

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT**

Information for the Workshop of 31 March 2006

Communication from Cuba

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

1. In order to prepare for the workshop on implementation of the SPS Agreement, participants were invited to answer the following questions. These are the replies of Ms Eva Maria Quintana.

2. A small and blockaded developing country obviously has budgetary limitations that prevent experts from the Capital from attending all meetings of the SPS Committee. As a rule, those who participate in the Committee most regularly are the representatives of the Mission at Geneva. However, every effort is made to secure participation by Capital-based specialists, whether the focal point or the national enquiry point. In Cuba, these are:

- Focal Point: Ms Eva María Quintana, Trade Policy Specialist, Directorate of International Bodies, Ministry of Foreign Trade;
- Enquiry Point: Dr Roberto Bolaños, Specialist, Institute of Veterinary Medicine;
- Enquiry Point: Mr Julio Piedrahita, National Plant Health Centre;
- Enquiry Point: Dr María Victoria Luna, National Institute of Food Hygiene.

3. The country has a National Group made up of various institutions which deals with the SPS Committee in connection with the Agreement on Agriculture. It also has a Technical Working Group, that analyses sanitary and phytosanitary prescriptions received from the WTO Secretariat, which are circulated countrywide to all interested, both in and outside the Capital. The members of this group are the national authorities/enquiry points referred to in the previous paragraph, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry for the Food Industry, the Ministry for Sugar, the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba and the Centre for the Promotion of Exports.

4. The Capital receives the information available on the WTO website, the documents made available in the meeting room and the reports of Mission delegates on the meetings they attend.

5. The focal point is responsible for circulating the prescriptions. It distributes them to interest groups so that the information is disseminated early on. Monitoring is the next stage and is the job of the Working Group, which meets once a month. Thus, any prescriptions that are of interest to one or another body are immediately analysed by the Group and passed on to the focal point so that

information can be sought from the senders of the notified prescriptions. A strategy is also drawn up to enable the country to respond as necessary to new demands of trading partners.

6. Cuba's experience of technical assistance relates to the assistance received from the WTO through the workshops and expert meetings it sponsors at national or regional level or in Geneva. Cuba identifies technical assistance needs by means of the questionnaires sent by the WTO. However, the growing number and complexity of the new sanitary and phytosanitary measures that are being applied, particularly by the developed countries, mean a substantial increase in infrastructure, workload, equipment, staff and technology which the economies and exporters of developing countries are unable to assume on their own. Nor are they able to adapt rapidly to these requirements.

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