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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**OUTLOOK ON ECOWAS IMPLEMENTED SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ACTIVITIES
DURING THE PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 2017 - FEBRUARY 2018**

COMMUNICATION FROM ECOWAS-USAID SENIOR SANITARY
AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) STANDARDS ADVISOR

The following communication, received on 5 February 2018, is being circulated at the request of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The USAID/West Africa Regional Mission works to support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to advance their vision to create an economic union and common market. In line with this objective ECOWAS is implementing many agreements designed to support the free movement of goods and people throughout the region. In standards, a USAID/West Africa: Cost Reimbursement Implementation Letter no 2 was signed between CILSS and USAID/West Africa. It is through this agreement focus will be on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards.

1.2. With reference to the approved 2017 work plan and in view of improving and strengthening SPS activities in the ECOWAS region the following activities were implemented during the period of November 2017- February 2018

2 PLANT HEALTH AND PLANT PROTECTION

2.1. Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*, FAW) emerged as a major threat to food security of smallholder farmers especially affecting the maize crops in more than 30 countries in Africa. In southern Africa, FAW has been reported in almost all countries, except Lesotho and the island states (Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles). FAW is particularly damaging to maize, the main food security and livelihood crop to several million people in the region. The pest which was first observed in the 2016-2017 is forecasted to continue in the 2017-2018 crop season and beyond.

2.2. A regional meeting was held from 6-7 June 2017 to develop a West Africa (ECOWAS) comprehensive plant pest and disease prevention, surveillance and mitigation framework that was validated by all stakeholders, and with the support of USDA-APHIS, bureau of Dakar, Senegal, a follow up regional meeting was held from 7-8 August 2017 to establish a Regional Taskforce for Surveillance, Prevention and Control of Crop Pests. The composition, organigramme, objectives and missions of the regional Taskforce (RTAF) are listed in G/SPS/GEN/1574.

2.3. In view of preparing countries to better respond to the invasion of FAW in the coming agricultural season, it was important to generate awareness and empower the farming communities with knowledge of the pest, scouting for the pest as well as its natural enemies, understanding the right stages of pest control, and implementing sustainable agro-ecological management of the pest, learning from the experiences of the United States and Brazil in tackling the FAW and adapting these practices/protocols to the African agro-ecologies and cropping systems landscapes. At the same time, it is important to introduce, validate and deploy best-bet technological interventions/management practices for effective control of FAW in Africa, especially for the benefit of low-resource farming communities. The West Africa Training-of-Trainers and

Awareness Generation Workshop on FAW Pest Management was held in Cotonou, Benin, 13-16 February 2018.

2.4. The goal was to build technical capacity in the West Africa region in IPM-based FAW management through a regional training of NARS, NPPOs, Senior Extension Advisers of all ECOWAS member States, FTF implementing partners, and technical staff of regional partners.

2.1 First West Africa National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) and Partners Taskforce meeting to address regional priorities and review IPPC instruments including the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, IITA-Benin, 15-16 February 2018

2.5. Furthermore, the Regional NPPOs and Partners Taskforce Task Force for Surveillance, Prevention and Control of Plant Pests was established during the meeting held from 7-8 August 2017 in Ouagadougou – Burkina Faso, supported by APHIS, following the recommendations of both USDA-APHIS workshop on "Surveillance, Diagnostic Capacities and Reporting of Plant Pests in West Africa" held from 9-11 August 2016 in Abidjan and the joint ECOWAS/WAEMU/USAID meeting on "Development of the Regional Framework for the Prevention, Surveillance and Mitigation of Pests and Plant Diseases" held from 5-7 June 2017 in Accra – Ghana. Such initiatives stem from countries' weak capacities to tackle the negative impact of harmful transboundary plant pests in crop production, population livelihood and trade and the need for countries to join efforts and harmonize strategies. This is evidenced by the numerous interceptions recorded at foreign borders causing significant economic losses for farmers and countries. The meeting aims to review regional priorities, develop a priority action plan for 2018-2019 and agree on a harmonized position for the preparation of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM-13) meeting planned from 16-20 April 2018 in Rome-Italy.

2.6. Participants were NPPOs from all 15 ECOWAS member States, WAEMU, technical and financial partners including USAID, USDA, APHIS, FAO, IITA, CIMMYT.

3 FOOD SAFETY AND CAPACITY BUILDING

3.1 First Regional Private Sector Information/Awareness-raising Meeting on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards and Regulations and their Involvement in SPS Activities

3.1. From 22 to 24 November 2017, the ECOWAS Commission held, with the support of USAID, in Abidjan, the first regional meeting on private sector capacity building in this domain. This meeting was held within the context of the implementation of the USAID-ECOWAS programme on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS).

