

**WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ARISING FROM THE THIRD REVIEW –  
PROPOSED PRIORITIES**

Cooperation between the SPS Committee and the International Standards-Setting Bodies

*Communication by Canada*

The following communication, received on 4 October 2010, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Canada.

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The SPS-related standards, guidelines and recommendations set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) (the three Sisters) are defined within the SPS Agreement as the international standards, guidelines and recommendations upon which WTO Members shall base their sanitary or phytosanitary measures.

2. In the 2005 Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement, the Committee noted that the relationship between the SPS Committee and the Codex, OIE and IPPC should be clarified. To address this observation, the WTO Secretariat organized a special workshop on 26 October 2009 between the SPS Committee and the Secretariats of the three Sisters. The workshop, open to all Members, Observer Governments and organizations with observer status in the SPS Committee, also provided an opportunity to review the standard-setting procedures of each of the three Sisters, with a focus on how to enhance the participation of developing countries. The workshop resulted in the identification of areas of future collaboration between the four bodies, as well as 11 specific recommendations intended to improve coordination and collaboration between the SPS Committee and the three Sisters.

3. During the Third Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Committee, it was recommended that the Committee follow-up on the recommendations that resulted from this workshop<sup>1</sup>, with a view to strengthening the relationship between the Committee and the three Sisters.

**II. OBSERVATIONS**

4. Canada notes that certain recommendations from the Secretariat's paper (G/SPS/R/57) have already been acted upon or fulfilled in some manner. As per Recommendation 1, the three Sisters are now delivering their reports earlier in the SPS Committee's agenda items. Recommendation 4 speaks to coordination meetings among the three Sisters and the WTO Secretariat. There is already a certain

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations can be found in G/SPS/R/57.

level of coordination in this regard; the IPPC secretariat, for instance, invites the WTO Secretariat, as well as the secretariats of the OIE and Codex, to its annual meetings, and the WTO Secretariat and the OIE have attended Codex meetings. Increasing representation of the relevant secretariats in this manner so that all four organizations attend the others' meetings would fulfil this recommendation. Canada would propose having the SPS Committee invite the secretariats of the three Sisters to consider including the secretariats of these Committees in their meetings. Canada would also encourage Members to discuss this recommendation with their OIE, IPPC, and Codex colleagues to ensure support at Member's level in these meetings.

5. It is important that the SPS Committee focus its resources and efforts on actions and issues that are within its mandate.

### III. PROPOSALS

6. Based on the above observations, Canada would support action on the following recommendations resulting from the October 2009 workshop:

**Workshop Recommendation 3:** *The SPS Committee should encourage joint work by two or all three Sisters on cross-cutting issues such as certification, inspection, approval procedures and/or risk analysis*

Cooperation between the three Sisters should be encouraged when cross-cutting issues exist, and the results of any cooperation should be reported upon in the regular Sisters reports to the SPS Committee. Additional cross-cutting issues include translation and language issues, publication of standards, use of electronic and on-line tools to collect comments on standards, and electronic certification. Further, the issue of the development of joint standards by Codex and OIE is currently under discussion by the Codex Committee on General Principles. Recognizing that differences in mandates between the three Sisters may limit joint work in this capacity, movement on these issues should be driven by the Sisters themselves.

**Workshop Recommendation 6:** *Soliciting more information at the strategic planning phase of the three Sisters work*

The OIE, IPPC, and Codex have been granted observer status at WTO SPS Committee meetings. Further, these organizations attend some of each other's general council meetings. As such, the organizations should be aware of each other's work. For example, the WTO has official observer status in the Codex and has available to it pertinent information related to the Codex strategic plan. Nevertheless, Canada would support work being undertaken to ensure more fulsome and targeted reporting by the representatives of Codex, the OIE and the IPPC on their strategic planning phases. Canada notes that the type of information the WTO SPS Committee is requesting is not clear and the SPS Committee would need to identify the additional information for such reporting, in order to solicit the appropriate information from the three Sisters.

**Workshop Recommendation 7:** *The SPS Committee transmitting information relating to trade issues linked to non-use of standards, absence of standards, or inappropriate standards to the relevant Sister organization*

It is Canada's view that the intended results of this recommendation can be achieved through the standing agenda item, "Monitoring the Use of International Standards", and its associated procedure.<sup>2</sup> Members are encouraged to make use of this agenda item and relevant procedure where applicable to highlight issues linked with the non-use of international standards, inappropriate standards and, in particular, the absence of standards. Increased use of the existing provision will allow more fulsome information to be shared with the three Sisters.

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<sup>2</sup> G/SPS/11/Rev.1.