

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT:  
EXPERIENCES AND ISSUES**

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Nepal

The following communication, received on 24 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Nepal.

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 Prakash Raj Shrestha.

**Introduction**

2. Nepal, a landlocked country sandwiched between India and China, was offered WTO membership in September 2003 during the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference at Cancun, Mexico. Nepal became the 147<sup>th</sup> Member of the WTO on 23 April 2004 to join WTO. Thereafter, we have been working hard to meet the obligations committed while signing the Agreement.

3. It is my privilege to attend this Workshop as a Nepalese delegate and I have listed below some facts and information on SPS regarding my country. I am hopeful that Members will listen to our issues and provide feedback.

**Participation in SPS Committee**

4. Nepal has been participating regularly in the SPS Committee. Our Geneva-based representative has attended most SPS Workshops in the past. The Ministry of Industries and Commerce has informed me about this Workshop and I have been informed that national obligations, progress and shortfalls regarding SPS measures will be discussed in the Workshop.

**SPS Situation in Nepal**

5. A SPS central coordination committee has already been formed. It is headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, and includes representation from Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Ministry of Health, Animal and Plant Quarantine offices. National traders and manufacturers, who are the members of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), are also working closely with the government. Exporters find out about new SPS requirements or trading partners through the WTO wing of FNCCI which is the apex body of policy lobbying business persons. Exporters and other stakeholders are also informed during business meetings and interactions organized by FNCCI.

Training is also being organized to inform the government and business people about SPS and other WTO-related issues and obligations. A separate website [spsenquiry.gov.np](http://spsenquiry.gov.np) has been launched by the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control, the national enquiry point for SPS, to disseminate information regarding SPS. Furthermore, spokespersons of the respective ministries also release regular press releases to let others know about the developments regarding WTO and SPS.

6. As part of our attempts to abide by the SPS obligations and implement them, some institutional restructuring has been made whereby new Quality Control Labs, Veterinary Public Health Offices, Central Epidemiology Office, new plant and animal quarantine check posts are established and are being strengthened.

### **Efforts made to meet the Obligations**

7. In order to pave the way for the smooth entry into WTO, Nepal has given priority to WTO and SPS-related issues. The resources so far available for the concerned departments have been allocated according to the national goal as envisaged by the National Planning Commission, HMG/N Nepal which broadly facilitates agribusiness by strengthening their qualities to have access into international markets. While developing a plan the National Planning Commission refers to the commitments made by HMG/N Nepal in national and international forum and also interacts with the concerning Departments, institutions and stakeholders in order to promote the agro-based private sector.

- Our tenth five-year plan has stressed agricultural exports and institutional development of the national quarantine system.
- Animal Health and Livestock Services, Slaughter House and Meat Inspection acts have already been passed. The first one is in effect while the latter one has not entered into effect yet.
- The existing Plant Protection Act has been revised as per the requirement of SPS and IPPC. It is about to be endorsed soon by the government.
- 20 District Food Inspectors are deployed in 20 populated districts of Terai who monitor the industries and food markets of the respective areas.

### **Certification system:**

- We have been developing and adopting certification system as per WTO requirements.

### **Infrastructure:**

- Documentation: A National Pest Status Database of diseases, pests, weeds, on the 20 most prioritized commercial crops has been established.
- A National Phytosanitary Database has been established.

### **Identification of Technical Assistance Needs**

8. The Central SPS Co-ordination Committee identifies the national need of technical assistance after consultation with respective Ministries and concerned Departments and business people, international governmental organizations like FAO and WHO.

9. A FAO funded project on Strengthening Plant Quarantine Services of Nepal is in action which is working mainly on plant quarantine related issues. But assistance is expected in strengthening animal quarantine systems, food labs and veterinary and livestock quality control laboratories. Furthermore, we need to have human resources capable of meeting the international

trade obligations. It is therefore strongly urged that assistance be provided to train our quarantine and laboratory staff in order to help our country get its share of international trade.

**Our Experiences so far**

- We need assistance in areas like HRD related to disease risk analysis, disease diagnosis and infrastructural development to meet the obligations made earlier.
  - We need support on the above issues from developed countries and other Members.
  - The porous border with India has made cross border quarantine and certification systems more complicated.
  - A "one roof" system of the quarantine services at the Department level would be recommended, as the process one should pass through would be simplified and less overhead cost would be needed.
  - A policy of training and exposure to the right people would be helpful.
  - Nepal may need some more time after the deadline of getting into WTO, i.e. 1 January 2007.
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