

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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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 22 October 2009, is being circulated at the request of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (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 further understanding and implementation of the SPS Agreement. IICA wishes to present some of the actions or activities that it considers to be of interest to this Committee.

I. IICA-STDF-108 PROJECT

2. IICA continues to implement the IICA-STDF-108 Project; some of the project's most significant recent actions include:

- Training on Risk Evaluation in Food Safety: ten countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia) benefited from courses on Evaluation of Microbiological and Chemical Hazards in Foods. These courses were of a high technical level and were imparted in the months of July and August, in collaboration with the University of Nebraska.
- Technical Forum on Private Standards: held in October with the participation of 12 countries. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the views of buyers and sellers on private standards and to launch a hemispheric proposal on this issue.
- Manuals on Good Participation Practices were prepared for meetings of the WTO-SPS Committee, OIE, Codex Alimentarius and IPPC. The manuals provide input for delegates who lack experience in participating in these organizations. In addition to the manuals, a training CD based on the manuals is being prepared and a training workshop will take place in November for countries of the IICA Andean and Central Regions.
- Coordinated case studies on:
 - (i) Transparency procedures: the objective is to complement the manuals prepared by the WTO and New Zealand. The focus of this manual is to

identify good practices that should be implemented by the various stakeholders to ensure that notification procedures are properly carried out.

- (ii) Audits of transparency procedures: the objective is to identify practices leading to the establishment of audit processes to verify the correct implementation of notification procedures. This study will complement the manuals prepared by the WTO and New Zealand. These two manuals are complementary and cover two levels of development as regards implementation of notification procedures. The manuals will be published in English and Spanish.
- (iii) Cost-Benefit Study - the Chilean Case: a study to develop a methodology to evaluate, in financial terms, the advantages of whether or not to participate in specific international SPS forums.
- (iv) Successful case study on sustainable management of diseases that currently pose a threat as re-emerging diseases: the case of brucellosis and tuberculosis in Panama.
- (v) Successful case study on fruit fly control in Belize.

3. IICA has taken steps to coordinate the implementation of an SPS-Codex Alimentarius information and communication system for countries of the Andean Region.

4. IICA has also begun an assessment of the current status of risk communication and crisis management for the implementation of specific actions, based on the needs of countries in the Andean Region.

5. Courses on Phytosanitary Hazard Profiles will be implemented in the Southern and Andean Regions (November 2009 and January 2010, respectively). These workshops are directed at decision-makers and trainers at border posts. The aim is to provide methodological tools for decision-making in situations where there is little time and few resources, and to strike a balance between trade and plant protection. The project will prepare a training manual, organize two workshops for ten countries and produce a video on the training process. A workshop is being planned in the Southern Region, in collaboration with COSAVE, the regional plant protection organization.

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II. PROJECT TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN CODEX ALIMENTARIUS MEETINGS

6. In collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), IICA is implementing a capacity-building project in the various countries with the aim of promoting and increasing their effective participation in, and the benefits derived from, the Codex Alimentarius committees.

7. The project began with a pilot phase that involved the creation of a competitive fund, with countries competing for limited spaces. The project has the following characteristics:

- (a) It is a competitive fund in which 32 countries compete to be selected.

- (b) The selection process is based on appropriate justification and identification of the importance or benefits of the Codex Committee meeting for each country.
- (c) The beneficiary countries - four to six countries are selected per meeting - must participate actively in the meeting for which they were selected.
- (d) This phase of the project concerns four Codex Committee meetings (Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, Food Hygiene, Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses and Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems).
- (e) The project aims to identify areas for technical cooperation with National Codex Committees.
- (f) Funding for the implementation of this project was provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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III. LEADERSHIP IN FOOD SAFETY SERIES

8. The Agricultural Health and Food Safety Area and the Center for Leadership in Agriculture of IICA, in collaboration with the Global Initiative for Food Systems Leadership of the University of Minnesota and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), have implemented the first training module of the Second Series of the Executive Leadership in Food Safety (ELFS) Program, on the topic of Globalization and Public/Private Partnerships.

