of needs; and the scope for collaboration in the future development and use of these tools including the sharing of results.

¹ This document uses hyperlinks to facilitate electronic access to background documents and websites. These linkages can only be accessed from an electronic copy of the document from a computer with a reliable internet connection. The documents can also be consulted through contacting the respective organizations.

² This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights or obligations under the WTO.

6. The complete set of presentations, and a podcast of the discussions, are available on the [STDF website](#) and the [SPS gateway](#) on the WTO website.

II. PRESENTATIONS DURING THE WORKSHOP

7. Ten presentations on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools were introduced at the workshop. The first session addressed specific capacity evaluation tools for plant protection, veterinary services and food safety with presentations by representatives of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The second session focused on general capacity evaluation tools with presentations from the World Bank, the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority, the International Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and PROMPERU.³ In the third session, the scope of the discussion was widened to related approaches to capacity evaluation, with presentations from the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

8. The presentations highlighted how the existing tools are at different stages of development and use. Some have already been tried and tested for a number of years. The IPPC's Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool was first developed in 1999 and has been used in 62 countries. Similarly, the OIE's tool for evaluation of the performance of veterinary services has been trialled in 50 countries, with another 55 evaluations in the pipeline. In contrast, FAO's Guide to Assess Biosecurity Capacity is more recent and in the early stages of application, while the WHO trade and health tool is still under development.

9. The presentations further illustrated the different approaches that are being used to evaluate SPS-related capacity needs from self-assessment tools (like the IPPC's tool) to externally-led evaluations (such as that used by the OIE) with variations in-between. Some approaches are focused on capacity to comply with international standards (such as those of IPPC and OIE) while others (such as the FAO and IICA tools) take a broader view including the development of a vision of the future state of capacity. In some cases, the findings generated by the capacity evaluation tools remain confidential while in others they are publicly available.

III. DISCUSSIONS DURING THE WORKSHOP

10. During the plenary discussion, several Members described how one or more of the tools presented had been applied in their countries. The resulting outcomes had included: increased awareness among high-level officials about the importance of food safety, animal and/or plant health; the development of sectoral and/or cross-sectoral strategies and action plans for capacity building; improvements in the delivery of SPS-related services; the establishment of national food safety committees; the formulation of project activities and the allocation of resources by government agencies and donors; and a more harmonized approach towards the management of SPS issues. A few Members indicated that application of the tools had resulted in substantial benefits linked to increased food and agricultural exports.

11. The proliferation in approaches to SPS capacity evaluation, reflecting growing interest in the relationship between SPS and market access, was discussed. It was noted that while the standards of three organizations (Codex, IPPC and OIE) are recognized by the SPS Agreement, many more organizations are involved in SPS capacity building and have developed accompanying capacity evaluation tools. However, some Members were concerned that this trend raised the risk of duplication in evaluations as well as in the design and implementation of subsequent capacity building

³ Peru Export and Tourism Promotion Board.

activities. The resource implications, particularly for small countries, of a large number of evaluations and the challenges of managing all the information generated was also underlined.

12. The choice of which tool to use in which situation was one of the main topics of the discussion. Several Members noted that this would depend on the country's particular situation. Experiences were shared from South America and Africa about how elements of different tools had been adapted and used together, based on the Member's needs, with positive results.

13. Some Members urged organizations to acknowledge the findings of capacity evaluations that had been performed by other organizations or using different tools, and to focus on common objectives such as the achievement of improvements to service delivery or improvements in the food safety, and animal and plant health situation.

14. The importance of an active role for beneficiaries in the selection and use of tools to evaluate SPS capacity was highlighted. Members agreed on the necessity of ensuring political commitment and buy-in of all the concerned stakeholders, including the private sector, to ensure ownership and sustainability of follow-up actions. Examples were shared of cases where the use of the tools presented had promoted inter-agency collaboration and facilitated agreement on priorities at the national level.

15. Members recognized that a large amount of data was being generated through capacity assessments but that compilation and exchange of the results had been limited to date. This had reduced opportunities for the findings to be taken on board by other organizations. There was agreement about the need to make the results of completed capacity evaluations more widely available, both at the country level and internationally.

16. Some Members expressed concern that limited attention had been given to monitoring the impact of capacity evaluations in generating results such as improved trade performance, or enhanced human health, disease or pest status, etc. Examining the impact of capacity evaluations was identified as an important area for future work.

17. Another of the main topics discussed concerned the scope for collaboration and cooperation in the future development and use of these tools. Broad agreement emerged on the need to strive towards harmonization of approaches to capacity evaluation while respecting the needs of beneficiaries, as a means to optimize the use of available resources. One Member asked if there was scope to take the best components of all three approaches and develop an overarching tool.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The general recommendations emerging from the workshop included the following:

- improve coordination to reduce duplication in capacity evaluation and follow-up activities;
 - promote harmonization in the future development and application of capacity evaluation tools;
 - make the findings of completed and planned capacity evaluations more widely available; and
 - identify ways to monitor the impact of capacity evaluations in generating results.
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