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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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INFORMATION FROM THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

The following communication, received on 7 March 2016, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of the African Union Commission (AUC).

1 AUC SPS RELATED-ACTIVITIES

1.1. The African Union Commission (AUC) organized the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) from 28-30 October 2015 in Kampala, Uganda. One of the side events for the occasion focused on promoting trade and the consumption of nutritious, safe and diverse diets in Africa. During the occasion, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition launched the Africa Nutrition and Biofortification Policy Briefs as well as discussions of concrete steps towards attaining food security, improved nutrition and market access through integrated aflatoxin control action plans and roadmaps, increasing production, availability and access of nutrient dense crops and animal products and improving access to markets for small holder farmers, particularly women farmers.

1.2. The first meeting of the Continental Committee meeting for Africa was held on 29 October 2015 in Kampala, Uganda. The meeting was convened in the margins of the Agriculture Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) commemorated on 30 October 2015. The committee members first participated in the Pre-events of the ADFNS of 28 October 2015. The meeting was attended by member of the Continental SPS Committee from the Regional Economic Communities (RECS), international organizations (FAO, OIE and ECA) and the African Development Bank and other departments of the African Union; namely Trade and Industry and Social Affairs.

1.3. The objective of the meeting included the following:

- Consolidate and sustain the momentum of operationalizing the Committee;
- Review the action points from previous meeting;
- Brief members and organizations represented to share information;
- Identify areas of support;
- Review working documents; and
- Plan for 2016.

1.4. An overview of Agenda 2063; Africa's agenda for economic development and transformation for the next 50 years from 2013 was presented to the meeting. The presentation focused on the Ten-Year Implementation plan highlighting the niche for SPS issues in the plan.

1.5. The strategic matters arising out of the Malabo Declaration was also presented to the meeting focusing on the Implementation Strategy and Roadmap for achieving CAADP vision 2025 and the CAADP Results framework developed to track contribution and delivery on the commitments.

1.6. The in-depth presentation and discussion on the commitment on Boosting IntraAfrican Trade in goods and services was led by the Department of Trade and Industry. The presentation focused on the launching the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) Negotiations. The role of the Continental SPS Committee was underscored in contributing to the CFTA negotiations forum and particularly in supporting the work on the Technical Group on TBT and SPS.

1.7. The Terms of References (ToR) for the Continental SPS Committee was presented for further reflection. The ToR was discussed at length and reaffirmed as the overarching framework for guiding and operationalizing the work the Committee. There was a general consensus that the ToRs that eventually constituted the entire agenda of the meeting is recast to reflect the input of the members of the committee and shared with all members. It was noted in discussing the ToR that while a lot of excellent SPS work has been done and is on-going, more has to be done to realise the full potential of different organizations in view of Malabo Declaration so that the committee established becomes even more dynamic and efficient to fully achieve commonly defined objectives. The meeting thus provided the opportunity to pursue these discussions. Reference was made to the reactivation of the discussions on developing a guideline document to facilitate mainstreaming SPS in various strategic documents existing; notably the National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPS) and the Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIPs). The meeting was an occasion for members to reflect the priorities of the ToR in which members exchanged ideas on the architecture and content of the ToR, as well various elements that would enable the members of the committee work efficiently.

1.8. Changes were made to this section of the TOR. Initially, the responsibilities were fifteen in number but following consensus by members of the Committee, they were categorized under three broad areas which include:

- Capacity development;
- Coordination and harmonization; and
- Policy guidance and advocacy.

1.9. The AUC organized a capacity building workshop and capacity needs assessment for CFTA negotiators in reparations for, and in the margins of the CFTA negotiations forum. The course addressed how to support a multilateral trade negotiation process from both an operational and strategic perspective with full simulation exercise on what may happen as part of the commencement of the CFTA negotiations. The findings from selected technical studies on the establishment of the CFTA were also shared and discussed with AU member States. The draft CFTA-NF Rules of Procedure was presented for consideration and adoption. The forum further considered the information requirement to prepare and facilitate negotiations and the work plan and schedule of negotiations presented by the secretariat.

2 AU-IBAR SPS RELATED ACTIVITIES

2.1 ANIMAL HEALTH

2.1. Meeting of African animal health experts to analyze and comment on OIE proposed changes to the Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes held in December 2015 for the meeting of the OIE Code Commissions in February 2016. The meeting led to identification of animal health issues of common interest to African countries and proposition of coordinated positions

2.2. The 8th Panafrican meeting of Chief Veterinary Officers on Africa's coordinated position on animal health standards will take place in Nairobi, Kenya from 26 to 28 April 2016. This annual meeting is also to prepare strategic attendance of African OIE Delegates to the 84th Session of the World Assembly of OIE Delegates in May 2016 in Paris, France.

2.2 FOOD SAFETY

2.3. February 2016: AU-IBAR organized an African food safety expert's consultation on contaminants in food and on food additives in Nairobi to examine items of the agenda items of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food for its 10th session, and on Codex Committee on Food Additives for its 48th session.

