

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

The following communication, received on 18 June 2005, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

1. The observer organizations of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to further understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement.

A. SPS INITIATIVE FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. The IICA, together with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the six countries that make up the Steering Committee (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico and the United States) continue to implement the SPS Initiative for the Americas (the Initiative).

3. This Initiative, which was launched in October 2002, will have completed, in June 2005, the ninth consecutive meeting, supporting the participation of the countries of the Americas and promoting national capacity-building.

4. As part of the initiative and of the responsibilities assumed, the beneficiary countries have had to implement actions at the institutional level. These include the dissemination and analysis of the topics addressed by the SPS Committee, as a result of which, in some countries, national mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination have been strengthened and SPS topics have been placed on the national agenda.

5. The countries that have been most successful in implementing these actions have seen improvements in other key variables: coordination between their national experts (capital) and their WTO representatives (Geneva); technical capacity-building of personnel in this field; and the procurement of financial resources.

6. At the June 2005 meeting, 33 of the IICA's 34 member States are participating, 27 with financial support. Of the 38 capital-based experts with full or partial financial support from the Initiative, 27 are from Ministries of Agriculture (71 per cent), 9 from ministries that deal with trade issues (24 per cent), and 2 from Ministries of Health (5 per cent).

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

B. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES THROUGH THE PREPARATION OF A COMMON VISION AND ACTION

8. The IICA, together with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), has begun implementation of the Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument for the animal health sector in certain countries of South America. The PVS was developed by the OIE and the IICA.

9. This instrument helps bring together the public and private sectors to develop a common approach to the proper implementation of the SPS Agreement. Colombia was the first country to begin the process in South America, and an agenda is currently being prepared for its implementation in Ecuador, Chile and Paraguay.

10. For further information, contact: ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Cordero), kevin.walker@iica.int (Kevin Walker).

C. STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP IN FOOD SAFETY IN THE AMERICAS

11. In 2001 and 2002, the IICA conducted four modules of the Executive Series on Leadership in Food Safety for the Americas. In May 2005, 25 participants in these modules from 15 countries met again in Colombia to present the results and progress achieved in projects carried out previously and to identify new challenges for food safety in the Americas.

12. As a result of this most recent meeting, two strategic multinational projects are under way, one focusing on education and training in the area of food safety and social responsibility, and the other on boosting the capacity of laboratories.

13. For further information, contact: Maria.abularach@iica.int (Lourdes Abularach) and kevin.walker@iica.int (Kevin Walker).

D. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE ORGANIZATIONS

14. The IICA participated in the first meeting of the Regional Steering Committee of the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADS) in America, held in Argentina on 14 and 15 April 2005. GF-TADS is a joint FAO/OIE initiative intended to control and eradicate major animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases, and to modernize national veterinary services. At the meeting, the IICA explained the application of the PVS instrument as a support tool for controlling transboundary diseases.

15. Together with the FAO and the Agriculture and Livestock Service of Chile (SAG), the IICA supported and the first Hemispheric Meeting on International Border Control in Animal and Plant Health, also held in April 2005. At the meeting, the IICA promoted implementation of the SPS Agreement and modernization of national services as key factors in the effective management of transboundary diseases.

16. With a view to improving transparency and the handling of information, the IICA will support the FAO next August in conducting a regional workshop on the International Portal for Food Safety and Animal and Plant Health. This will be the first workshop: it will be held in Argentina, and will be attended by representatives of 18 Spanish-speaking countries.

17. For further information, contact: kevin.walker@iica.int (Kevin Walker), victor.arrua@iica.int (Victor Arrua), maureen.obando@iica.int (Maureen Obando).

E. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

18. Brazil: In June 2005, the IICA will participate in the Fifteenth International Meeting on Health Education and Social Communication (ENESCO), a Latin American event during which the latest and most successful experiences in health education will be presented.
19. Argentina: The IICA office in Argentina will continue to provide technical support to the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA), which will be directed to the Chairmanship of the CODEX Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean (CCLAC) and the SPS enquiry point in Argentina: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).
20. Ecuador: The IICA has been actively supporting efforts to strengthen institutions for the analysis of the topics addressed in the SPS Committee. Emphasis has been placed on involving the private sector in the process of analysis, in the creation of a national committee, and in improving the notification process: paola.ramon@iica.int (Paola Ramon).
21. Dominican Republic: The IICA is supporting efforts to update the legal and regulatory framework in the agricultural health area, including the coordination of a working group created to examine two proposed laws, one on plant health protection and one on animal health protection.
22. Support will also be provided for a national workshop on the notification process, scheduled for June: dvanderlinder@iicard.org (Dilencio Vanderlinder).

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