

**USE OF ELECTRONIC SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY  
CERTIFICATES IN WORLD TRADE**

Communication from Mexico

The following communication, received on 18 October 2011, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Mexico.

- 
1. Mexico has made significant progress in the implementation of trade facilitation measures similar to those proposed at WTO SPS Committee meetings. These measures concern, *inter alia*, the publication and availability of information on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and, more recently, the creation of the Single Foreign Trade Window. Such improvements will put Mexico at the forefront of trade efficiency, while ensuring compliance with international regulations.
  2. On 14 January 2011, a Presidential Decree relating to the creation of the Mexican Electronic Foreign Trade Window was published in the Mexican Official Journal. This Decree stipulates that the foreign trade procedures of the National Agriculture and Food Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) are to be incorporated into this Electronic Foreign Trade Window as of 31 January 2012.
  3. For the Electronic Single Window to have a major impact on SENASICA procedures, its connection with international systems has to be ensured through the electronic exchange of information relating to phytosanitary, animal health and aquaculture certification.
  4. Mexico's Electronic Foreign Trade Window seeks to provide a single reception point for the information that is provided in advance by the various parties involved in foreign trade. In doing so, it will facilitate and control Mexican trade, provide a basis for the restructuring of the customs system processes, contribute to the paperless customs system and ensure the application of quality standards and best practices in the field. The development of this Window will involve the creation of a module for the electronic exchange of information between governments, which will be notified to Member countries in due course.
  5. On the basis of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) for issuing phytosanitary certificates, Mexico seeks to establish a reciprocal electronic scheme with Member countries that will ensure compliance with safety standards, promote a climate of trust and ensure fulfilment of the certification objectives of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the objectives of the animal health certificates provided for in Section 5 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code.

6. The need to establish certificates at global level has arisen due to an increase in the number of countries interested in electronic certification. Such certification is viewed as a means of facilitating import and export procedures between countries and ensuring their harmonization, providing that the parameters of reliability are maintained for both printed and electronic certificates.

7. In this respect, SENASICA has launched a review and is working to form links with Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Canada and the United States of America in order to establish technical, administrative and management protocols for the implementation of the electronic exchange of certificates concerning agriculture and food health, safety and quality for foreign trade purposes.

#### **POSSIBLE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

8. Mexico is of the opinion that the Committee needs to discuss and put forward recommendations that will help Member countries and international bodies to harmonize electronic sanitary and phytosanitary certification procedures, with a view to ensuring that the guidelines followed are uniform and consistent with the basic objectives of the sanitary regulations established in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), in accordance with the following precepts:

- (a) International bodies (IPPC, OIE, Codex Alimentarius Commission) establish and issue guidelines, standards or rules for approving or harmonizing the electronic exchange of certificates and other sanitary and phytosanitary documents required for foreign trade purposes.
- (b) Member countries are called on to comply with the rules, guidelines, standards and recommendations issued by international bodies for designing, setting up and implementing electronic information and document exchange systems, pursuant to the provisions of Article 3 of the SPS Agreement.
- (c) Member countries are urged to promote bilateral and regional electronic exchange initiatives and to ensure harmonization with the international rules, guidelines and standards issued by the above-mentioned international bodies.

9. This communication is being submitted under Article 13 of the SPS Agreement, without prejudice to Mexico's rights and obligations under that Agreement.

---