

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**WTO SPS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN 2024:
GENERAL INFORMATION, SELECTION PROCESS
AND APPLICATION FORM**NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT¹*Revision*

1. The Secretariat of the WTO plans to organize a number of specific technical assistance activities on the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) in 2024. These activities include: the SPS e-Learning Course, national SPS seminars, a thematic SPS workshop, regional SPS workshops², other SPS workshops, and an SPS Transparency Champions Course.³

2. These activities will primarily focus on the provisions of the SPS Agreement, implementation matters and the latest discussions taking place in the SPS Committee.⁴ The overall objective of the SPS technical assistance activities is to enhance the knowledge and expertise of government officials from WTO developing country Members and Observers, so they can better understand and implement the SPS Agreement, benefit from its provisions, and strengthen their capacity to engage in the work of the SPS Committee. For additional information on technical assistance activities related to the SPS Agreement, please consult the WTO website at <http://www.wto.org/sps/ta>.

3. This document provides detailed information about SPS-specific WTO technical assistance activities planned for 2024, including information on dates, and where applicable, eligibility and selection criteria of participants, instructions for submission of applications, deadlines and pre-requisites when required.

4. This document is structured according to the different types of SPS-specific technical assistance activities provided by the WTO:

- e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement
- National SPS Seminars
- Thematic SPS Workshop
- Regional SPS Workshops
- Other SPS Workshops
- SPS Transparency Champions Course

¹ This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights and obligations under the WTO.

² Regional SPS workshops will be organized in 2024 upon request from regional organizations. Please refer to additional details in [Section 4](#) of this document.

³ In addition to these SPS-specific technical assistance activities, the WTO offers general training courses where the SPS Agreement is taught, such as Introduction Courses for Least-Developed Countries, Regional Trade Policy Courses and Advanced Trade Policy Courses.

⁴ The SPS Committee is scheduled to meet three times in 2024: 20-22 March; 26-28 June; and 13-15 November (also see document [G/SPS/GEN/2117](#)). Informal meetings of the SPS Committee and other SPS-related workshops/thematic sessions might be scheduled during the weeks when the SPS Committee meetings take place. These dates are subject to change.

5. The structure, content, target audience, pre-requisites, exercises and materials of these SPS-specific activities will follow the WTO Progressive Learning Strategy (PLS).⁵ Therefore, each activity is identified according to a scale ranging from "Level 1" (the least advanced, introductory activities) to "Level 3" (the most advanced, in-depth training activities). This measurement will, *inter alia*, assist in making candidates aware of the expected level of the activity before they apply, and facilitate the Secretariat's assessment of whether a candidate's profile and experience match the level of the activity when carrying out the selection process. This will ultimately help ensure that the participants in a particular activity are able to most effectively follow and contribute to the discussions, and that they have a harmonized level of understanding of the SPS Agreement. Further information on the WTO PLS and a table with the level of each of the SPS-specific technical assistance activities can be found in [Annex I](#).

1 E-LEARNING COURSE ON THE SPS AGREEMENT

Level of this activity: 1 ☐ ☒ ☐ 3

6. The WTO offers an e-Learning Course Series on the SPS Agreement (SPS e-Learning Course) comprising four interactive courses:

- a. SPS Course Series 1 - Overview of the SPS Agreement and Committee;
- b. SPS Course Series 2 - The SPS Agreement and Science;
- c. SPS Course Series 3 - Trade Facilitating Operational Provisions of the SPS Agreement;
- d. SPS Course Series 4 - Implementation, Administration and Enforcement.

7. The online course series is freely accessible at all times via the WTO e-Learning Platform (<https://www.learning.wto.org>). Each course of the series includes a final exam and a WTO certification upon its successful completion. Participants who successfully complete the four courses of the series receive in addition a "Specialization Award".

8. Successful completion of the SPS e-Learning Courses (in any of the WTO working languages) is normally a pre-requisite or recommendation for participation in SPS technical assistance activities. However, successful completion of the SPS e-Learning Course **does not guarantee** selection for SPS-related training events. Government officials who have already successfully completed the SPS e-Learning Course, in any of the available languages, are not required to undertake it again.

