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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

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

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

The following communication, received on 12 March 2024, is being circulated at the request of 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). IICA would like to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

**1 SUPPORT FOR MULTILATERAL FORA ASSOCIATED WITH SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

**1.1 Codex Alimentarius Colloquia**

1.1. IICA, in collaboration with the United States Codex Office, the FAO/WHO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) and the African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), continues to support its member countries in their active participation in the Codex Alimentarius, through the implementation of an annual program of colloquiums aimed at the CCLAC and the CCAFRICA countries and the United States. In these colloquiums, both regions (43% of the Codex membership) discuss and exchange opinions on the various agenda items of each of the official Codex Alimentarius meetings. These meetings motivate and support developing countries to enhance their active participation both individually and regionally. The most recent colloquiums were:

- January 2024 - preparation for the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH7);
- February 2024 - preparation for the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO28);
- February 2024 - preparation for the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH54);
- March 2024 - preparation for the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF17).

1.2. These events provided an opportunity for delegates from these two regions and the United States to analyze issues of common interest and develop regional participation strategies prior to those Codex Committee meetings.

**1.2 Regional Coordination Session on WTO SPS Matters**

1.3. Adding to the regional efforts to strengthen capacities in the hemisphere for the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures and working in collaboration with several of its members, IICA will conduct in March 2024 its Ninth Coordination Session on WTO SPS Committee Matters. The meeting will be hosted virtually with simultaneous interpretation for English, French and

Spanish. Considering the current prominent subjects under discussion in the WTO SPS Committee, the coordination sessions will address matters related to the Sixth Review of the Operation and Application of the WTO SPS Agreement.

### **1.3 Inter-American Coordinating Group in Plant Health (GICSV) recent activities**

1.4. Since the constitution of the GICSV, IICA has exercised the technical secretariat on a permanent basis and currently hosts its [website](#). In recent years it has maintained an intense agenda and a work plan focused on institutional strengthening, coordination of activities and attention to the main emerging phytosanitary issues. The most relevant events and activities conducted during the period covered by this report were:

- Fruit Fly Working Group Meeting;
- Working Group on Phytosanitary Emergencies Responses;
- Locust Workshop;
- Electronic Certification Meeting (ePhyto) Working Group.

## **2 OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **2.1 2<sup>nd</sup> Cooperative Agreement IICA-FDA: Activities between December 2023 and March 2024**

2.1. The Cooperative Agreement is currently on its last fiscal year, and the main focus of the efforts is on disseminating the "Growing Safe Produce" Programme, which is one of the most important products of this Agreement. The Programme can be found on its webpage (<https://pci.iica.int/>) and is currently available in Spanish and English.

2.2. In-person dissemination activities of the "Growing Safe Produce" Programme:

- IICA will participate in several in-person activities disseminating the "Growing Safe Produce" Programme, as a training tool to improve the understanding of the regulatory requirements of FSMA's Produce Safety Rule (PSR). Two of those activities will be Produce Safety Summits, organized by FDA's Division of Produce Safety (DPS). One will take place in Chihuahua, Mexico, in February 2024, and the second will be in Antigua, Guatemala, in March 2024. There are also Summits being planned in Peru in March 2024, and Baja California, Mexico, in April 2024, where IICA will also have a participation. These Summits will have the participation of government authorities, private organizations, as well as producers. During these events, IICA delegates will present the Programme, its contents and will invite the participants to register for free on its web platform and use it. The delegates will also answer the participants' questions and provide some printed samples of the resources available.

2.3. Virtual dissemination activities of the "Growing Safe Produce" Programme:

- IICA has organized, in collaboration with PSA Trainers and Lead Trainers, virtual meeting with producers to disseminate the "Growing Safe Produce" Programme. These virtual events have already happened in Peru (November 2023, 80 participants), Argentina (December 2023, 60 participants) and the Dominican Republic (January 2024, 95 participants). Upcoming events will be conducted for Panama (February 2024), Chile and Peru (March 2024) and Costa Rica (April 2024). During these events, IICA technical specialists and PSA Trainers and Lead Trainers will present the Programme, the web platform and some of the materials available, and will help the participants register in the platform and provide some examples of the training materials and how to access and download printable materials. All of these events take place via Zoom and have a duration of approximately two hours. All dissemination activities (virtual and in-person) are planned in partnership with FDA's Latin America Office.