3.2. The meeting objectives were: i) to strengthen the capacities of private sector actors and consumer associations on SPS standards; ii) to share successful experiences in implementing SPS requirements; iii) to review and document challenges of private sector companies with regard to SPS issues in the relevant priority sectors; and iv) identify common areas of cooperation between the private sector and the ECOWAS Commission to help improve compliance with SPS requirements. Participants were all 15 ECOWAS member States representatives, consumer associations, and resource persons.

3.3. Key recommendations addressed to ECOWAS Commission are as follows:

- a. Create an information and communication platform for the private sector on SPS standards;
- b. Train/regularly strengthen the capacities of private sector actors on SPS agreements;
- c. Mobilise private sector financing to contribute to the functioning of SPS committees and international SPS actions;
- d. Encourage the formulation of common positions on SPS measures at the national, regional and continental level with the effective participation of the private sector;
- e. Strengthen the role/participation of the private sector in the functioning of national SPS committees;
- f. Organise a regional meeting bringing together private and public actors (SPS, Codex, IPPC, OIE Contact Points);
- g. Facilitate knowledge sharing on good practices;

- h. Conduct a study on the economic impact of the application of SPS standards on regional trade (releases);
- i. Develop/promote the establishment of regional standards and facilitate their application;
- j. Support laboratories in the certification process;
- k. Raise awareness of the importance of SPS measures; and
- l. Develop a regional SPS strategy.

3.2 Training workshop on aflatoxin sampling protocols in West Africa, Dakar, Senegal, 12-13 December 2017

3.4. Sampling and testing are major components in identifying aflatoxins and determining the levels. Proper sampling and testing methodologies should be used in order to minimize the impact of aflatoxins on the health of the people as well as trade. Sampling is the most important step that contributes to the variability of analyses, due to the non-homogenous nature of aflatoxin distribution in foods and feed. Statistically sound sampling protocols are critical for establishing national aflatoxin monitoring programmes for the purpose of food safety regulatory enforcement. If samples are not properly attained, compliant food/feed may erroneously be condemned and destroyed or non-compliant food/feed may be passed for human consumption and subsequently rejected (when importing countries identify them as uncompliant).

3.5. This workshop was to address the following challenges:

- The unacceptably high rejection of certificates, by importing countries;
- The present situation where multiple (importing & exporting countries) testings are practiced for an export consignment;
- The current practice of subjecting export consignments to more than one laboratories to increase reliability of analysis results; and
- The use of non-harmonised sampling and analysis protocols across countries.

3.6. The objectives were: i) to present aflatoxin sampling protocols for maize and groundnuts that were first developed by NC State University for COMESA; ii) to train participants on the sampling protocols through a hands-on demonstration; iii) to initiate discussions on the protocols, harmonized maximum limits, policies and regulatory frameworks; and iv) to initiate discussion on the ECOWAS Mutual Recognition Framework.

3.7. Participants were laboratory technicians, regulator from all 15 ECOWAS member States, Chad, AUC, USAID, USDA, PACA, CILSS/CHAD, CORAF, COMESA, Resource Persons, Media.

3.8. The following recommendations were made to the ECOWAS Commission and follow up actions will be conducted:

- a. ECOWAS Commission to support the establishment and or strengthening of laboratories for aflatoxin testing in the member States;
- b. ECOWAS member States to adopt and implementation international testing standards in the absence of national and regional standards;
- c. To request that member States conduct risk assessment as a prelude to the development of regional standards;
- d. Capacity development at all levels of the agricultural value chain;
- e. Development partners were requested to provide technical and financial support to the ECOWAS Commission and the member States with regards to aflatoxin control and mitigation;
- f. Development partners should support technology development and dissemination for aflatoxin control; and
- g. ECOWAS and development partners to address aflatoxin control and mitigation within the context of climate change in the region.

3.9. As key follow up action, a concept note was developed on Harmonizing Achievable Maximum Limits for Aflatoxin in Groundnuts in ECOWAS region. This concept note waiting approval and implementation, expected to start in 2018.

4 ATTENDANCE AT REGIONAL, INTERNATIONAL SPS FORA

- 4.1. The ECOWAS Commission were represented at regional and international meetings including:
- Participation to the workshop on transparency organized by the WTO SPS Committee from 30-31 October 2017 in Geneva as well as to the WTO SPS Committee meeting from 1-3 November 2017;
 - Participation to the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) meeting held from 13-17 November 2017 in Chicago, United States of America;
 - Participation to first ECOWAS Quality Infrastructure Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, 29 January – 1 February 2018; and
 - Participation to international workshop on tackling invasive species in Africa, ICIPE, Nairobi, 21-22 February 2018.

5 CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

5.1. The ECOWAS Commission take this opportunity to thank USAID Regional office, West Africa, USDA, USDA-APHIS and all partners and donors for their support in advancing SPS issues in the ECOWAS region and beyond, and call for more collaboration, support for the implementation of actions to better address SPS matters in the region.
