

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Egypt

The following communication, received on 23 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Egypt.

1. In preparation for the Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement, participants were invited to provide information relating to their experiences in relation to the issues to be discussed. The following are the responses of Dr. Ali Soliman.

Question 1

How regularly do representatives of your country participate in meetings of the SPS Committee? Who usually participates from your country (Capital-based experts? Geneva-based trade representative? What information do you receive regarding meetings of the SPS Committee, and how do you receive this information?

2. Egypt is keen to participate in the regular meetings of the SPS Committee that take place in Geneva through the year.

3. From capital, SPS experts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation and representatives from the Ministry of Trade and Industry consistently attend these meetings as well as Geneva-based delegations. In some cases, private sector representatives attend as well.

4. The Central department of the WTO (CD/WTO) in the Ministry of Trade and Industry receives the information related to meetings of the SPS Committee from the Egyptian Commercial office in Geneva and also through the WTO web site. The CD/WTO then circulates this information to the relevant stakeholders. The information includes meeting agendas, submissions from Members and other documents related to the SPS Committee.

Question 2

Does your country have an SPS national committee? How do your exporters find out about your trading partners new SPS requirements? What national mechanism can be created to ensure that stakeholders in your country are informed in a timely manner of new SPS requirements, so that the SPS requirements of trading partners can be evaluated and so that the views of relevant stakeholders can be taken into account when responding to SPS notifications? In establishing such mechanism, how can Members identify the relevant domestic stakeholders

and promote effective interaction among these stakeholders that can be sustained over time?
How can information about SPS requirements be transmitted to groups outside of capital?

5. Egypt established an SPS national Sub-Committee in 2003, under the auspices of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, with the participation of other public and private sector representatives who have direct or indirect links with SPS issues.

6. The relevant stakeholders including the private sector in Egypt are being informed of the new SPS requirements through two channels, the first one is the SPS national sub-committee at which the new SPS requirements are being discussed and analyzed. The second channel is the SPS national enquiry point as it takes the responsibility to inform the private sector regularly of the newly adapted SPS requirements.

7. Moreover, each competent authority has established a web site, (www.tas.gov.eg, and www.epq.gov.eg) at which it includes its laws, decrees and SPS measures so as to help the private sector and other stakeholders to get familiar with the SPS related issues.

8. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, a Notification Coordination Mechanism (NCM) was established aimed at sharing SPS related information with all relevant parties (public, private sector) and to support the national enquiry point in providing stakeholders with all information they need in a timely manner.

Question 3

Has there been any national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement in your country? If so, was this planning developed using a particular methodology?

9. Egypt understands that the most effective way to move forward in complying with its commitments under the SPS Agreement is for the government and private sectors to share this responsibility.

10. Some of the challenges that Egypt was facing in the SPS field were problems related to structural arrangements, coordination between agencies, specific training needs, and lack of IT infrastructure, so the Government of Egypt has put forward some principal tasks to be undertaken to overcome such challenges and to better comply with the obligations under the SPS Agreement at the national level.

Task 1:

11. Establishing an SPS national sub-committee, where all the competent authorities (private and public sector) are involved and where roles for each party were designated so as to share views and discuss all SPS related matters and come up with decisions that could help make Egypt compliant with the SPS Agreement.

12. Members of the national SPS sub-committee are :

- (a) The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) with its responsibilities relating to foreign trade;
- (b) The Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality (EOS);
- (c) The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MoALR), Department of External Relations, as the SPS national enquiry point;
- (d) The General Organization for Veterinary Services (GOVS);

- (e) Egyptian Central Administration of Plant Quarantine (CAPQ);
- (f) The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP);
- (g) The General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOEIC); and
- (h) Representatives from the commodity councils reflecting the views and interests of the private sector.

Task 2:

13. Assessment of Egypt's SPS compliance including :
- (a) An assessment of Egypt's general compliance with the SPS Agreement;
 - (b) An assessment of Egypt's compliance with specific aspects of the SPS Agreement, such as
 - (i) Notification and enquiry point functions;
 - (ii) Transparency of SPS measures;
 - (iii) Risk analysis;
 - (iv) The legal framework in Egypt.

Task 3:

14. Based on the recommendations resulting from the previous tasks, awareness programs including seminars, workshops, and on-the-job training were held for private and public sectors to bring Egypt into WTO SPS compliance and to strengthen all the competent authorities' ability to become familiar with and implement the SPS Agreement

Task 4:

15. It was important to identify specific actions to transform the transparency procedures to become more effective and operational for both the public and private sector.

16. That is why it was important to establish a Notification Coordination Mechanism (NCM) that involves all Egyptian competent authorities, and stakeholders, including private sector who have direct and indirect relation with the SPS Agreement, with the aim of documenting the flow of information for incoming and outgoing SPS notifications and indicate a more structured approach to handling notifications and to build a strong communication channel with our office in Geneva.

17. The mechanism also aimed at strengthening the Egyptian enquiry point which is located in the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, through facilitating Egypt's ability to comment early on SPS measures proposed by other countries that may negatively affect Egypt's exports, managing the flow of notifications, deciding quickly whether comment is necessary, and ensuring that comments are passed back within the stipulated timeframe. The mechanism also allows for incorporating the views of the private sector when responding to the SPS notifications.

Question 4

How does your country identify its technical assistance needs? What has been your country's experience in both the request and the supply of SPS-related technical assistance? How can technical assistance supply and demand be most effectively matched, priority areas identified and duplication of donor efforts avoided?

18. Egypt's technical assistance needs are identified through the SPS national sub-committee, where each competent authority specifies its technical assistance needs. The sub-committee gathers and categorizes those needs based on priorities. Then, possible means are investigated on how to cover those needs.

19. An explicit example of how technical assistance helps developing countries to overcome SPS related problems is the technical assistance that Egypt acquired through the Potato Brown Rot Project (PBRP) in the field of establishing and monitoring pest free areas to meet the related SPS requirements.

20. The core issue in technical assistance is that Members should efficiently, effectively, and precisely identify at the earliest possible stage their technical assistance needs based on a relevant needs assessment that covers all the SPS-related stakeholders in that country.

21. With regard to the provision of technical assistance, Egypt is of the view that the provision of technical assistance in the SPS field should be based on the real needs of the recipient countries (demand driven), and should not be limited to certain types of technical assistance but vary according to the specified needs. At this stage we may find some developing countries still need specific technical assistance in the fields of risk assessment, risk analysis and risk management, as well as effective surveillance and monitoring services.

22. The provision of technical assistance should also cover areas like establishing accredited laboratories to accurately diagnose diseases and pests, identify toxic residues, and verify the quality of agricultural chemicals and veterinary products.