2.4. Webinar series 2024:

- An important part of the Cooperative Agreements between IICA and FDA has been the development of several webinar series addressing different food-safety-related regulations

from the regulator's as well as the industry's point of view. All the webinars are coordinated jointly by IICA and FDA's Latin America and the Caribbean Office (LAO) and have the support of subject matter experts. From this agreement, ten webinars will take place in 2024, with the first two programmed for March. Each webinar is expected to have more than 200 participants from all of the Americas, with the events having simultaneous interpretation Spanish-English.

## **2.2 Food Inspection Initiatives in Central America and the Caribbean**

2.5. The IICA, in collaboration with USDA/FAS and the University of Minnesota (UMN), provided technical assistance to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in developing a pilot model of risk-based food safety inspection. Incorporating a risk classification model into the food safety monitoring system will enable regulators to determine the frequency of inspections that achieve the greatest relative risk reduction and optimize resources. In the period from December 2023 to March 2024, more than ten virtual sessions were held with government entities in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru, and more virtual sessions and face-to-face visits to the countries are planned to socialize the model with the industry.

## **2.3 Capacity building activities under the US Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)**

2.6. IICA, in collaboration with USDA/FAS and the Texas Tech University (TTU), conducted a series of training courses for Produce Safety Alliance growers on regulations, requirements and GAP, and delivered official Preventive Controls for Qualified Individuals (PCQI) workshops. The workshops provided free FDA-certified training materials on FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and the Preventive Controls for Human Food final rule, preparing participants to lead and support the creation, development and implementation of a Food Safety Plan in processors. Some of the countries that participated in the last three months were: Barbados, Guatemala and Honduras. There are plans to carry out this type of activities in El Salvador in the next few months.

## **2.4 Voluntary Third Party Assurance with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)**

2.7. In collaboration with CFIA Canada, IICA facilitated two virtual workshops on voluntary third party assurance (vTPA). The first workshop, conducted for BAHAMA Belize, focused on integrating vTPA Information into the CFIA's Risk-Based Inspection and Auditing Approach (ERAs), CFIA's ERAs for Import, and the Development of ERA/Import Risk Assessment (IRA) Models. The second workshop, organized for SENASA Honduras, covered various topics including the inclusion of vTPAs in risk profiling model, differences in risk models with different vTPAs, development and demonstration of risk model, recognition and selection of vTPAs by CFIA, availability of public database, data exchange mechanisms, and impact of vTPAs on inspection frequency.

2.8. In March, our focus will be on developing policy paper proposals and outlining a roadmap aimed at institutionalizing risk-based inspection models that incorporate vTPA risk frameworks in both Honduras and Belize. This initiative highlights our commitment to enhancing food safety measures and regulatory practices in collaboration with stakeholders from both countries. Through these efforts, we strive to foster a more robust regulatory environment that effectively addresses emerging challenges and ensures the integrity of food supply chains.

## **2.5 Workshop on African Swine Fever Prevention and Control in the Americas**

2.9. Hosted in a physical format in March 2024 in Costa Rica, this event is the result of an agreement between IICA and Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC), which was also joined by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in the design and organization of the Workshop.

2.10. A group of 12 countries, considered as priority for Canadian technical cooperation (Bahamas, Barbados, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago), was invited for a discussion covering the different topics related to the prevention of ASF, including epidemiological and laboratory diagnosis of the disease. An extensive list of existing gaps and opportunities for international technical cooperation among Canada and the participants was identified to strengthen prevention against ASF in our hemisphere.

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