

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Burkina Faso

The following communication, received on 24 March, 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Burkina Faso.

1. Burkina Faso, an original WTO Member classified as a least developed country, is a West African country which is experiencing numerous difficulties in implementing the SPS Agreement. These difficulties relate not only to the understanding of the SPS Agreement and the lack of capacity in this area, but to the mobilization of resources to meet SPS Agreement requirements.

2. The lack of awareness of the SPS Agreement and insufficient domestic expertise do not favour its implementation. At this level, information, awareness-raising and training activities to build domestic capacity in respect of the Agreement, as well as technical and financial assistance, are indispensable. The need for support in this area is evident if one considers Burkina Faso's experience in respect of SPS measures.

- Burkina Faso's participation in SPS Committee meetings is sporadic and has so far been occasional and infrequent. If the country does participate, it is represented by capital-based experts or by counsellors from the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso in Geneva, depending on circumstances and availability. In general, information relating to SPS Committee meetings is received in the form of aerogrammes and/or reports sent by the WTO Secretariat. Burkina Faso has participated in a number of information and training sessions on the SPS Agreement, most of which were held in West Africa.
- Burkina Faso does not have a national SPS committee. However, SPS-related issues are addressed within Subcommittee No.1 of the Market Access Committee of the National Unit for the Follow-Up and Coordination of the Implementation of WTO Agreements (CNSC/OMC). Details of WTO trading partners' new SPS requirements can be obtained from the National Enquiry Point, the Standardization and Quality Promotion Directorate (FASONORM) and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts of Burkina Faso (CCIA-BF). SPS information can also be transmitted directly to Burkinan economic operators through the CCIA-BF and professional organizations such as the Professional Association of Industrialists (GPI), the Burkinan National Employers' Council (CNPB), the Association of Traders, Importers and Exporters (SCIMPEX) and the Young Entrepreneurs Association.

- There has not yet been any national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement. This is due to the inexistence of an SPS Committee at national level and the numerous issues addressed within Subcommittee No.1, which is responsible for examining these matters. The main task of Subcommittee No.1 is to follow the negotiations and monitor the implementation of the Agreements on Agriculture, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.
- In order to identify its assistance needs, Burkina Faso generally organizes a consultation phase involving all the parties concerned. Any concerns and suggestions are put forward and examined with a view to establishing a consensus and a clear idea of the type of assistance to request. In the area of SPS measures, Burkina Faso needs substantial technical and financial assistance in order to facilitate the understanding and implementation of the Agreement. The consultation phase, which would be held at national level, would undoubtedly ensure the rational and optimal use of the assistance provided by any donors that come forward.

3. In short, Burkina Faso's experience of SPS Agreement implementation is still in its early stages and merits special consideration. For this reason, technical assistance of any sort is required from both the WTO and various partners in order to enable Burkina Faso to assimilate and effectively implement the SPS Agreement provisions. It is also vital that the enquiry point and FASONORM be made more operational in order to strengthen their functional capacity.

4. It should also be mentioned that, at sub-regional level, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU or UEMOA) has launched an extensive programme entitled the "UEMOA Quality Programme". Phase I of this programme involves capacity building and Phase II relates specifically to technical assistance. The programme should ultimately ensure that WAEMU member countries understand SPS standards and adopt them at regional level.