2.4. In March 2016, AU-IBAR organized an African food safety expert's consultation on pesticide residues and on general principles in Nairobi to examine items of the agenda items of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues for its 48th session, and on the Codex Committee on General Principles for its 30th session. The meetings of food safety experts are to provide scientific advice to African Union member States in collaboration with the Coordinator of CCAfrica during their preparation of national positions. This is an effort of African Union to improve the effective participation of its member States in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

2.5. 47th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (Boston, USA): AU-IBAR sponsored the attendance of eight African delegates to participate in the meeting.

2.6. From 21 to 23 December 2015, a regional workshop on the establishment of a network on SPS and Food safety for ECOWAS member countries was held in Dakar, Senegal and organized by AU-IBAR under the scope of the project Participation of African Nations in the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard Setting Organizations (PANSPSO-Project). The meeting aimed to establish a network of ECOWAS countries that are involved in sanitary and phytosanitary and food safety activities and create a synergy of actions in this domain.

2.7. And specifically:

- To strengthen national Codex Alimentarius Committees;
- To enhance the participation of countries in the various meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission;
- To create synergy of actions to pursue a coherent and harmonized policy of food safety in line with the concerns of the West African region.

2.8. Over fifty participants at the workshop were National Codex Contact Points and officials of ministries in charge of Codex, actors performing important functions relating to sanitary and phytosanitary issues, representatives of consumers associations. Fourteen African Delegates from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, five observer organizations were in attendance namely the Economic Council of Senegal representative, a member of the Parliament, Representative of Luxemburg's Embassy, representative of France's Embassy, FAO, WHO, African Union Commission (department of DREA and Social Affairs), ECOWAS, UEMOA.

2.9. AU-IBAR supported a workshop on the strengthening and revitalisation of the National Codex Committee (CNCC) of Ethiopia on 7 and 8 December 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2.10. Objectives:

1. Improve the understanding of the participants of the workshop on the standards setting procedures of CAC; and
2. Enable the participants of the workshop to have a better understanding of the CAC.

2.11. Expected outcomes were:

1. Participants of the workshop demonstrate their capacities to effectively participate and contribute to the standards setting procedures of CAC; and
2. The NCC has in place a functional national SPS action plan and a road map to revitalize the NCC in Ethiopia.

3 SPS ACTIVITIES

3.1 AU-IBAR WORKSHOP ON THE TRANSPARENCY PROVISION AND ON IMPROVEMENT OF THE PARTICIPATION OF AFRICAN DELEGATES IN THE MEETINGS OF THE SPS COMMITTEE

3.1. The African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) in its effort to improve participation of African countries at the WTO SPS Committee meetings and implementation of SPS Agreement has been providing technical assistance in the form of capacity building on SPS matters and providing financial assistance in supporting African delegates to attend the SPS Committee meetings in Geneva, Switzerland. A total of 25 African delegates were sponsored by AU-IBAR to participate in the 64th session of the SPS Committee in October 2015.

3.2. The focus on improved participation of African countries in the activities of the SPS Committee includes:

- i. Inclusion of African countries participation in SPS Committee meeting activities on the agenda also commonly known as the WTO airgram;
- ii. Improved notifications from African countries to the WTO Notification Submission System (NSS) through National Notification Authorities (NNA);

- iii. Enhanced capacity of the African countries to resolve trade disputes in the SPS Committee meetings; and
- iv. A united African approach and support system during the sessions of the SPS Committee meetings on SPS matters discussed and presented.

3.3. Following an agreement between African Union and the Secretariat of the SPS Committee, the AU sponsored delegates participated in the two-day workshop on transparency organized in Geneva from 12 to 13 October 2015.

3.4. The efforts of AU-IBAR in providing technical assistance in the form of capacity building and financial assistance to enable African countries to participate in the WTO SPS Committee meeting has produced tangible results which will go a long way in improving the participation of African countries. The participation of African countries has tremendously improved. The initiative has created a united African country support system and also empowered African Delegates in resolving trade disputes at the WTO SPS Committee meetings.

3.2 AU-IBAR WORKSHOP ON CAPACITY BUILDING IN AGRICULTURE TRADE ISSUES

3.5. The capacity building workshop organized by AU-IBAR was held, in Nairobi from 16 to 17 December 2015 in the margins of the 10th Ministerial Conference of WTO.

3.6. The topics of focus were as follows:

- i. Agriculture negotiations;
- ii. The Doha mandate and development agenda;
- iii. The Agreement on Agriculture;
- iv. Technical barriers to trade; and
- v. Trade facilitation.

3.7. The trainers were competent national officers who have received training from AU-IBAR and/or WTO.

3.8. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- i. Improve knowledge and understanding by participants of the provisions of the Agriculture negotiations Agreement of the WTO;
- ii. Improve knowledge and mastering of the technical barriers to trade;
- iii. Improve knowledge and mastering of the trade facilitation; and
- iv. Enhance the capacity of African countries to resolve trade issues using the provisions of the SPS Agreement.

3.9. Participants were officers from Ministerial Departments in charge of Commerce, National Notification Authorities and National Enquiry Points who have attended trainings organized by AU-IBAR and/or WTO from member States of the African Union.

3.10. A total of 33 participants attended the workshop. The workshop was officially opened by the European Union Commissioner of Agriculture and Rural Development. The workshop was highly interactive with full participation of delegates who decided to seek more collaboration with all national institutions dealing with SPS matters in order to comprehensively address national SPS matters.
