

**COMMENTS ON ARTICLE 6
REGIONALIZATION**

Communication from Ecuador

The following communication, received on 20 January 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Ecuador.

1. In view of the extensive discussions within this Committee concerning Article 6 of the SPS Agreement and the problems facing Member countries when it comes to the recognition of disease-free areas and areas of low disease and pest prevalence, Ecuador would like to make the following comments:

- The subject of regionalization and Article 6 of the SPS Agreement has two clearly-defined elements: firstly there is the need for a scientific determination of pest- or disease-free areas and areas of low pest prevalence; and secondly, there is the absence of an expedited administrative procedure, common to all Member countries, for the recognition of such areas.
- The first of these elements is reflected in the fact that on the whole, there is little in the way of official recognition on the part of the international organizations (OIE and IPPC) owing to the reluctance of member countries to accept such recognition.
- The second element, on the other hand, is reflected in the feeling of uncertainty among Members owing to the lack of a clearly-defined administrative procedure for the recognition of disease-free areas and areas of low disease prevalence, making investment very risky and limiting market access expectations. The problem is even more acutely felt in the developing countries.

Alternative:

2. Although the OIE and the IPPC are making considerable efforts to find solutions to the regionalization issue, those efforts are focussing on a limited sphere of action, namely the technical and scientific aspect for the development of guidelines. However, there are administrative processes that are not covered by the work of the international organizations.

3. In Ecuador's view, it is the responsibility of this Committee to support and supplement the work being conducted by the international organizations by developing harmonized administrative procedures that clearly and specifically help Members to implement Article 6 of the SPS Agreement by introducing specific processes and time-frames for the recognition of pest- and disease-free areas and areas of low prevalence.

4. A number of procedures have been proposed in this respect and several members of this Committee have shared their experiences in the area of regionalization. Taking account of the information provided by Members, the SPS Committee should focus its work on the development of harmonized administrative procedures to be applied by both the exporting country and the importing country, without prejudice to the progress being made in the OIE and the IPPC, since these efforts, far from being mutually exclusive, are complementary.
