

**ACTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WTO AGREEMENT ON  
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES (WTO-SPS)**

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

The following communication, received on 17 February 2009, is being circulated at IICA's request.

1. The observer organizations of the World Trade Organization's Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO-SPS) have been invited to submit reports on the activities organized to promote the understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. IICA wishes to highlight some actions or activities that it considers are of interest to this Committee.

**I. IICA-STDF-108 PROJECT**

2. During the last seven years, IICA has invested substantial resources and efforts to develop institutional capacity in its member countries (34 countries of the Americas) in the area of sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), with an international perspective. The Institute is currently implementing the IICA-STDF-108 Project in 28 countries, with the support of six other countries under the modality of horizontal technical cooperation.

3. The project is designed to help countries carry out their own analysis (self-assessment) of their institutional performance, formulate a national agenda and strengthen their institutional framework, a task that is largely accomplished through the National SPS Committees or through the creation of such committees.

4. To date, the project has been implemented in 21 of the 28 countries, using the *SPS Performance, Vision and Strategy Tool* (SPS-PVS), a self-assessment tool developed by IICA in the context of the STDF Project.

5. The national agendas formulated as part of the above project constitute a work plan for the national SPS Committees or institutions involved, to be implemented over a two-year period. In addition, various actions were identified that can be addressed by international technical cooperation. Some of the most important actions of these national agendas include: the preparation of manuals on transparency procedures; operating manuals for the national SPS Committees; modernization of national regulatory frameworks; strengthening risk analysis capacity; documentation of successful cases to raise awareness among decision-makers, and identification of needs in SPS.

6. In addition to the measures implemented at national level, some common actions were identified involving countries within the same region (Central Region, Andean Region, Caribbean Region, Southern Region), with a view to formulating regional SPS projects. These regional projects include actions or issues of common interest to the countries of a particular region.

7. For more information contact: [ricardo.molins@iica.int](mailto:ricardo.molins@iica.int) (Ricardo Molins), [erick.bolanos@iica.int](mailto:erick.bolanos@iica.int) (Eric Bolaños).

## II. TRAINING ON INTERNATIONAL STANDARD-SETTING PROCESSES OF THE THREE SISTER ORGANIZATIONS

8. As part of the SPS training program developed by IICA, a total of 11 training courses were implemented on the standard-setting process of the three sister organizations (Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC).

9. The general objectives of these courses were: to discuss the importance in international trade of the standards, guidelines and recommendations issued by these three organizations; to promote understanding of the standard-setting process at the national, regional and international levels, emphasizing the need for public-private participation and interaction in order to define national positions; and to increase the participation of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries in the standard-setting processes.

10. The organizations that provided support for the implementation of the courses were: (a) for the technical presentations: Codex Alimentarius, OIE, the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE), and (b) for funding of the events: the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

11. Dates of the training events, coverage and type of participant: the courses were designed and recommended for public and private-sector officials whose work is directly or indirectly linked to the formulation, application and supervision of SPS, but who have limited experience or knowledge about the three sister organizations and their work. The aim was to expand the human resource base trained in the international standard-setting processes.

Course on:	Number of countries served	Number of participants	Cost per participant	Duration of the course	Implementation date
Codex Alimentarius	28	508	US\$69	2 days	June 2008
OIE	28	552	US\$45	1 day	October 2008
IPPC	17	317	US\$47	1 day	November 2008

12. Training technique: The courses were imparted using the services of IICA's Distance Training Center (CECADI), based in San Jose, Costa Rica. This approach enabled countries to participate in the course via interactive videoconference transmitted in real time. Countries with limited access to this technology participated via *webcast*. The only people who needed to travel were the trainers/facilitators, the trainees remaining in their countries of origin. The workshops were organized on a regional basis to avoid overloading the system's capacity and to ensure that the workshops addressed each region's specific needs (Central, Caribbean, Andean, Southern). Thanks to these technologies the costs per participant were kept very low - from 45 to 69 dollars depending on the course, which underscores the great advantages offered by this approach in terms of cost and the possibility of expanding the coverage of the courses.

13. For more information contact: [ricardo.molins@iica.int](mailto:ricardo.molins@iica.int) (Ricardo Molins) and [ericka.calderon@iica.int](mailto:ericka.calderon@iica.int) (Ericka Calderon).

### III. IMPORTANT EVENTS COMING SOON:

#### A. WORKSHOPS ON RISK EVALUATION

14. In 2009, IICA will be imparting regional training courses on risk assessment for chemical and microbiological contaminants in food, in partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (United States), using videoconferencing technology. The courses will be imparted to 32 countries of the Americas, both in English and in Spanish. For more information contact: [ricardo.molins@iica.int](mailto:ricardo.molins@iica.int) (Ricardo Molins).

#### B. WORKSHOPS ON GOOD PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

15. IICA is developing four manuals on good participation practices concerning the WTO-SPS Committee, the Codex, the OIE and the IPPC. The purpose of these manuals is to provide basic inputs and essential information on participation to all delegates who lack experience or are called upon to represent their country for the first time in one of these organizations.

16. The manuals contain theoretical and practical elements to help delegates operate more effectively before, during and after meetings, to familiarize them with the inner workings of these organizations and their meetings so that they are able to make the most of them. To supplement the participation manuals, training workshops will be held in 2009. For more information contact: [ricardo.molins@iica.int](mailto:ricardo.molins@iica.int) (Ricardo Molins) and [erick.bolanos@iica.int](mailto:erick.bolanos@iica.int) (Eric Bolaños).

### IV. SUPPORT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

17. IICA has several newsletters and communication systems that promote the exchange of information on SPS and the work of the WTO, the international reference organizations and the regional bodies.

18. The **CODEX-SPS *Foro de Opinión*** (Opinion Forum) is a quarterly electronic newsletter that specializes in the topics and events of the Codex Alimentarius and the WTO-SPS Committee. The newsletter publishes and reviews the latest information on standards and its purpose is to promote communication and improve knowledge of these issues. It is available to all members at [www.iica.org.ar](http://www.iica.org.ar). For more information contact: [mlfonalleras@iica.int](mailto:mlfonalleras@iica.int) (Lourdes Fonalleras).

19. The **AGRIHEALTH** information system distributes information on agricultural health and food safety, and the areas it covers include the standards and actions of the WTO and the international reference organizations. Visit [www.infoagro.net/salud](http://www.infoagro.net/salud) for the Spanish version and [www.agrihealth.ws](http://www.agrihealth.ws) for the English version. For more information contact: [ericka.calderon@iica.int](mailto:ericka.calderon@iica.int) (Ericka Calderon).

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

---