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Page: 1/3

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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SIXTH REVIEW OF THE OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE APPLICATION OF SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

SPS COMMITTEE THEMATIC SESSION ON MONITORING THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CCFICS GUIDELINE ON THE USE OF VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES (CXG 93-2021)

SUBMISSION FROM BELIZE

The following submission, received on 19 April 2024, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Belize.

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1.1. In the context of Sixth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), Belize submitted a proposal for a thematic session on Monitoring the Use of International Standards: Implementation of the CCFICS Guideline on the Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes (CXG 93-2021).

1.2. The objectives of the thematic session are to:

   (a) explore different approaches to implement the Codex Guidelines and share experiences and lessons (including from three regional STDF vTPA pilot projects);
   (b) learn about tools (e.g. UNIDO/STDF vTPA programme assessment tool, GFSI data sharing platform) that support the assessment and/or use of third-party assurance programmes by regulators;
   (c) identify capacity building opportunities to assist developing countries to use the Codex vTPA Guidelines, including to enhance their risk-based inspection and auditing frameworks.

1.3. The proposed draft agenda below is being circulated for consideration by Members.

DRAFT AGENDA FOR THEMATIC SESSION, XX NOVEMBER 2024, WTO, GENEVA

MORNING SESSION

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1. Relevant international standards (0.75 Hr)

Overview of the Codex Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of the Voluntary Third-Party Assurance, developed by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS), and views from selected international organizations on how the vTPA programme approach can contribute to improved food safety outcomes.

Speakers:

- ▪ **Nicola Hinder**, Chair, Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) (TBC)
- ▪ **Ryan Newkirk**, World Health Organization (on expected contribution of vTPA programme approach to WHO Food Safety Strategy (TBC)

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

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2. MEMBERS' EXPERIENCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODEX GUIDELINE ON VOLUNTARY THIRD-PARTY ASSURANCE PROGRAMMES (CXG 93-2021) (1.25 hours)

Presentation from Members on their experiences implementing the approach set down in the Codex Guideline (CXG 93 – 2021).

Speakers: TBD

- ▪ Speaker from Africa
- ▪ Speaker from the Americas
- ▪ Speaker from Asia
- ▪ Speakers from Europe

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

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3. Roundtable - Experiences and lessons learnt on piloting the use of the Codex guideline (CXG 93-2021) (1 hour)

In this roundtable discussion, members (involved in the STDF pilot projects) will share experiences and lessons learnt in improving their national food control system through the implementation of the respective regional vTPA pilot projects[1] supported by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). This session will also explore some of the lessons/learnings that could be applied to the implementation of other international standards as well as provide valuable feedback for future projects funded by the STDF.

Moderator: Marlynne Hopper, Deputy Head, Standards and Trade Development Facility (TBC)

Speakers: TBD

- ