

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FROM MEMBERS ON THE USE OF
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its meeting of 15-16 October 1997, the SPS Committee adopted a provisional procedure to Monitor the Process of International Harmonization.¹ In accordance with paragraph 6 of this procedure, five Members have proposed nine distinct issues for consideration by the Committee as of 12 March 1999. All nine issues have been discussed at one or more meetings of the SPS Committee.²
2. Paragraph 8 of the procedure states:

"Based on the information provided by Members, and in the light of discussion in the Committee, a list of standards, guidelines or recommendations which have a major impact on international trade shall be established by the Committee. This list shall be reviewed at each meeting of the Committee. Members should provide information, for each of the standards, guidelines or recommendations identified, of any relevant trade impact, and on their use or non-use of the standard, guideline or recommendation and the reasons therefor. The Committee may invite the relevant international standard-setting body to consider reviewing the existing standard, guideline or recommendation." [emphasis added]
3. The purpose of this note is to gather information from Members in respect of the issues identified. It is suggested that Members fill in the attached Annex and fax/e-mail it back to the Secretariat. Should Members wish to obtain the Annex in electronic format, please send an e-mail to erik.wijkstrom@wto.org (cc: irma.bracco@wto.org) with the word "Monitoring" in the subject line.
4. Each of the identified issues is set out in a table contained in the attached Annex. The tables include sufficient information in order to give a brief explanation of the concern, as identified by the Member who brought it to the Committee's attention. For a more detailed explanation it is recommended that Members refer to the original submission (the document symbol is indicated in the table).
5. The deadline for responding is **17 May 1999**.

¹ G/SPS/11.

² March 1998 (G/SPS/R/10), June 1998 (G/SPS/R/11), September 1998 (G/SPS/R/12), November 1998 (G/SPS/R/13) and March 1999, under the heading "Monitoring of the Use of International Standards".

ANNEX

Table 1

Disease/problem: Requirement for control of Infectious Bursal Virus (IBDV) in cooked chicken meat			
Submission by: Thailand (G/SPS/W/99, 2 March 1999)			
Commodities affected: Cooked chicken meat			
<p style="text-align: center;">Identified concern:</p> <p>At present, there is an international standard on this disease but it deals only with specific animal health issues. This disease is not a zoonosis, therefore it will not cause any harm to human health. The OIE Code has listed IBDV in the List B diseases (Part 3, Section 3.6, Chapter 3.6.1). Its guidelines and recommendations are related to the importation of live birds, day-old chicks and hatching eggs only. Recommendations on trade of poultry meat and poultry products are not included in the Code.</p>			
Identified standard:	OIE International Animal Health Code Mammals, Birds and Bees (1997)		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
<i>Does your government use the identified standard?</i>			
<i>Is there a need for an international standard?</i>			
<p>¹ N.A. stands for Not Applicable.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What are your reasons for using / not using the identified international standard?</i> <i>or</i> <i>What are your reasons for considering that there is a need for/ no need for an international standard?</i></p>			
<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 2

Disease/problem: Definition of "quarantine pest"			
Submission by: United States (G/SPS/W/97, 11 February 1999)			
Commodities affected: Fresh commercial fruits, vegetables, grain, oilseeds, and cotton			
Identified concern: The IPPC Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms provides the following definition for quarantine pest: "a pest of potential economic importance to the area endangered thereby and not yet present there, or present but not widely distributed and being <u>officially controlled</u> ". Questions have emerged regarding the meaning of " <u>officially controlled</u> ". This two-word phrase is not currently defined by the IPPC. There is a need to agree on the meaning of "official control" to ensure a harmonized understanding and application of this concept, particularly as it is used to justify phytosanitary measures on intercepted pests.			
Identified standard:	IPPC Glossary of Phytosanitary Terms (in part)		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
<i>Does your government use the identified standard?</i>			
<i>Is there a need for an international standard?</i>			
¹ N.A. stands for Not Applicable.			
<i>What are your reasons for using / not using the identified international standard? or What are your reasons for considering that there is a need for/ no need for an international standard?</i>			
<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 3

Disease/problem: Chlortetracycline (CTC) residues			
Submission by: United States (G/SPS/W/87, 12 February 1998)			
Commodities affected: Pork and pork products (potentially also: cattle, sheep, chicken, turkey and duck products)			
Identified concern: Of the tetracyclines (CTC, Oxytetracycline and Tetracycline), only Oxytetracycline has a MRL international standard. Codex is currently considering one MRL standard that would apply to each of the three tetracyclines. However, the draft MRL has not been finalized by Codex and therefore a formal international standard for CTC has not been set. Because of the impact on international trade, it is important that Codex move as quickly as possible to finalize MRLs for CTC. Some countries have no tolerance or maximum residue limit (MRL) in place for CTC.			
Identified standard:	None.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
<i>Does your government use the identified standard?</i>			
<i>Is there a need for an international standard?</i>			
¹ N.A. stands for Not Applicable.			
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<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 4