9. This first training module took place in Quito, Ecuador. It was attended by 33 participants from 20 countries and ten mentors from five countries of the Americas.

10. The three remaining modules are: Laws, Regulations and Ethics; Food Safety Systems, Public Health and the Agrifood Chain; and Multiple Roles of Agricultural Health and Food Safety.

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IV. SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES BY COUNTRY OR BY REGION

11. Bahamas: the *Performance, Vision and Strategy* (PVS) tool for *Plant Protection Services* was applied and a manual on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) was produced.

12. The Caribbean: a workshop on the identification of Coleoptera pests was organized in collaboration with USDA-APHIS, FAVACA (Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean), St George University and the Ministry of Agriculture of Grenada. A total of 21 participants from 13 Caribbean countries benefited from the workshop. The training was provided by experts recruited through FAVA.

13. Uruguay: the *Performance, Vision and Strategy* (PVS) tools for *Food Safety Services* and *Plant Protection Services* were applied in Uruguay. These assessments took place in Montevideo during the weeks of 21 and 28 September, respectively, with the participation of a large group of delegates from all the agencies involved, as well as representatives of the private sector, users of the services involved, and academics.

14. Paraguay: the *Performance, Vision and Strategy* (PVS) tool for *Veterinary Services* was applied, as a follow-up to a previous process.

15. Colombia: in the context of the CONPES (National Council for Economic and Social Policy) documents, which establish guidelines for strengthening the national agricultural health and food safety (AHFS) system, the IICA office in Colombia is supporting the formation and establishment of the Unit for Risk Evaluation in Food Safety (UERIA) and the design of a proposal to be presented to the STDF with the aim of consolidating and strengthening this Unit. It is hoped that this new institutional structure will assume the responsibility for these issues and advise the Ministry of Social Protection on decisions related to the definition and protection of the country's food safety status.

16. Ecuador: the Integrated National System for Agricultural Health, Food Quality and Safety (SISCAL) has been consolidated through actions such as the establishment of its inter-institutional committee, the appointment of a technical manager, strategic planning, the drafting of rules of procedure and the provision of specific funds for the System's effective operation. Similarly, Ecuador's Agricultural Quality Assurance Agency, AGROCALIDAD, has been strengthened with the implementation of 80 per cent of its administrative, financial and technical processes. The agency's human resources have also been upgraded with 85 technicians recruited through prequalification processes, in order to ensure the transparency and excellence of its personnel.

17. Southern Region: a study is under way to determine the impact of private standards on the meat industry and how these relate to the WTO's legal competencies. Another study on the role of governments and private standards was implemented in the context of the regional plant protection organization, COSAVE.

18. A workshop for the Southern Region will take place from 11-13 November to strengthen capacities in the area of risk analysis in animal health. This activity will involve the Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP), IICA, the OIE Collaborating Center for Training Official Veterinary Services (Buenos Aires Training Center for Veterinary Services - CEBASEV) and the University of Berkeley, United States.

V. SUPPORT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

19. IICA has several newsletters and communication systems to promote information-sharing on SPS and the work carried out in the context of the WTO, the international reference organizations and the regional organizations.

20. The electronic newsletter CODEX-SPS *Opinion Forum* specializes in the topics discussed at Codex Alimentarius and WTO SPS Committee meetings. This newsletter disseminates and analyses the standards and actions defined at these events with the aim of increasing information and promoting the study of these issues. The newsletter is available to all member countries at www.iica.org.ar. For further information contact mlfonalleras@iica.int (Lourdes Fonalleras).

21. The AGROSALUD information system distributes information relating to agricultural health and food safety, including the standards and the actions undertaken in the WTO and the international reference organizations (www.infoagro.net/salud for the Spanish version and www.agrihealth.ws for the English version). For further information contact ericka.calderon@iica.int (Ericka Calderon).

22. In Paraguay, an electronic newsletter is distributed periodically with information on the activities carried out by the National SPS Technical Committee and latest SPS news. For further information contact carlos.franco@iica.int (Carlos Franco).

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