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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**ACTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT
ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

INFORMATION PRESENTED BY THE INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE
FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE (IICA)

The following communication, received on 10 March 2017, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

The observer organizations of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to promote the understanding and implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). The IICA would like to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

1 EFFORTS TO MAKE GREATER USE OF MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL FORUMS

1.1 Codex Alimentarius

1.1. Participation in Codex meetings: The IICA provided support for participation in the following Codex Committees through its Programme to Support the Participation of Countries in Codex Alimentarius Meetings:

- a. 23rd Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods: Support was provided for the participation of Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Peru and Ecuador (16-20 October 2016, United States);
- b. Physical Working Group on Codex Alimentarius Work on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR): Support was provided for the participation of Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador (29 November-2 December 2016, United Kingdom);
- c. 48th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene: Support was provided for the participation of Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador and Jamaica (5-9 November 2016, United States);
- d. 20th Session of the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean: Support was provided for the participation of 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries (21-25 November 2016, Chile);
- e. 38th Session of the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses: Support was provided for the participation of Chile, Costa Rica, Panama and Paraguay (5-9 December 2016, Germany).

1.2. During the first six months of 2017, funding will also be provided to support the participation of at least four countries in the Codex Committees on Food Additives and Contaminants and Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. Fostering participation in Codex meetings seeks to promote the active participation of the funded countries and increase the influence of the CCLAC region at each meeting. These activities receive funding from the US Department of Agriculture.

1.3. Workshop on maximum residue levels and Codex: A workshop on pesticides in the Americas and related trade and regulatory issues was held in Quito, Ecuador, on 6 March 2017. It was attended by 51 delegates from 18 countries, two international organizations, the SPS Committee, and the IICA. Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities relating to maximum pesticide residue limits (MRLs) for food products in international trade, as well as matters pertaining to the next meeting of the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues (CCPR), which is to be held in China.

1.4. The workshop was an opportunity for regulatory and trade experts to discuss the following issues:

- a. international trade regulations concerning MRLs for pesticides;
- b. best regulatory practices in certain countries;
- c. MRL alignment projects in the region;
- d. challenges relating to the establishment of MRLs for minor use crops; and
- e. other emerging issues in the CCPR, such as crop grouping.

The Canadian Ministry of Agriculture and Food sponsored and actively participated in this event.

1.5. Codex Colloquium: A Codex Colloquium was held in Quito, Ecuador, from 6 to 9 March 2017. This event was attended by some 75 participants from 23 Latin American and Caribbean countries, and India. The Colloquium sought to promote the analysis of agenda items from three upcoming Codex meetings (on contaminants, food additives and pesticide residues) and to identify issues of common interest to participants. The US Department of Agriculture and the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture and Food sponsored and actively participated in the event.

1.6. Twinning programme: This much-needed programme provides an opportunity to benefit from the capacities and experience already acquired in other countries of the Americas, and helps build beneficiary countries' capacity in terms of Codex Alimentarius matters. In 2016, the IICA funded five projects under this programme in Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Chile, Dominica, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Grenada. New projects are currently being selected for funding in 2017. The programme is funded by the US Department of Agriculture.

2 SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL, TECHNICAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

2.1. Support to CARIFORUM States in the implementation of the commitments undertaken under the CARIFORUM-European Union (EU) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA): Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures: This project, to be concluded at the end of March 2017, has been implemented by the IICA with funding from the European Union. Models of laws, protocols, measures and guidelines on plant and animal health, food safety and fisheries were prepared with a view to updating and harmonizing the region's existing legislative framework. The models (plant health, animal health and food safety) have been sent to the CARICOM Secretariat and made available to countries in order to facilitate the updating process, which has gone some way to helping harmonize the sanitary and phytosanitary legislative framework throughout the region. Support was provided to five countries to help them update their existing legislation (Bahamas, Barbados, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago).

