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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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VOLUNTARY THIRD PARTY ASSURANCE

COMMUNICATION FROM BELIZE

The following communication, received on 3 July 2019, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Belize.

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1. The Draft Report of the Committee on the "Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement", document G/SPS/W/313, dated 27 May 2019, will be discussed at the informal session of the 75th Regular SPS Committee Meeting.
 2. Belize's proposal on voluntary third party assurance is found on page ten of document (G/SPS/W/313). Although it contains two recommendations, as accurately reported by the Secretariat, our main goal is for the Committee to support either a thematic session or a workshop on voluntary third party assurance programmes.
 3. We believe that the time is opportune to support such an activity, particularly as we are currently implementing two STDF project preparation grants (PPGs) on voluntary third party assurance (STDF/PPG/682 and STDF/PPG/665), of which Belize, Honduras, Mali, Senegal and Uganda are all beneficiaries. In addition we also have the current work in the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS); in particular REP19/FICS Appendix III: "Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third Party Assurance (for adoption at Step 5)".
 4. The thematic session or workshop could have presentations on:
 - a. Members' experience in recognizing voluntary Third Party Assurance Programmes;
 - b. CCFICS presentation on the "Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third Party Assurance";
 - c. Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) work on benchmarking against international standards, or a third party certification programme owner, a buyer or a retailer and their procedures in benchmarking with national requirements or with the standards, guidelines and recommendations of International Standard Setting Bodies recognized by the SPS Agreement; and
 - d. Experiences of both exporting and importing Members on third party assurance schemes.
 5. In terms of specific language for the report of the Fifth Review, we propose the following:

Recommendation:

In view of the ongoing work being undertaken by CCFICS on the use of voluntary third party assurance to inform national food control system planning, and the current pilot projects that will be undertaken in Belize, Honduras, Mali, Senegal and Uganda, the Committee should hold a thematic session or workshop on voluntary third party assurance programmes.
