

**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 1 October 2008, is being circulated at the request of the IICA.

1. The observer organizations of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are invited to submit reports on the activities they have carried out to promote understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. IICA wishes to present some of the actions and activities that it considers relevant to the work of this Committee.

**I. SUPPORT FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS
IN THE SPS COMMITTEE OF THE WTO**

2. Through the SPS Initiative for the Americas, IICA provides support for the development of capabilities needed to participate effectively in the SPS Committee of the WTO. The countries concerned have received support under the Initiative, launched in October 2002, for six consecutive years now and have taken part in 19 meetings of the WTO SPS Committee.

3. For this meeting, 15 of the 28 beneficiary countries (54 per cent) are participating. This level of participation is noteworthy, considering that the beneficiary country must cover 50 per cent of the cost of its participation and that some countries are represented by more than one person.

4. In all, the Initiative has facilitated the participation of 230 capital-based experts from 32 countries since October 2002. This has made it possible to support the WTO in a number of training events, and has contributed to cooperation between countries through the transfer of successful experiences. Most importantly, it has helped create a new, or strengthen the existing, institutional framework in the countries. Some examples of such support are: In Honduras, IICA contributes to the activities of the National SPS Committee by serving as its Technical Secretariat.

5. In Ecuador, IICA has provided support for the Informal SPS Committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, in monitoring technical topics addressed by the WTO SPS Committee and in effectively channelling trade concerns regarding Ecuador's exports. The Ministry has developed rules of procedure for the operation of the Informal SPS Committee, and has decided to include three officials in the General World Trade Directorate to actively follow up on matters relating to the TBT and SPS Agreements. Additionally, a technical cooperation agreement has been signed with the National Council for the Reactivation of Competitiveness and Production (which serves as the Office of the President's technical secretariat for production), calling for IICA to

provide support in structuring and implementing the new Integrated Food Quality, Health and Safety System of Ecuador. The system involves the establishment an international relations unit, with its own budget and two full-time staff to fulfil the assignment set forth, which is to address matters and commitments relating to food quality, health and safety with international organizations (WTO, RPPOs, FAO, international agreements) and bilateral and multilateral issues with other countries.

6. In Paraguay, IICA serves as the Technical Secretariat of the National SPS Committee, supporting coordination of the national position for the formal meetings of the WTO SPS Committee, supporting coordination of the national position in the area of SPS, and helping to implement the Paraguayan portal on food safety and SPS.

7. For further information, contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), mariela.madrigal@iica.int (Mariela Madrigal).

II. IICA-STDF PROJECT

8. As a complement to the development of institutional capabilities in the countries of the Americas, IICA is currently implementing the IICA-STDF-108 project. This project promotes the development of national SPS agendas which, in turn, constitute portfolios of projects or specific actions for cooperation that cooperation agencies or donor countries can conduct.

9. For further information, contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), erick.bolanos@iica.int (Eric Bolaños), mariela.madrigal@iica.int (Mariela Madrigal).

III. TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THE THREE SISTER ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WTO SPS AGREEMENT

10. As part of the SPS training programme developed by IICA, the first introductory training course on the OIE standard-setting process was held jointly with the OIE. Thanks to the collaboration and direct involvement of OIE officials, the course was conducted out of IICA headquarters in Costa Rica via videoconference or webcast, covering the Southern, Andean, Central and Caribbean Regions.

11. The course focused on existing standards, the development of standards, and the institutional mechanisms needed for effective participation in the standard-setting process of the OIE. The course was taught through IICA's Distance Training Center.

12. The training and comprehension module on the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) standard-setting process will be offered at the end of this year. For further information, contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins), ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

13. IICA Bolivia participates in the meetings of the National Codex Alimentarius Committee, which analyses and approves the work of the Technical Subcommittees. It also studies the directives issued by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. IICA Bolivia also participates in the Technical Subcommittee on Food Imports and Exports. For further information, contact: marco.jordan@iica.int (Marco Jordan).

