



1 November 2019

(19-7359)

Page: 1/2

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

Original: English

COMESA SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) ACTIVITIES

The following communication, received on 25 October 2019, is being circulated at the request of COMESA.

1. Since the establishment of the COMESA Free Trade Area, there has been progress in the reduction of tariffs which has resulted in increased intra COMESA trade. However, COMESA recognizes that inadequate capacity amongst the public and private sectors, coupled with the absence of harmonized food safety regulatory frameworks constitutes some of the outstanding unresolved NTBs in the region. Their impact ranges from restricting trade flows, compounding trade costs and undermining the competitiveness of COMESA exporters regionally and globally. To address these challenges, COMESA developed the SPS Strategy through a consultative and participatory process. The strategy has four result areas:

1. Public and private sector capacity development needs prioritised and addressed;
2. Regional leadership, coordination and collaboration on SPS matters;
3. Reduced trading costs associated with SPS measures;
4. Priority SPS risks managed.

2. The COMESA SPS programme works across COMESA and the tripartite to promote a harmonized risk based regulatory environment and strengthened biosecurity systems that enhance food and nutrition security and facilitate agricultural trade, exports and investments. Building on past achievements that connected SPS services and infrastructure (including laboratory infrastructure) in COMESA and the tripartite FTA, COMESA has been working to improve compliance in the public and private sectors to unlock trade flows, as well as encourage local and foreign investments in agro-processing and agri-business. Connecting biosecurity systems, not only enhances market access but enables sourcing of raw material across borders and creates incentives for investments in agro-processing and agribusiness.

3. Under the tripartite, a list of ten crops that are commonly traded in the COMESA-EAC-SADC region was prioritized for harmonization of SPS/phytosanitary measures, namely maize/maize seed, wheat, rice, groundnuts, sorghum, beans, cotton, soybeans, sunflower and seed potato. Ten tripartite countries, namely: Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Eswatini, Mozambique, Tanzania Zimbabwe and Malawi undertook to harmonize quarantine pest lists and mitigation strategies. To date, the countries are on course to develop: (i) a common approach to pest risk analysis; (ii) harmonized quarantine pest lists, for maize and maize grain/ seed, horticulture; and (iii) harmonized mitigation strategies/actions including for the Fall Army Worm (FAW) and the fruit fly. Prioritizing risks, promoting common approaches to risk assessment (e.g. pest risk analysis (PRA) for horticulture products or chemical risk assessment for processed food products) is one way of narrowing regulatory barriers that constrain cross-border trade in food and agricultural products. In addition, honey, dairy and meat products are some of the value chains that have been identified. COMESA has been working on: (i) connecting biosecurity systems to enable cross border sourcing and investments; (ii) harmonizing SPS regulatory frameworks to secure market access; and (iii) mitigating transboundary biosecurity risks to improve food and nutrition security.

4. COMESA food and agricultural products have good opportunities in regional and global markets, (either as raw materials or specialty food products). COMESA is currently working to develop and adopt sector specific Good Practice Guides, taking into account the major SPS risks, to build

appropriate biosecurity capacity and harmonize competencies across the public and private sectors. This will enhance intra-regional and international trade.

5. The major issues being addressed are:

- (i) The emergence of more resilient plant/animal pests and diseases e.g. the Fall Army Worm (FAW), that continues to undermine regional food security, regional and international trade. COMESA has been monitoring the implementation of national action plans developed by the ten tripartite national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Eswatini, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Malawi to update national pest lists, harmonize quarantine pests and adopt common approaches to pest risk analysis, as one of the means to strengthen biosecurity systems for trade and food security;
- (ii) Changes in SPS regulatory requirements of key trade partners, that place new obligations on countries. COMESA has been supporting existing and new exporters to respond to trade partners SPS regulatory requirements, whenever there are changes. COMESA has been supporting and strengthening domestic food systems, promoting harmonized regulatory frameworks and enhancing regional food and nutrition security;
- (iii) Delivering on the four result areas of the COMESA SPS strategy remains most crucial in guiding the harmonization of SPS measures and capacity strengthening. Many initiatives at country and regional levels, supported by the governments and development partners contribute to the expected results. COMESA has developed templates to monitor and track progress on the four result areas of the strategy, as well as generate SPS bi-annual reports. The reports include success stories and lessons learned;
- (iv) To improve the participation of enterprises involved in live animal (beef cattle and small ruminant) and meat trade in the regional and international markets and to improve sanitary conditions, COMESA has studied export and import trade in major exporting and importing member states; major challenges, including sanitary conditions and Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs), opportunities and solutions have been identified. Moreover, enterprises involved in live animal and meat trade in major exporting and importing countries have been mapped;
- (v) To improve intra-regional and international trade in live animals (beef cattle and small ruminant), meat and meat products and sanitary conditions, COMESA has organized regional workshops to discuss on major sanitary challenges, opportunities and the way forward to realize safe trade. Moreover, an experience sharing visit to Frigorifico Boran Foods Plc in Ethiopia, a subsidiary of the Allana Group of India, was organized to share experiences on best practices. The visit took place at the export abattoir and meat and meat products processing.

Acknowledgement

SPS activities in COMESA are supported by member States, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through Regional Development Objectives Grant Agreement (RDOAG), European Union through 11 EDF, World Trade Organization through STDF.
