

**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, received on 23 March 2006, is being circulated at the request of the 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.

I. SPS INITIATIVE FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. In conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and with the collaboration of six countries that serve as a steering committee (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, the United States and Mexico), the IICA continues to implement the SPS Initiative of the Americas (the Initiative).

3. The Initiative, which came into force in October 2002, has now contributed to eleven consecutive SPS Committee meetings, supporting the participation of the countries of the Americas and helping them to build their capacity. For this particular meeting, the Initiative enabled 26 capital-based experts from 26 countries of the Americas to participate.

4. Through its network of offices in its member countries, the IICA has promoted the establishment of national forums to follow up the agendas of the SPS-related international bodies, particularly the WTO SPS Committee.

5. In Honduras, with broad participation by the private sector and the public sector and support from international organizations, a National Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures was created pursuant to a ministerial decision.¹ The IICA serves as the Committee's technical secretariat and so has been able to lend support in the organization of monthly meetings, the establishment of a national agenda to meet technical demands arising from the WTO SPS Committee, and the dissemination of information. Work is under way to draft operating regulations.

¹ The National Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures was established in August 2004 by Ministerial Decision No. 651-04 and was formed on 7 December 2005.

6. In Ecuador, work has been done to put an informal SPS committee into operation and to have a draft Executive Decree prepared in order to give the committee official status. The decree is undergoing legal checking prior to signature by Ministers.

7. With technical support from the IICA, the Ecuadorian Agricultural Health Service (SESA) is in the process of setting up and implementing a National Information and Notification System for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The system is to include a computer programme for the management of SPS notifications from Member countries of the WTO. The system aims to (i) establish a network between national technical services, the private sector and consumers' associations involved in developing standards, to provide a permanent channel for dialogue between the different players; (ii) establish an SPS information node that can be consulted on any SPS-related topic.

8. Again in Ecuador, in coordination with the SESA the IICA manages external resources from USAID and the FAO for a project intended to update, systematise, analyse and as far as possible harmonise Ecuador's legislation and standards on sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety matters with the standards, guidelines and recommendations of competent regional and international bodies.

9. For further information, contact: 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). For information on the work in Honduras, contact: claudia.garcia@iica.int (Claudia Garcia). For information on the work in Ecuador, contact: paola.ramon@iica.int (Paola Ramon).

II STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SERVICES BY DEVELOPING A COMMON VISION AND JOINT ACTION

10. Further to the joint action undertaken by the IICA and the OIE to develop and implement the Performance Vision and Strategy (PVS) instrument for the animal health sector, a work session was held to incorporate new elements under the OIE's Animal Health Code, and support was given to the preparation of a strategy for its application in African countries.

11. This instrument brings together the public and private sectors to develop a common approach to proper implementation of the WTO SPS Agreement. For further information, contact: ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Cordero).

III SUPPORT TO THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

12. The IICA has various bulletins and channels of communication to promote the exchange of information on SPS matters and the work done in the WTO, the relevant international bodies and the regional organizations.

13. An **electronic bulletin "CODEX-MSF Opinion Forum"** specialises in events occurring in the Codex Alimentarius and the WTO SPS Committee. The bulletin reports and analyses standards and activities and aims to enhance the dissemination and study of these matters. Its readership comprises first and foremost the countries of South America, but it is available to all members at WWW.IICA.ORG.AR For further information, contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

14. **Access** and **Access Plus** are bulletins specializing in subjects and information generated by the SPS Committee and the Codex Alimentarius respectively. Both bulletins are intended to generate executive reports allowing follow up to the two bodies. They have hemispheric coverage (the Americas) and are available both electronically and in paper format. They may be consulted by the

public at www.infoagro.net/salud. For further information, contact: tim.obrien@iica.int (Tim O'brien) and erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños).

15. The information system **AGROSALUD** disseminates information pertaining to agricultural health and food safety and the areas it covers include standards and actions carried out in the WTO and the relevant international organizations. www.infoagro.net/salud for the Spanish version and www.agrihealth.ws for the English version. For further information, contact: consultor2@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

16. The **INFOAGRONEGOCIOS** information system aims to promote trade in agriculture in the Americas and one of its objectives is to facilitate access to import/export requirements for agrifood products in selected markets and access to the main sources of information relating to the agrifood sector. www.infoagro.net/agronegios (Spanish version). For further information, contact: daniel.rodriguez@iica.int (Daniel Rodríguez).

IV. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

17. Avian influenza: The IICA lent support to the development of Strategic Guidelines for the Prevention of Avian Influenza in the Americas. The work was carried out in Argentina in February under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs). On 3 April OAS Ambassadors are to attend a meeting in Washington on the subject of avian influenza. Work is being done in Central America and the Caribbean to develop a regional avian influenza prevention strategy and involves various players in both the public and the private sectors. For further information, contact: erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), ana.cordero@iica.int (Ana Cordero).

18. Argentina: The IICA in Argentina continues to lend technical support to the Secretariat for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of Argentina (SAGPyA), specifically to the presidency of the CODEX Committee for Latin American and the Caribbean (CCLAC) and with the SPS contact point in Argentina. For further information, contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

19. Andean countries: The IICA, the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI) and the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food organized an international workshop on traceability systems in March, with the participation of Spanish experts and the assistance of public and private officials working in this area from Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia. The aim is to draw up a regional Andean project for the implementation of traceability systems for each of the main production chains in every country of the region based on knowledge gained of the traceability systems of Spain, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, Brazil and Peru. For further information, contact: Jaime.flores@iica.int.ve (Jaime Flores).

20. Caribbean: The IICA lent support: in Barbados, to the preparation of a proposal for implementation of IPPC standard No. 15; in Jamaica, to a regional training workshop organized by the WTO which covered the WTO SPS Agreement. In Saint Lucia, the IICA is supporting the establishment of a certification system for fresh food. For further information, contact: carol.thomas@iica.int (Carol Thomas), everton.ambrose@iica.int (Everton Ambrose).

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
Agricultural Health and Food Safety
<http://www.infoagro.net/salud>
<http://www.iica.int>