Disease/problem: <i>Bacilli</i> and other organisms			
Submission by: United States (G/SPS/W/87, 12 February 1998)			
Commodities affected: Canned/Bottled Products, including jams.			
Identified concern: Codex standards for jam state that products should be "free from microorganisms in amounts which may represent a hazard to health". This standard presupposes that zero tolerance is not necessary to eliminate health hazards. Codex has recently elaborated its position on zero tolerance and health hazards in Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL21-1997). In this document, Codex states that "the mere finding, with a presence-absence test, of certain organisms known to cause food-borne illness ... does not necessarily indicate a threat to public health". However, certain countries have rejected jam imports containing bacteria (<i>Bacillus Cereus</i>) without substantiating that the level or stage (e.g. spore) of bacteria detected poses a hazard to health. Other canned and bottled products have been denied entry into markets for similar findings. This would appear to be inconsistent with the Codex standard and be an unnecessary trade restriction.			
Identified standard:	Codex Standard 79-1981; Codex Standard CAC/GL21-1997, 5.1.3.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
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¹ N.A. stands for Not Applicable.			
<i>What are your reasons for using / not using the identified international standard?</i> <i>or</i> <i>What are your reasons for considering that there is a need for/ no need for an international standard?</i>			
<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 5

Disease/problem: Frequency of controls to be carried out on bulls in collection centres (brucellosis, tuberculosis, leucosis, IBR)			
Submission by: European Communities (G/SPS/W/96, 23 November 1998)			
Commodities affected: Bovine semen			
Identified concern: Semen collection is carried out before the final destination of the semen is determined. Serological tests must be carried out before the collection. This constraint is difficult to manage as bulls used for artificial insemination are usually tested on descendants and a minimum of four to five years is necessary to carry out these tests. It is only at the end of the period of testing that the commercial and genetic value of the semen can be known and the possibilities of trade envisaged. The absence of consistency between the provisions of the OIE Animal Health Codex Appendix concerning bovine semen and those of articles of the Code concerning the relevant diseases is the cause of disparities in requests by importing countries.			
Identified standard:	Articles 3.2.1.4, 3.2.3.7, 3.2.4.4 and 3.2.5.7 and Appendix 4.2.1.1 of the International Animal Health Code.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
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<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 6

Disease/problem: Use of benzoic acid as a preservative in sauces			
Submission by: Philippines (G/SPS/W/91, 2 November 1998)			
Commodities affected: Sauces such as oyster sauce, fish sauce and others			
Identified concern: Benzoic acid is an anti-microbial preservative used in sauces which require a shelf-life of 6-12 months, and therefore used in products marketed for export. The lack of an international standard allows countries to discriminate in the use of the additive. Benzoic acid has an ADI of 5 mg/kg body weight. This has been used as a reason for restricting its use, as high levels of consumption of foods containing the additive could create a health risk. However, as there are no internationally agreed methodologies for assessing risk due to dietary exposure to food additives, the potential for discrimination in usage exists. The use of benzoic acid in sauces is included in the draft Codex General Standard for Food Additives (GSFA). It is important that the GSFA be finalized soon by Codex as the lack of an international standard not only harms international trade in sauces but has the potential to affect trade in other processed food products where preservatives are used.			
Identified standard:	No international standard; only individual country standards		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
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<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 7

Disease/problem Certification requirements for origin of animals			
Submission by: Canada (G/SPS/W/89, 7 September 1998)			
Commodities affected: Meat Products			
<p style="text-align: center;">Identified concern:</p> <p>Restrictions are imposed on trade of meat products because some countries require that the country of origin of the animal from which the meat products were derived be identified. As a general practice, meat processors import animals, process the meat and export the products to another country. Some countries require that imported meat products be derived only from animals raised in the exporting country, i.e., no products derived from non-domestic animals may be imported. This requirement is maintained even when the importing country is also importing meat products directly from the source country of the animals. This presents a difficulty for processors in the exporting country who must segregate shipments in order to meet this requirement. OIE could be asked to establish criteria and conditions for determining country of origin requirements.</p>			
Identified standard:	None.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
<i>Does your government use the identified standard?</i>			
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<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 8

Disease/problem: Certification regarding the absence of certain pathogens in raw meat products (e.g., salmonella)			
Submission by: Canada (G/SPS/W/89, 7 September 1998)			
Commodities affected: Meat Products			
Identified concern: Restrictions are imposed on trade of meat products because certain countries require that the meat be free of certain pathogens, e.g. salmonella. Codex could be asked to determine if developing standards for pathogens in raw meat is feasible or appropriate.			
Identified standard:	None.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
<i>Does your government use the identified standard?</i>			
<i>Is there a need for an international standard?</i>			
¹ N.A. stands for Not Applicable.			
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<i>Additional comments:</i>			

Table 9

Disease/problem: Certification requirements for diseases for which national control measures may not exist			
Submission by: Canada (G/SPS/W/89, 7 September 1998)			
Commodities affected: Meat Products			
Identified concern: Restrictions are imposed on trade of meat products because of the presence of certain animal diseases which are unlikely to be transmitted through meat. OIE guidelines should serve as the basis for animal health certification. Only diseases of importance (e.g. OIE list A) should be required to be listed on export certificates. OIE could be asked to develop more specific guidelines for the animal health certification of meat products, i.e. diseases of concern and appropriate safeguards such as country freedom, farm-free, farm-free-plus-certain-radius. Guidelines could also be developed for countries that want to require more stringent certification, e.g. surveillance program, disease transmission data from meat products.			
Identified standard:	OIE establishes standards for safeguards against diseases, e.g. List A and B. These guidelines are generally appropriate.		
	YES	NO	N.A. ¹
<i>Is your international trade significantly affected because of this issue?</i>			
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