

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

RESTRICTED

G/SPS/W/97

11 February 1999

(99-0534)

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

PROCEDURE TO MONITOR THE PROCESS OF INTERNATIONAL HARMONIZATION

Submission by the United States

In accordance with paragraph 6 of the provisional procedure to monitor the use of international standards (G/SPS/11), the United States proposes that the Committee consider the attached issue.

PROCEDURE TO MONITOR THE PROCESS
OF INTERNATIONAL HARMONIZATION

Submission by the United States

Commodities affected:	Fresh commercial fruits, vegetables, grain, oilseeds, and cotton
Disease/problem/issue:	Several countries impose quarantine actions, such as requiring fumigation and other costly treatments, on imported commodities when found with intercepted pests even though these same pests occur in the importing country and are not subject to internal regulatory or quarantine controls. These situations arise due to the way some countries define a "quarantine pest".
Is international trade significantly affected because of this issue?	Yes
Does there currently exist an international standard for this disease/problem/issue with these commodities?	Yes, in part
If so:	
Briefly describe the existing standard:	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> ".
Is the international standard inappropriate?	<p>Questions have emerged regarding the meaning of "<u>officially controlled</u>". This two-word phrase is not currently defined by the IPPC.</p> <p>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.</p>

Description of how trade is affected by this issue and how the issue can be resolved through new or existing international standards:

Several countries impose quarantine actions, such as requiring fumigation and other costly treatments, on imported commodities (e.g., fresh fruit, vegetables, grains, oilseeds, and cotton) when found with intercepted pests even though these same pests occur in the importing country and are not subject to internal regulatory or quarantine controls. This action severely affects US trade in lettuce, grain, citrus, asparagus and broccoli, as well as other commodities.

Besides raising concerns that such treatment is discriminatory, it is also apparent that certain countries define a "quarantine pest" in a manner which is inconsistent with the intent of the IPPC-approved definition. In particular, the definition of "official control", a term contained in the definition of "quarantine pest", needs to be elaborated.

Clarifying the definition of "official control" will help ensure a common understanding of what constitutes an official internal control programme, particularly control programmes performed at the state, regional, or local level. Reaching an agreed definition for the term "official control" will help ensure that countries are not arbitrary and discriminatory in their application of phytosanitary measures for pests which may already occur in the importing country and are not under quarantine control to prevent their internal spread.