9. Government officials from eligible⁶ developing WTO Members and Observers wishing to enrol in the SPS e-Learning Courses must:

- a. **Create an account on the WTO e-Learning Programme:** the online registration is available at <https://www.learning.wto.org>; and
- b. **Submit the Nomination Form:** participants wishing to have full access to the e-Learning programme (i.e., access to course exams and certification) must be nominated by their government authorities. The nomination form is available for download on the e-Learning platform (<https://www.learning.wto.org>) in the participant's Dashboard upon log in. The completed nomination form, duly signed and stamped by the candidate's government authorities, must be submitted (i.e. uploaded on the WTO e-Learning platform) to complete the candidate's registration process.

⁵ The primary aim of the PLS is to promote higher levels of learning and to encourage the development of participants' autonomy, with a view to building and sustaining the long-lasting human and institutional capacity of beneficiary countries to participate most effectively in the rules-based multilateral training system.

⁶ Eligible participants are government officials from WTO Members and Observers who are beneficiaries of WTO Technical Assistance and who are not subject to WTO Administrative Measures. The WTO e-Learning programme is also freely accessible to the public (non-eligible participants) on a self-study basis; these participants have access to the e-Learning courses but not to the course exams and certification.

10. For further information and help about the registration process for the SPS e-Learning Course, the WTO e-Learning team can be contacted at elarning@wto.org. Please also consult the [WTO e-Learning Quick Guide](#), available in English, French and Spanish.

2 NATIONAL SPS SEMINARS

Level of this activity: 1 ☐ ☒ ☒ 3

11. WTO developing country Members and Observers are entitled to request national seminars with a view to address specific training needs on the SPS Agreement and its implementation. In this regard, the programmes for national seminars are elaborated by the beneficiary country in consultation with the WTO Secretariat. It is possible to address both the SPS and TBT Agreements, or the SPS Agreement and the Agreement on Agriculture or the Trade Facilitation Agreement, in a single national seminar.

12. National SPS seminars may have a lower (more introductory) or higher (in-depth, advance training) level, depending on the training needs identified by the requesting Member, and the level of knowledge and experience of the participants. It is also possible to organize two national activities back-to-back for different participants, for example, one at an introductory level and another at an advanced level. A national seminar can also be organized in the form of a targeted training on the use of SPS online tools, e.g. online submission of notifications, searching for specific trade concerns and/or notifications, receiving notification alerts, etc.

13. The Secretariat will aim to tailor the structure and content of these seminars according to each specific request and through consultations with the beneficiary Member during the preparation phase of the seminar. In addition, the Secretariat encourages Members to clearly outline the objectives of national seminars in the submitted training requests, in order to allow the Secretariat to respond more effectively to the training needs of Members.

14. To request a national seminar on the SPS Agreement, Members and Observers must complete and submit a Technical Assistance National Request through the Technical Assistance Management System, which is available through the weblink <https://tams.wto.org>.⁷

15. The Technical Assistance National Request must be submitted along with an official letter of request by the contact point to the WTO (e.g. mission in Geneva), addressed to the Director of the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC). The request and the official letter should be submitted online via the weblink <https://tams.wto.org>.

16. The Secretariat encourages Members and Observers to submit their requests for national SPS seminars as early as possible (preferably in the first half of the year) to ensure proper coordination and preparation for these activities.⁸

3 THEMATIC SPS WORKSHOP

Level of this activity: 1 ☐ ☒ ☒ 3

17. The Secretariat will organize a thematic SPS workshop on transparency, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland. The workshop will take place on Monday, 18 March and Tuesday, 19 March 2024, immediately prior to the SPS informal and formal Committee meetings to be held during the same week.

18. The workshop aims to enhance the implementation of SPS transparency provisions by bringing together officials from WTO Members and Observers to engage in a technical discussion on SPS transparency-related work, and to exchange experiences on the use of online transparency tools, including the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#). The workshop, open to participation by WTO Members

⁷ The system is available in the three WTO working languages, English, French and Spanish. Login usernames and passwords are the same as for the WTO website. WTO Members must connect using their WTO credentials through the WTO sign in button on <https://tams.wto.org>

⁸ While every effort will be made to accommodate the requests of Members and Observers, the Secretariat cannot guarantee that it will have the necessary resources to undertake all national seminars requested during the year.

and Observers, will be of particular interest to government officials in charge of the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement, i.e. SPS national notification authorities and enquiry points.

