

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPS AGREEMENT**

Information for the Workshop on 31 March 2006

Communication from Honduras

The following communication, received on 30 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Honduras.

1. In preparation for the Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement, participants were asked to provide replies to the following questions.

**1. How regularly do representatives of your country participate in meetings of the SPS Committee?**

2. Honduras has participated continuously for the last two years (with the exception of certain meetings), thanks to the support of the SPS Initiative for the Countries of the Americas. This Initiative is implemented in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the six countries which form the steering committee (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the United States and Mexico).

**2. Who usually participates from your country (capital-based experts? Geneva-based trade representatives?)?**

3. Delegates from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG) and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (SIC), and an official from the Permanent Mission of Honduras in Geneva.

**3. What information do you receive regarding meetings of the SPS Committee, and how do you receive this information?**

4. Information is received from three main sources before and after each SPS Committee meeting: the IICA, the Permanent Mission of Honduras in Geneva, and directly from the WTO web site.

**4. Does your country have an SPS national committee?**

5. Yes. Thanks to its participation in SPS Committee meetings, Honduras became aware of the need to set up a national SPS committee. The National Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures was established with the support of the IICA Office in Honduras under Agreement No. 651-04 of 18 August 2004. However, owing to internal administrative problems, the Committee did not

hold its first meeting until the end of 2005. The Committee's rules of procedure are currently being drawn up and a national agenda is being defined.

**5. How do your exporters find out about your trading partners' new SPS requirements?**

6. Through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (enquiry point) and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (notification point). Both ministries have a web site through which they can inform the public and receive comments and observations regarding notifications.

**6. What national mechanisms 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?**

7. Ideally, a mechanism should be created to ensure that notifications submitted to the WTO Secretariat by other Members and draft SPS measures to be adopted by competent national bodies can be analysed effectively.

8. It is hoped that the creation of the National SPS Committee, which includes representatives from the public and private institutions directly involved in such matters, will improve coordination and communication with private sector exporters. The Committee will facilitate the communication and analysis of any measures introduced by trading partners which might have an economic impact on the country, and will enhance the country's capacity to respond to such measures.

9. Through the Ministry of Agriculture, consultations are currently being organized with private sector exporters so that views can be exchanged regarding the SPS requirements of Member countries. However, it has not yet been possible to establish a regular and permanent mechanism that ensures all stakeholders are informed of requirements in a timely manner.

10. Within the Ministry, a procedure has been introduced which is similar to that established in other Member countries:

- Each week, a list of the notifications received and/or accessed via the WTO/SPS web site is drawn up. These notifications are classified in terms of trade interest for Honduran exports.
- Further information is requested from the notifying Member and notifications are forwarded to the public and private institutions responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary matters.
- The plant and animal health authorities meet twice a week to review relevant notifications and take the appropriate decisions.

**7. In establishing such mechanisms, how can Members identify the relevant domestic stakeholders and promote effective interaction among those stakeholders that can be sustained over time?**

11. By setting up a database containing details of the stakeholders and by holding interactive meetings to provide information about benefits and obligations arising from the effective follow-up and implementation of the SPS Agreement. The National SPS Committee would be an effective vehicle for supporting and following-up any action taken to reinforce these activities.

**8. How can information about SPS requirements be transmitted to groups outside of the capital?**

12. Through the regional offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, through Chambers of Commerce and by fax and e-mail etc.

**9. Has there been any national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement in your country?**

13. There has been no specific national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement. The sanitary and phytosanitary authorities address issues directly, together with the sectors concerned, depending on their nature.

14. Through the National SPS Committee, a national agenda will be drawn up to reinforce any action that is taken to further the effective implementation of the Agreement.

**10. If so, was this planning developed using a particular methodology? 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?**

15. Technical assistance needs are identified on the basis of the country's commitments and obligations in respect of international reference bodies, and its commitments arising from the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements.

16. Demand for technical assistance outweighs supply. An effective way to match technical assistance supply and demand would therefore be to implement a plan for tackling priority training needs in the short and medium term, which would allow cooperating countries to coordinate their assistance programmes so as to avoid the duplication of efforts.

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