2.2. National coordination mechanisms have been developed for ten countries, while a regional mechanism has been created to improve coordination between regional agricultural health and food safety (AHFS) groups and agencies. Such mechanisms allow for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to coordination and will ultimately help to ensure the effective and coherent coordination of AHFS systems at national and regional level. To support the implementation of the regional coordination mechanism, assistance was provided to strengthen regional AHFS bodies.

2.3. In this light, support was provided to CARIFORUM nationals so that they could attend international SPS meetings (CODEX, IPPC, OIE, SPS Committee). Thanks to the support received, Caribbean representation at these meetings has increased by 60%. This has, in turn, increased awareness in the region of new issues relating to international trade in food products, as well as countries' understanding of their rights and obligations under the various international sanitary agreements, conventions and protocols. Opportunities for Caribbean citizens to serve in international committees and working groups have also increased.

2.4. Training was provided to more than 2,000 regulatory staff members and private sector officials in important SPS-related areas, such as diagnostics, surveillance, inspection, HACCP, traceability, risk analysis, and antimicrobial resistance. In addition, 27 private-sector entities received direct technical assistance in respect of management and traceability in the area of food safety. More than 50 knowledge products (videos, manuals, factsheets and posters) have been developed on key AHFS issues.

2.5. **Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA):** On 10 January, in San Salvador, the IICA gave a Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance (FSPCA) training course for lead instructors and preventive controls qualified individuals. The aim of the course was to train representatives from the public and private sectors and academic institutions to be lead instructors and preventive controls qualified individuals. Training was provided to 27 participants in total. The same course took place in Guatemala on 21 February and in the Dominican Republic on 7 March, following which 40 professionals from these countries became certified instructors. These recently certified instructors have already begun to teach training workshops in their countries of origin.

2.6. **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP):** The IICA office in Peru held a GAP training workshop for public and private sector representatives from 13 to 17 March in Lima. The course, attended by 25 specialists from both sectors, was organized with a view to improving the safety of fresh products and providing guidance on the proper implementation of standards for exports to the United States.

2.7. **Virtual forum for regional international agricultural health organizations on risk analysis in the Americas:** Pursuant to Resolution No. 502 of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (JIA), a virtual forum for regional international agricultural health organizations on risk analysis in the Americas took place on 12 December 2016.

2.8. The first meeting was attended by representatives from COSAVE/CAS, CVP/CAS, OIRSA/CAC, CAHFSA/CARICOM, NAPPO, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the United States and Mexico. The Secretariat of the WTO SPS Committee, the OIE, the IPPC and the IICA moderated the various sessions on the agenda. The aim of the virtual forum was to establish a baseline regarding the current situation in respect of risk analysis, challenges and constraints, and improvement strategies.

2.9. The main observations made during the virtual forum were the following:

- a. All the regional organizations that participated in the event are aware of and work in a manner consistent with the WTO SPS Agreement, particularly as regards risk assessment based on available scientific data;
- b. All the regional organizations are actively involved in risk assessment activities; despite different capacity levels, each organization has made the commitment to its member countries to address priority issues and build capacity;
- c. International bodies are actively involved in initiatives to build capacity to ensure the effective implementation of animal and plant health standards, including risk assessment;
- d. Despite high levels of technical capacity in some parts of the Americas, considerable needs and shortcomings still exist. A lack of training and material resources was repeatedly cited as a deficiency that needs to be addressed.

2.10. Common vision sessions and implementation of the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument on the prevention of and response to plant protection emergencies: On 12 December, a common vision session was held by the IICA office in Santiago de Chile. At the same time the technical team presented the results achieved during the implementation of the PVS instrument. The event was attended by the various sectors linked directly or indirectly to the activities of the Agricultural and Forestry Protection Division of the Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG). This allowed for fluid discussion, moderated by the IICA, on the required characteristics of the phytosanitary emergency response capacity, the recognized limitations, and possible strategies and actions needed to enhance this capacity.

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