

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

APPLICANTS FOR OBSERVER STATUS

Note by the Secretariat¹

Addendum

1. An application for observer status in the SPS Committee was received on 8 January 2011 from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC). Information concerning ECCAS is provided below.

A. List of members (9)

Angola	Burundi
Central African Republic	Republic of the Congo
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Gabon
Equatorial Guinea	Sao Tome and Principe
Chad	

B. Mandate, scope and area of work

2. ECCAS was established on 18 October 1983 by the members of the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), which in 1981 had agreed in principle to form a wider economic community of Central African States, and by the members of Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). It is one of the African continent's Regional Economic Communities (RECs). ECCAS is an international organization created for Africa's economic, social and cultural development, with a view to setting up regional structures that can gradually lead to a common market. ECCAS stems from the Lagos Plan of Action adopted in April 1980.

3. Under Article 43 of the 1983 Treaty Establishing the Economic Community of Central African States and its Protocol IX, the ECCAS Member States undertook to cooperate in the areas of agriculture, food and trade in food products. Such cooperation has the following objectives:

- To satisfy the food requirements of populations and enhance food security, *inter alia*, through the quantitative and qualitative improvement of food crops and the definition of a trade and food reserves policy;
- to harmonize food export and import regulatory and quality control policies, as well as policies concerning the packaging and storage of agricultural, animal and forestry products.

¹ 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.

4. To address the food insecurity problem compounded in the majority of ECCAS Member States by armed conflicts and disabling diseases (HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis), in 2004 the ECCAS Heads of State and Government adopted the Regional Food Security Programme (PRSA), whose targets include:

- (i) Increasing food and production input safety;
- (ii) facilitating intra- and extra-ECCAS trade;
- (iii) building the capacity of Member States to participate effectively in the multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

5. ECCAS is involved in the implementation of the PAN-SPSO (Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard Setting Organizations) programme, aimed at helping to reduce poverty and increase food security in Africa by improving access to international markets for agricultural products from African countries. This programme specifically seeks to facilitate effective involvement of African countries in the activities of the OIE, IPPC and the CODEX Alimentarius relating to the preparation of international food safety and animal and plant health standards. ECCAS launched the PAN-SPSO programme with a number of awareness-raising workshops that led to the establishment of national SPS committees in Cameroon and in Gabon.

6. ECCAS was granted observer status in the United Nations General Assembly on 12 December 2000 (Resolution A/RES/55/161). It became an observer in the OIE in January 2011 and is awaiting responses to its applications for observer status in the CODEX Alimentarius Commission and the IPPC.

C. Contribution to the work of the SPS Committee

7. ECCAS is applying for observer status in the WTO SPS Committee to ensure better coordination in the preparation, implementation and impact assessment of standards in the Member States and effective facilitation of intra- and extra-ECCAS trade. As regards ECCAS work on food safety, plant and animal health protection and quarantine measures, the key subregional initiatives are the common regulations for pesticide registration, common phytosanitary regulations in Central Africa and the PAN-SPSO programme.

D. Reciprocity

8. The WTO Secretariat has not requested observer status in ECCAS. The ECCAS General Secretariat is willing to provide the WTO with all information concerning its SPS-related work, upon request.
