

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Contributions and Suggestions by the Central African Republic

The following communication, received on 20 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of the Central African Republic.

1. The Central African Republic, a land-locked country, is currently experiencing some difficulties in implementing the SPS Agreement, particularly in the areas of transparency, resource allocation and technical assistance. There are, as yet, no experts specializing in these areas.
2. Since the Central African Republic's accession to the WTO, no country representatives have been present at meetings of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee). The country has no representatives in Geneva.
3. The Central African Republic receives information relating to SPS Committee meetings through the WTO Reference Centre, based within the Ministry of Trade, and through official documents faxed by the WTO.
4. The Central African Republic does not have a national SPS Committee comparable to the Technical Group on Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, which was established within the framework of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) and Sao Tomé and Príncipe. Groups such as this are made up of officials from Ministries of Trade, Rural Affairs (Agriculture, Livestock) and Public Health, and Chamber of Commerce representatives who export and import food products and veterinary and fish products.
5. Exporters in the Central African Republic are informed of their trading partners' new SPS requirements through the foreign media or the WTO Reference Centre, which unfortunately has only one computer with Internet access.
6. The national mechanisms that could be created to ensure that stakeholders are notified of new SPS requirements in a timely manner, so that the requirements of trading partners can be taken into account, include the creation of a food biosafety laboratory, phytosanitary risk analysis, the treatment of obsolete pesticides, the training of managerial and operative staff and the installation of computers with Internet access so that information can be circulated at subregional, inter-African and international level. The mechanisms should also include the setting up of a working group on SPS matters, the participation of national representatives in the work of the SPS Committee, and the

updating of national legislation to ensure consistency with SPS measures – a task which would require the assistance of an expert in such matters.

7. With the establishment of such mechanisms the members would be able to identify domestic stakeholders and promote effective interaction among them through a follow-up committee made up of experts from the Departments of Trade, Agriculture and Livestock, Water and Forestry, Hunting and Fisheries, and Public Health, and through a notification committee.

8. Information on SPS requirements could be circulated to groups outside of the capital by the above-mentioned notification committee using computers with Internet access and a proper reference laboratory for SPS risk analysis and control. There has been no national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement at national level. However, the country has two legal texts accompanied by implementing orders and decrees:

- Law No. 65.63 of 16 July 1999 regulating livestock farming;
- Law No. 001.99 of 16 July 1999 establishing the *Ordre National des Vétérinaires* (National Veterinary Association) and setting the framework for the veterinary profession.

9. The Economic Commission on Cattle, Meat and Fish Resources, a specialized CAEMC body, organizes annual coordination sessions at which the animal health situation in each of the member States is examined. At national level, the protection of animal and public health is a State responsibility assigned to the Ministry of Rural Affairs, which develops policies to be implemented by the National Agency for Livestock Development (ANDE), the State Agency for Abattoir Management (SEGA) and, to a certain extent, the National Federation of Central African Livestock Farmers (FNEC).

10. The Pasteur Institute in Bangui assists ANDE in screening for tuberculosis, rabies and Ebola haemorrhagic fever, and trains Agency officials in laboratory techniques. The Central African Republic is an agricultural and pastoral country and, as such, has a number of technical assistance requirements, most notably in the following areas:

- Creation of a body for standardization, certification and the quality promotion of agricultural and pastoral products and for the detection of pesticide and other residues;
- creation of a reference laboratory for sanitary and phytosanitary analysis and control;
- active participation of national representatives in SPS Committee meetings;
- setting up of an SPS information system for economic operators involving the installation of computer equipment with Internet access;
- launch of a study on distribution channels for agricultural and veterinary inputs;
- the launch of a study on animal diseases at border level and within national territory;
- compliance of national legislation with the SPS Agreement;
- creation of a national list of pests;
- SPS-related human resource training;

- creation of an agricultural database;
- capacity-building for agricultural producers in the areas of international trade and plant protection;
- services of an expert in SPS-related matters.

The technical assistance requested above could effectively address the country's needs, and there would be no duplication because it sums up priority areas that have not yet been covered in a satisfactory manner by donors. Technical assistance would resolve certain problems in anticipation of the Central African Republic (as a CAEMC member) signing an Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union by January 2008.