19. The WTO Secretariat will be in a position to sponsor the participation of 30 government officials in this workshop. The Governments of Members and Observers to the WTO, eligible to benefit from training and technical cooperation activities, were invited to present one or two officials for consideration in the selection process. In this regard, an invitation letter with the application form had been distributed to eligible technical assistance beneficiaries through their WTO representation. Information on the selection process and pre-requisites was made available through the [WTO Technical Assistance Management System](#).⁹

20. A draft programme for this workshop was circulated in document [G/SPS/GEN/2192](#) on 19 December 2023. The Secretariat will circulate a final version of the programme closer to the date of the workshop. A dedicated webpage for the workshop is available on the WTO website: [WTO | SPS Committee Thematic Workshop on Transparency](#).

4 REGIONAL SPS WORKSHOPS

Level of this activity: 1 ☐ ☒ ☒ 3

4.1 Overview

21. The WTO Secretariat organizes regional workshops on the SPS Agreement with the purpose of making participants fully aware of the WTO SPS Agreement, its implementation, and the possible implications at the regional and national levels. Funding is available through the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund (DDAGTF) for these workshops.

22. Regional workshops also serve as an opportunity for government officials working on SPS matters in different developing countries to establish contact with their counterparts in other developing countries of the region, facilitating the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices related to the implementation of the SPS Agreement.

23. These regional workshops may include representatives from Codex, IPPC and WOAHA as resource persons contributing their knowledge and experience in their areas of expertise. In addition, relevant international organizations, international and regional development institutions and organizations, as well as other technical assistance organizations and bilateral donors involved in SPS matters, may be invited to inform participants of their latest activities.

4.2 Regional SPS Workshops in 2024

24. In order to deliver more effective and tailored regional workshops, the WTO Secretariat will be working collaboratively with regional organizations to specifically address SPS-related training needs identified within regions. Using this approach, the WTO Secretariat will schedule regional SPS workshops in 2024 upon request from regional organizations.¹⁰

25. To request a regional workshop on the SPS Agreement, regional organizations (or a Member in conjunction with a regional organization) must submit an official letter indicating the purpose and expected outcome of the workshop, their expected contribution, as well as the proposed dates and venue. This formal request should be addressed to the ITTC Director and sent by e-mail to ittcregionaldesk@wto.org.

⁹ The SPS Committee decided at its November 2023 meeting to organize this workshop in March 2024. The application/selection process, conducted during the period December 2023 to January 2024, is now closed.

¹⁰ While every effort will be made to accommodate the requests of regional organizations, the Secretariat cannot guarantee that it will have the necessary resources to undertake all regional workshops requested during the year.

26. Regional SPS workshops that are requested during the year will be made available on the WTO website at <http://www.wto.org/sp/ta>. Programmes, pre-requisites and selection criteria will be defined for each requested activity.

5 OTHER SPS WORKSHOPS

27. The WTO Secretariat will participate in other SPS technical assistance activities at the request of other organizations, where possible.

6 SPS TRANSPARENCY CHAMPIONS COURSE

Level of this activity: 1 ☐ ☒ ☒ 3

6.1 Overview

28. An SPS Transparency Champions Course will be held in English from September 2024 to April/June 2025. It will comprise an initial in-person element, the implementation of an action plan, and a follow-up component at the end of this time period.

29. The course will be comprised of sessions and activities related to the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement. It will offer selected government officials an opportunity to gain comprehensive knowledge and practical skills to implement as well as benefit from the WTO's SPS transparency framework.

30. At the time of their application for this course, candidates will be asked to provide preliminary ideas for an action plan with a view to improving the SPS transparency framework in their countries/territories.

6.2 Selection Process

31. The Secretariat will select participants for the SPS Transparency Champions Course. The target audience for this course are government officials holding direct responsibilities in the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement, particularly from National Notification Authorities (NNAs) and/or Enquiry Points (NEPs), who:

- a. possess an understanding of the provisions and structure of the WTO, and the principles and provisions of the SPS Agreement;
- b. are highly motivated to scale up the transparency framework in their countries;
- c. are endorsed and supported by their respective Ministry; and
- d. are fluent in oral and written English.

32. All candidates are strongly encouraged to complete the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application. See [Section 1](#) regarding enrolment in the e-Learning Course. In addition, candidates must be government officials at the time of applying for the course and during the course.

