

**Committee on Sanitary and  
Phytosanitary Measures**

Original: Spanish

**EXPERIENCE OF COLOMBIA IN IMPLEMENTING THE AGREEMENT  
ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY  
AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement of 31 March 2006

Communication from Colombia

The following communication, received on 23 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Colombia.

1. In preparation for the Workshop on the Implementation of the SPS Agreement, participants were asked to provide replies to the following questions.

**2. How regularly do representatives of your country participate in meetings of the SPS Committee?**

2. It attends the three meetings scheduled during the year.

**3. Who usually participates from your country (capital-based experts? Geneva-based trade representatives?)?**

3. Colombia is represented by an official delegation made up of one representative of the Mission of Colombia to the WTO in Geneva, and two-capital based experts: a delegate from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism and a delegate from the Colombian Agricultural Institute as the country's health authority.

**4. What information do you receive regarding meetings of the SPS Committee, and how do you receive this information?**

4. The information that Colombia receives is the information sent electronically by the Secretariat of the SPS Committee through the Mission in Geneva, the printed information handed over in person during the meetings, and the information transmitted electronically by the IICA.

**5. Does your country have an SPS national committee?**

5. Colombia approved document CONPES 3375 of 5 September 2005 establishing the national policy for agricultural health and food safety for the system of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and proposing the establishment of a National Council for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures to

serve as the national SPS committee. It will include technical groups for animal health, plant health and food safety.

6. However, there is currently no formal mechanism for discussing sanitary and phytosanitary matters. For the moment, they are managed by the official State entities with competence and authority in that area. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that an ad hoc SPS group has emerged in the country in the wake of the negotiation and signature of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, made up of representatives of the public sector assisted by the leading private sector associations and responsible for advising the national government in these negotiations and drawing up policy papers in order to strengthen the country's SPS system in the short, medium and long term with a view to improving the quality and competitiveness of its agricultural products.

**6. How do your exporters find out about your trading partners' new SPS requirements?**

7. Through the enquiry point, which communicates them to the different production and marketing associations.

**7. What national mechanisms can be created to ensure that stakeholders in your country are informed in a timely manner of new SPS requirements, so that the SPS requirements of trading partners can be evaluated and so that the views of relevant stakeholders can be taken into account when responding to SPS notifications?**

8. Strengthening of the enquiry point and publication of the measures on the web site of the national institution responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary measures, as well as the organization of periodic meetings with the associations in order to discuss the implications of the notifications.

**8. In establishing such mechanisms, how can Members identify the relevant domestic stakeholders and promote effective interaction among those stakeholders that can be sustained over time?**

9. Dissemination of the information at all levels and strengthening of the enquiry point of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism and of the Risk Analysis and International Affairs Group of the Colombian Agricultural Institute.

**9. How can information about SPS requirements be transmitted to groups outside of the capital?**

10. By e-mail and by disseminating the information at the departmental level.

**10. Has there been any national planning on how to implement the SPS Agreement in your country?**

11. There is a plan which includes policy guidelines to strengthen the country's sanitary and phytosanitary system, in document CONPES 3375 of 5 September 2005 establishing the national policy for agricultural health and food safety for the system of sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

**11. If so, was this planning developed using a particular methodology?**

12. It began with Decree 4003 for the introduction of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, which entered into force on 1 December 2004. This was followed by the approval of document CONPES 3375 of 5 September 2005.

**12. How does your country identify its technical assistance needs?**

13. The Government of Colombia identifies and prioritizes its technical assistance needs, taking account of the main products of trade interest and the potential export markets, by organizing consultations between the national health authorities and the different public and private entities forming part of the SPS system.

14. To encourage this process, the Government of Colombia set up a cooperation and technical assistance committee to identify, develop and manage projects relating to sanitary and phytosanitary measures in the framework of the FTA negotiations with the United States. In addition, the national health authority is working on the management of resources with the international cooperation agencies and the counterparts of the health entities in the developed countries.

**13. What has been your country's experience in both the request and the supply of SPS-related technical assistance?**

15. Colombia has provided technical cooperation to Latin American countries in diagnosing diseases like foot-and-mouth disease and Venezuelan equine encephalitis, and has also transmitted its experience in applying geographical information systems and developing risk assessment.

16. Colombia has requested and received technical assistance on foot-and-mouth disease from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Pan-American Foot-and-Mouth Disease Centre (PANAFTOSA), and the United States Department of Agriculture. In the case of avian influenza, it also requested technical assistance from the international reference laboratory in diagnosing the disease, and directly from the OIE which is currently in the process of approving the request.

17. The United States has been the principal source of technical assistance requested by Colombia for different diseases and pests. Similarly, Panama has offered and provided cooperation and technical assistance for the eradication of screwworm in the vicinity of the Colombian-Panamanian border.

18. The European Communities, in conjunction with the Andean Community, has been providing technical assistance for the harmonization of Andean standards and the technical procedures of the Andean health system. France, in particular, has offered and provided cooperation and technical assistance for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

**14. How can technical assistance supply and demand be most effectively matched, priority areas identified and duplication of donor efforts avoided?**

19. Colombia proposes two mechanisms for adapting technical assistance supply to demand. In the first of these mechanisms, the developing countries interested in receiving technical assistance would submit their needs to the reference international organizations and to the cooperation and technical assistance agencies, which would channel and focus the specific requirements of the developing countries. This would ensure the support required by the member country.

20. The second option would be to use the channels between the agencies of the interested country and their counterparts in the supplying country, provided the area of technical assistance is of mutual interest to the parties.

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