14. In Honduras, IICA has helped draw up guidelines for the preparation of the national Codex Alimentarius agendas. A workshop was held to draw up the national Codex Alimentarius agenda. For further information, contact: lourdes.medina@iica.int (Lourdes Medina).

15. In Ecuador, IICA has conducted a number of activities with the National Codex Alimentarius Committee, including the development of a computerized system for managing information; efforts to encourage greater participation on the part of the private sector; improvements in the institutional image of the National Codex Committee through the development of a web page and the institutional logo; and support for the operation of the National Codex Committee through a SWOT workshop involving an international consultant with broad experience in the field. For further information, contact: paola.ramon@iica.int (Paola Ramon).

IV. SPECIFIC ACTIONS BY COUNTRY OR REGION

16. In the Andean Region, IICA has supported national workshops on live bird marketing, conducted in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and covering regulatory aspects and the development of institutional capabilities. The workshops were held in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador. For further information, contact: jflorespo@yahoo.com (Jaime Flores).

17. In the Caribbean Region, IICA, together with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA/APHIS) is implementing the Caribbean Veterinary Epidemiologist/Paraepidemiologist Project in ten countries (11 islands) of the Caribbean Region. The project is designed to strengthen epidemiological surveillance capabilities for animal diseases in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. For further information, contact: carol.thomas@iica.int (Carol Thomas).

18. In Honduras, IICA has provided technical support for the Swine and Aquaculture-Fisheries Health and Safety Commissions. Support has also been given to prepare rules for the production, importation and marketing of potato seed. For further information, contact: lourdes.medina@iica.int (Lourdes Medina).

19. In Ecuador, existing sanitary and phytosanitary information systems (hardware and software) are currently being evaluated with a view to drawing up a technical proposal for their integration into a single system, so as to improve mechanisms for coordination and communication between institutions in the official sector and with users of the services they offer at the national and international levels. Other efforts are under way to address the technical and legal requirements for structuring an efficient control and surveillance system for products in the market.

20. Also in Ecuador, with a view to developing technical capabilities that will enable the country to access more international markets, the Corporation for Export and Investment Promotion (CORPEI), APHIS, IICA and the Ecuadorian Agricultural Health Service (SESA) have held a workshop, involving both theory and practice, on fruit fly free or low prevalence areas and their importance for the production and export of fruits and vegetables. For further information, contact: paola.ramon@iica.int (Paola Ramon).

21. In Costa Rica and Uruguay, IICA have begun the delivery and distribution of training materials on food safety for primary school children, donated to IICA by USDA/FSIS. For further information, contact: ricardo.molins@iica.int (Ricardo Molins).

V. SUPPORT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

22. IICA produces several bulletins and has communication systems that encourage the exchange of information relating to SPS and the work of the WTO, the international reference organizations and regional organizations.

23. The electronic bulletin CODEX-MSF *Foro de Opinión* (Opinion Forum) specializes in developments within the Codex Alimentarius and the WTO SPS Committee. This bulletin disseminates and analyses standards and events that have taken place, in order to increase communication on and the study of these topics. It is distributed mostly to the countries of South America but is also available to all IICA member countries at www.iica.org.ar. For further information, contact: mlfonalleras@iica.org.ar (Lourdes Fonalleras).

24. The AGRIHEALTH information system disseminates information relating to agricultural health and food safety, and its coverage includes the standards and actions of the WTO and the international reference organizations. This information system (www.infoagro.net/salud in Spanish and www.agrihealth.ws in English) is currently launching an observatory on emerging issues and emergencies in the areas of animal health, plant health and food safety. For further information, contact: ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderón).

25. In Paraguay, an electronic bulletin distributed periodically reports on the activities of the National SPS Committee, on new SPS developments, on studies requested by the SPS Secretariat, and notifications, to produce a country report through the Foreign Ministry. For further information, contact: carlos.franco@iica.int (Carlos Franco).

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