

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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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 presented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

The following communication, dated 2 March 2005, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

1. The observer organizations have a standing invitation to present reports to the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) on the activities they have undertaken to promote greater understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement.

I. INITIATIVE IN SPS FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. Together with the United States Department of Agriculture, and six countries that serve as a Steering Committee (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico and the USA), IICA continues to implement the Initiative in SPS for the Americas (Initiative).

3. This Initiative, which began with the October 2002 meeting, has so far contributed to eight consecutive meetings, supporting the participation of the countries of the Americas and promoting national capacity building.

4. A total of 34 countries are involved in the Initiative, 28 of which receive direct assistance to enable them to participate in SPS Committee meetings. By the end of the seventh meeting of the SPS Committee, in October 2004, the Initiative had helped 159 specialists from 32 countries take part. These specialists were drawn from ministries of agriculture (57 per cent), health (6 per cent) and trade or foreign affairs (37 per cent). The Initiative is designed to promote the coordinated implementation of the SPS Agreement by the different national institutions involved. It also promotes coordination with the private sector at the meetings held in the capitals before and after WTO/SPS Committee meetings. As many as 28 of the 34 countries of the Americas (82 per cent) now have an internal mechanism of some kind (be it formal or informal) for discussing and providing follow-up to the issues dealt with by the SPS Committee.

5. For more information, contact: kevin.walker@iica.int (Kevin Walker); erick.bolanos@iica.int (Erick Bolaños); gregg.young@usda.gov (Gregg Young); marianne.mcelroy@fas.usda.gov (Marianne McElroy); or henry.schmick@usda.gov (Henry Schmick).

II. STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES BY DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION AND JOINT ACTIONS

6. IICA now has the preliminary versions of the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument for the plant health and food safety sectors. These versions complement the animal health version developed with the World Organization on Animal Health (OIE). The instrument was presented to the Caribbean countries at a WTO workshop held 16-18 February 2005 in Jamaica.

7. For more information, contact: marisa.cordero@iica.int (Marisa Cordero) or kevin.walker@iica.int (Kevin Walker).

III. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD-SETTING ORGANIZATIONS

8. To support the training processes and the dissemination of the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) #15 of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), IICA helped organize and carry out a workshop on the regulations governing the wood packaging materials used in international trade, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in September 2004.

9. For more information, contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras) or cvgelderen@iica.org.ar (Carlos van Gelderen).

10. The IICA Office in Argentina and the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA) of Argentina are implementing technical cooperation agreements with the Chair of the Codex Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC), and the SPS Enquiry Point in Argentina.

11. Assistance is being provided in identifying regional needs and sources of cooperation for capacity building, and the technical evaluation of documents, standards proposed under the aegis of international organizations, and notifications. Support is also being provided with research on specific subjects, the preparation of technical justifications and the design of surveys on national and regional needs.

12. IICA took part, as an international observer organization, in the 14th Meeting of the CCLAC held 29 November - 3 December 2004, in Buenos Aires. During the meeting, IICA suggested further cooperation efforts to achieve greater interaction among, and participation by, the national enquiry points, and capacity building.

13. For more information, contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras) or tim.obrien@iica.int (Tim O'Brien).

IV. SUPPORT FOR WTO TRAINING WORKSHOPS

14. To support the training workshops that the WTO implements in the region of the Americas, IICA took part in a workshop held 16-18 February 2005 in Jamaica. A similar event is scheduled for Nicaragua in May 2005.

15. For more information, contact: erick.bolanos@iica.int (Erick Bolaños).

V. ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

16. IICA supported and made presentations for a national quarantine course held in Saint Lucia, where over 40 persons from the public and private sector were sensitized or trained in quarantine

services. All activities were coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture's Deputy Director, and the plant protection and quarantine services, veterinary services, office of standards, private sector associations and chambers of commerce. An SPS consultation was held in Saint Lucia for more than 35 persons from the public and private sectors.

17. A workshop on the SPS and TBT Agreements and their implications for trade, entitled "Where we are and where we want to go", was held in Grenada for twenty participants from the public and private sectors. Activities were coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture and the office of standards. As a result of this workshop, a follow-up meeting was requested and is planned to further discuss recommendations and generate a strategic plan of action.

18. In Jamaica, a national strategy for good agricultural practices (GAP) was introduced by the national agricultural health and food safety committee. This is an initiative to follow up on the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) programme from last year. The purpose is to elaborate on what the private sector has been doing in the area of GAP and to outline a strategy for a national food safety programme. This is an OECS ongoing activity.

19. For more information, contact: aeverton.ambrose@iica.int (Everton Ambrose).

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