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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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PILOT PROJECT: VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMME

COMMUNICATION FROM BELIZE

The following communication, received on 13 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Belize.

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1. In April 2020, the Standards and Trade Development Facility Working Group approved the pilot project STDF/PG/682: "Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programme in Central America (Belize and Honduras) to Improve Food Safety Outcomes for Public Health". The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) will be the implementing agency for this project, which officially started on 12 October and will end on 11 October 2023. It has an estimated budget of US \$942,612, of which US \$619,916.00 will be from the STDF and US \$322,696.00 is in-kind contribution.
 2. This pilot project is closely linked to the ongoing work in the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) on "Draft Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programmes".
 3. In summary, the pilot contains three main areas:
 - a. A regulatory component: focusing on the competent authorities (increasing knowledge on vTPAs; looking at the legislative framework; capacity building efforts and possible public/private partnership opportunities that would facilitate strategic changes to strengthen the food control management system based on Codex principles and guidelines);
 - b. Food Business Operators: engaging the FBOs to improve food safety compliance in the selected value chains. This component is expected to foster growth and promotion of the selected value chains and open new opportunities which will also benefit consumers; and
 - c. Dissemination and Learning component: which will enable the beneficiary countries to receive mentoring from other stakeholders and especially food safety regulators who have used vTPA as part of their risk management strategies in their national food control system. It will also allow for the beneficiary countries to share experiences, challenges and lessons learnt regionally and globally.
 4. A coordinating committee comprised of public and private sector representation will provide general oversight and support to this pilot project in Belize.
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