

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

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

The following communication, received on 11 October 2007, is being circulated at the request of IICA.

1. The observer organizations of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPSC) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to promote the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. IICA wishes to present some actions and activities we consider to be of interest to the Committee.

INITIATIVE IN SPS FOR THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS

2. The Initiative for the Americas continues to support IICA's member countries through institution building activities and support for their participation in meetings of the SPSC. Since the Initiative was launched in October 2002, the countries have been able to attend 16 consecutive meetings.

3. For its fortieth meeting, the Initiative facilitated the participation of 26 countries and an equal number of specialists. All told, the Initiative has supported the participation of 220 "Capital-based" experts from ministries of agriculture, trade and health. Of IICA's 34 member countries, 28¹ are beneficiaries of the Initiative, and six make up the Steering Group², which supports the implementation of the Initiative. For further information: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), maureen.obando@iica.int (Maureen Obando).

IICA-STDF PROJECT

4. As a follow-up to the development of institutional capabilities in the countries of the Americas, IICA will soon begin implementation of a project funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). IICA's 34 member countries will participate: 28 as direct beneficiaries and six (the Steering Group) as providers of technical cooperation.

¹ Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela and Peru.

² Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico and United States of America.

5. The objectives of the project are:

- (i) To promote a common and shared vision in the countries (public and private sectors) to follow up on and consolidate their institutional capacity-building in the SPS field;
- (ii) to continue supporting real and potential capacity-building in the countries of the Americas, for the sake of more active and effective participation in the SPS Committee; and
- (iii) to consolidate technical cooperation among the countries of the Americas as a mechanism for exchange in the area of technical assistance and for support in the area of special and differential treatment. For further information: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), maureen.obando@iica.int (Maureen Obando).

TRAINING COURSES IN SPS MEASURES

6. The IICA Office in Argentina, in conjunction with the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA) and the National Agrifood Health and Quality Service (SENASA), held a number of training workshops for the purpose of disseminating information on the SPS Agreement and international norms, and of familiarizing representatives of the private sector with the structure and operation of the Codex and the impact of international norms on food trade.

7. In the workshops, participants learned about or updated their knowledge of the provisions of the SPS Agreement, based on the work of the SPSC and the Three Sisters – Codex, OIE and IPPC. The training itself focused on specific production chains. For further information: MLfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

8. In late October, in Honduras, the National SPS Committee will present its working agenda for 2008. The event is being held to create awareness, at the highest levels of government, of current topics related to SPS measures, with a view to facilitating implementation of the national SPS agenda. IICA is very pleased to support Honduras in this process. For further information: alejandra.diaz@iica.int (Alejandra Díaz).

9. IICA will support in Ecuador, in late October, the National Congress on the Codex Alimentarius. Its main objective is to learn how the Codex Alimentarius is structured and how it operates, its current importance and how it is related to the SPS Agreement. During the congress, the current status of the national committee will be discussed and efficient public-private articulation will be promoted. Successful experiences in other countries will be presented and the economic impact of compliance or non-compliance with international norms will be explained. This event is the first of a series in the Andean Region aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the National Codex Alimentarius Committees. For further information: paola.ramon@iica.int (Paola Ramon).

TRAINING PROGRAMME ON UNDERSTANDING THE THREE SISTERS

10. As part of the training programme developed by IICA, a programme will begin soon which focuses on understanding and participating actively in the regulatory process of the Three Sisters (Codex, OIE and IPPC). This programme was created to meet two needs of the official agricultural health and food safety services: to continually train and update the skills of their specialists, and to study proposals received by the focal points for new norms or the review of existing ones, inviting the private sector to participate in the discussion of same and the definition of national positions.

11. This training programme will include speakers from each of the Three Sisters and will be executed regionally (Southern, Andean, Central and Caribbean) via distance education.

12. The programme is the first of three components of an effort to strengthen the participation of the countries in the regulatory process of the Three Sisters. Later, and depending on the availability of resources, support will be provided for the participation of the scientific communities of member countries in the specialized, permanent and ad hoc committees and technical fora of these organizations, and for the active participation of the countries in the annual meetings of the three organizations. For further information: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins).

SUPPORT IN THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

13. IICA has several bulletins and communication systems that promote the exchange of information related to SPS measures and the work of the WTO, the Three Sisters and regional organizations.

14. The electronic bulletin CODEX-MSF Opinion Forum specializes in developments within the Codex Alimentarius and the SPS Committee. It disseminates and analyses information on norms and recent developments, with a view to increasing discussion and analyses of these topics. Its readership is found mostly in the countries of South America, but it is available to all members at www.iica.org.ar. For further information: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

15. The AGRICHEALTH information system disseminates information related to agricultural health and food safety, focusing on norms issued and actions taken by the WTO and the Three Sisters. It is currently launching an observatory of emerging issues and emergencies in the areas of animal and plant health and food safety. www.infoagro.net/salud for the Spanish version, and www.agrihealth.ws for the version in English. For further information: ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

16. The IICA Office in Argentina continues to provide technical support to the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (SAGPyA), specifically the National Codex Committee. For further information: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

17. IICA has prepared the profile of a project for implementation of traceability systems in priority chains in the Andean region. The project proposal was developed with representatives of the public and private sectors in each of the countries of the region. The IICA proposal was validated in a USDA-APHIS event held in Peru in September. At the meeting, it was ratified and IICA was asked to move forward with the project and the technical cooperation actions arising from it. For further information: jaime.flores@iica.int (Jaime Flores).

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