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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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INFORMATION ON SPS ACTIVITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

COMMUNICATION FROM THE AFRICAN UNION

The following communication, received on 17 March 2024, is being circulated at the request of the African Union.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. The African Union Commission Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) is responsible for coordinating continent-wide initiatives in agriculture, fisheries, food and nutrition security, strengthening the resilience of African food production systems, facilitating harmonization of agricultural and knowledge support systems policies, mobilizing resources to address implementation of priority issues in the continent and advocacy for implementation of priority programmes in Africa.

2 SPS ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN FROM SEPTEMBER 2023 TO DECEMBER 2023

2.1 AU SPS Coordination Forum

2.1. The African Union SPS Coordination Forum convened its second meeting on 19-20 September 2023 in Accra, Ghana. The forum was instrumental in guiding the integration of SPS issues into the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and other AU initiatives. Attendees included AU institutions, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Development Partners, focusing on streamlining SPS activities across the continent.

2.2 Learning event on Using Good Regulatory Practice to Facilitate Safe Trade in Africa, Accra, Ghana, 21-22 September 2023

2.2. The African Union Commission, in collaboration with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) secretariat, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), hosted a learning event from 21 to 22 September 2023 in Accra, Ghana on "Using Good Regulatory Practices to Facilitate Safe Trade in Africa". The event brought together key stakeholders and experts to explore and discuss best practices in regulatory processes that enhance trade safety across the continent. The workshop aimed to support the implementation of effective, science-based regulatory measures that safeguard health and promote the smooth flow of trade within the African Union and beyond. This initiative underscored the commitment of the African Union and its partners to leveraging regulatory excellence as a foundation for achieving sustainable economic growth and food security in Africa.

2.3 Regional SPS Coordination Mechanisms Strengthened

2.3. The African Union Commission collaborated with EAC, SADC and COMESA to strengthen their respective regional SPS coordination mechanisms with the objective to enhance regional collaboration and compliance, and towards an integrated approach to managing sanitary and phytosanitary measures across the continent.

- (i) Regional SPS coordination mechanism for East African Community held in Nairobi from 17 to 18 August 2023;
- (ii) Southern African Development Community (SADC) - Food Safety Technical Committee (FSTC) held from 10 to 12 October 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia;
- (iii) Regional SPS coordination mechanism for Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the 12th SPS sub-Committee meetings held from 27 November to 1 December 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya to discuss regional SPS matters;
- (iv) SADC Livestock Technical Committee meeting to discuss transboundary Animal Diseases, feed and fodder, and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Centenary celebrations was held on 12 to 14 December 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia.

2.4 SPS Index for Africa

2.4. The African Union has mainstreamed SPS into the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Biennial Review Report through the Africa SPS Index. The SPS Index is as a tool to monitor progress in performance of SPS systems in Africa. For the first time, member States reported on the performance of their SPS systems during the 5th CAADP Biennial Review Cycle in 2023.

2.5 Phytosanitary activities

2.5.1 Harmonization of Phytosanitary regulations for market access

2.5. A training on the implementation of phytosanitary measures for market access was held from 12 to 14 June 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya. During the workshop, member States developed a matrix of the different International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) that are being implemented, those that are not being implemented and the challenges encountered.

2.6. Similarly, a workshop on the harmonization of phytosanitary regulations for priority commodities was held from 30 May 30 to 2 June 2023 in Accra, Ghana. The objective of the workshop was to enhance harmonization of phytosanitary regulations for priority commodities in order to strengthen the effectiveness of regulatory interventions, improve compliance with international standards and the SPS Agreement, and ensure plant health protection while facilitating trade.

2.6 Food Safety activities

2.6.1 Awareness and Training on Food Safety

2.7. The African Union Commission organized a training program focused on foodborne disease surveillance and the management of food safety events in Mahe, Seychelles, from the 12 to 15 December 2023. The participants included National Food Safety Authorities and Competent Authorities from across African Union member States. This training aimed to enhance the competencies of member States in effective foodborne disease surveillance, outbreak investigations, and response strategies. Key recommendations from the training include the need to revise current guidelines for foodborne disease surveillance and support member States to establish integrated foodborne disease surveillance systems. The Commission also organized a training on risk-based food inspection from 18 to 20 December 2023.

2.6.2 Participation in the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

2.8. The Commission coordinated member States to present African Positions and also supported participation in the 46th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission held in Rome, Italy, December 2023.

2.7 Animal health

2.7.1 Development of Continental Inspection Guidelines

2.9. The African Union Commission held an expert workshop on 20-23 June 2023 in Naivasha, Kenya, to develop continental inspection guidelines for animals and animal products. This initiative aimed to facilitate regional collaboration and knowledge exchange among professionals in animal

health inspection, producing a draft of the Sanitary Inspection Guidelines for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

2.7.2 Training on Import Risk Analysis and Quarantine Procedures for trade in animals and animal products

2.10. The African Union Commission organized a training session on Import Risk Analysis based on WOHAT standards from 19 to 21 July 2023 in Kampala, Uganda. This training enhanced the competence of member States in conducting transparent, objective, and defensible risk analyses for international animal trade. Similarly, the Commission organized a benchmarking event to enhance knowledge on the application of certification, inspection, and quarantine principles and procedures for African Union member States from ECOWAS and ECCAS regions.

2.8 Notable Upcoming SPS Activities

- 16th Pan African Chief Veterinary Officers meeting from 13 to 15 May 2024;
- Training on HACCP for MSMEs in June 2024;
- African Union SPS Coordination Forum meeting scheduled for May 2024;
- Training of National SPS Committees scheduled for April 2024;
- Stocktaking and experience sharing session on the implementation of the Livestock Development Strategy for Africa scheduled for April 2024.

2.11. The African Union Commission extends its gratitude to the European Union, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Standards and Trade Development Facility, and other Development Partners for their invaluable support to the SPS activities undertaken by the African Union Commission, its member States, and Regional Economic Communities. This collaboration plays a crucial role in strengthening our collective efforts to enhance food safety, plant, and animal health across the continent, contributing significantly to the well-being and prosperity of our communities.
