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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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ECOWAS IMPLEMENTED SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD OF OCTOBER 2020 - JANUARY 2021

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

The following communication, received on 15 February 2021, 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. Since 2017, SPS-related actions have been implemented.

1.2. In view of improving and strengthening SPS activities in the ECOWAS region, the following activities were implemented during the period of October 2020 to January 2021. It is to note that since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted on the smooth implementation of SPS-related activities at national and regional levels. As such, most planned SPS-related activities were postponed till further notice. However, certain activities were implemented, most of them in a virtual mode.

2 PLANT HEALTH AND PLANT PROTECTION

2.1 Continuation of training workshop on the "Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide"

2.1. The continuation of the training workshop on "The Use of the Harmonized Phytosanitary Inspection and Decision-Making Guide" is an effort of USDA-FAS dedicated to support West Africa NPPOs Taskforce to disseminate the harmonized Guide in order to promote best practices in the conduct of plant quarantine operations in the sub-region.

2.2. The program aims:

- to train in the pilot countries, including Benin and Nigeria, plant quarantine inspectors on a better understanding for further use of the Guide;
- to conduct simulation exercises with practical demonstrations of phytosanitary inspection, including pest detection and identification at the laboratory; and
- to test the applicability of the Guide.

2.3. The training was conducted in Benin (2-5 December 2020) and Nigeria (8-11 December 2020). In both countries, a total of 30 port, sea and terrestrial border inspectors were trained. It is anticipated to scale up this training to the remaining 13 ECOWAS and Sahel countries. This initiative is in line with ECOWAS priorities and the implementation of the SPS framework to help West Africa countries' plant quarantine systems meet international standards and to promote safe trade.

2.2 Coordination and organization of a virtual meeting to validate the regional programme on plant pests and diseases control with emphasis on fall armyworm in West Africa and the Sahel

2.4. A comprehensive regional programme on plant pests and diseases control with emphasis on fall armyworm in West Africa and the Sahel was developed. A virtual meeting was organized in October 2020 and all targeted countries and partners participated to validate the programme. The overall objective is to improve the surveillance, prevention, and sustainable management of plant pests and diseases in the ECOWAS and Sahel region. The specific objectives are to:

- Ensure control, surveillance, risk analysis and impact of plant pests, in particular the armyworm (FAW) on the food security and the livelihood in West Africa and the Sahel;
- Set up and run farmer field schools (FFS);
- Increase community participation in the surveillance and sustainable management of plant pests to reduce the impact on food and nutrition insecurity;
- Develop effective control methods adapted to West Africa and the Sahel to help reduce production losses, loss of income and improve the resilience of populations through the various options for biological control against armyworm by emphasizing the inventory of natural enemies already available and their way of contributing to the reduction of armyworm populations; and the inventory of the introduction of natural enemies from other origins in addition to local predators and parasitoids;
- Develop communication and knowledge sharing to improve the dissemination of phytosanitary information, provide information on the risks of using pesticides, and on the benefits of using biological control methods on reducing the impact of plant pests;
- Harmonize the registration of pesticides to help reduce their misuse in food safety and facilitate the registration of biopesticides;
- Improve the coordination of the fight against plant pests to contribute to the effective implementation of policies, legislative and regulatory provisions in this area.

2.5. It is anticipated that implementation will start in 2021.

3 ECOWAS SPS OPERATION PLAN 2021-2024

3.1 Coordination, and finalization of the SPS operation plan for 2021-2024 to be supported by USAID-USDA

3.1. A series of virtual coordination meetings have been held with stakeholders and USAID-USDA to reach consensus and validation of the proposed SPS activities for 2021-2024. The operation plan for 2021-2024 contains various outputs and SPS activities among others:

- Harmonized Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards:
 - Establish and operationalize a Technical Working Group on SPS standards;
 - Organize public and private interests on SPS standards harmonization;
 - Coordinate and support participation of member States in ISSBs;
 - Provide technical guidance for national SPS inspection and information systems;
 - Provide technical guidance and promote regional awareness of anti-microbial resistance;
 - Develop and disseminate information for decision-makers.

4 PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTINENTAL SPS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19-22 OCTOBER 2020 AND ORGANIZED BY DREA/AUC IN COLLABORATION WITH USDA

4.1. The continental SPS committee meeting was held virtually on 19-22 October 2020. The ECOWAS Commission participated in this meeting and made a presentation on the sub-regional coordination and support to member States. The following objectives were met:

- assisted in the harmonised inclusion of SPS standards in ECOWAS regional agricultural and industrial policies, in accordance with the requirements of international trade agreements, under WTO.
- strengthened the capacities of the ECOWAS Working Group (involving CILSS member countries including Chad and Mauritania, and other technical partners) to harmonise SPS standards.

4.2. Key activities implemented were highlighted, including:

- Plant Health Products Regulatory Collaboration and Harmonization in West Africa and the Sahel region: West Africa Pesticide Registration Committee (in progress);
- Establishing an ECOWAS food safety regulatory convergence forum (in progress);
- Regional NPPOs and Partners Task Force for Surveillance, Prevention and Control of Plant Pests established;
- Harmonized inspection and decision-making guidelines developed and training on its uses conducted;
- Training workshop and awareness on e-Phyto.

5 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

5.1. The ECOWAS Commission takes this opportunity to thank all partners for their continuing support in advancing SPS-related issues in the ECOWAS and Sahel sub-region. The ECOWAS Commission also calls for more collaboration and support for future implementation, especially in the new era of COVID-19.