33. Candidates will be selected using criteria such as the fulfilment of pre-requisites, prior selection of other candidates from the Member, as well as balance among the selected candidates in terms of region and gender.

34. The Governments of Members and Observers to the WTO, eligible to benefit from training and technical cooperation activities, will be invited to present officials for consideration in the selection process in May/June 2024. In this regard, an invitation letter with the application form will be distributed to eligible technical assistance beneficiaries through their WTO representation. Please consult the information in [Annex II](#).

35. Other administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.

ANNEX I

PROGRESSIVE LEARNING STRATEGY¹ SPS-SPECIFIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA) ACTIVITIES

1. In order to respond to the need for greater coherence and complementarity in WTO capacity-building, ITTC has developed a progressive strategy to promote higher levels of learning and encourage the development of participants' autonomy. This is with a view to build and sustain the long-lasting human and institutional capacity of beneficiary countries to participate more effectively in the rules-based multilateral trading system.

2. In this regard, two broad categories of participants in WTO capacity-building have been identified:

- a. **"Generalists"** are government officials who will need a broad knowledge of the WTO to conduct their work, such as capital-based officials dealing with WTO issues or delegates posted to Geneva missions with general responsibility for WTO affairs;
- b. **"Specialists"** are government officials who will require in-depth knowledge in a specific area, such as officials working on a specific issue in a particular Ministry in their capital (for example, those who are dealing with SPS issues).

3. Following this strategy, each SPS-specific technical assistance activity has been categorized based on a scale of three training levels, ranging from "Level 1" (the least advanced, introductory activities) to "Level 3" (the most advanced, in-depth training activities).

Progressive Learning Strategy	
Level	SPS-specific TA Activity
2	e-Learning Course on the SPS Agreement ²
2 and 3	National SPS Seminars ³
2 and 3	Thematic SPS Workshop
2 and 3	Regional SPS Workshops ⁴
2 and 3	SPS Transparency Champions Course

¹ Additional information on the WTO's progressive learning strategy (PLS) is available in [JOB/TC/7](#).

² An introduction to the SPS Agreement is included in the Level 1 e-Learning Course "Introduction to the WTO".

³ National SPS seminars may have a lower (more introductory) or higher (in-depth, advance training) level, depending on the training needs identified by the requesting Member, and the level of knowledge and experience of the participants. The Secretariat will aim to tailor the structure and content of these seminars according to each specific request and through consultations with the beneficiary Member during the preparation phase of the seminar.

⁴ The training provided in regional SPS workshops will, in general, be more advanced than the training given in national SPS seminars, as it will also focus on regional challenges and coordination matters. In determining the level of each regional workshop, the Secretariat will take into account the level of implementation of the SPS Agreement by the participating countries (for instance, through participation in the SPS Committee, number of notifications, etc.), as well as the overall level amongst the selected candidates.

ANNEX II**SPS TRANSPARENCY CHAMPIONS COURSE**

Title of the activity	SPS Transparency Champions Course (in English)
Dates	September 2024 to April/June 2025
Venue	Geneva, Switzerland
Eligible WTO Members and Observers	WTO least developed and developing Members and Observers
Pre-requisites	<p>Candidates must be government officials holding direct responsibilities in the implementation of the transparency provisions of the SPS Agreement, particularly from National Notification Authorities (NNAs) and/or Enquiry Points (NEPs); possess an understanding of the provisions and structure of the WTO, and the principles and provisions of the SPS Agreement; be highly motivated to scale up the transparency framework in their countries; and be endorsed and supported by their respective Ministry.</p> <p>Candidates are also strongly encouraged to complete the WTO SPS e-Learning Course by the time of their application (see Section 1 regarding enrolment in the e-Learning Course).</p> <p>Fluent in oral and written English.</p>
Application	<p>The Governments of Members and Observers to the WTO, eligible to benefit from training and technical cooperation activities, will be invited to present officials for consideration in the selection process in May/June 2024.</p> <p>In this regard, an invitation letter with the application form will be distributed to eligible technical assistance beneficiaries through their WTO representation.</p>
Results of the selection	<p>Selected candidates will be informed about the results of the selection by July/August 2024.</p> <p>Administrative and logistical information will be provided in due course to the selected candidates.</p>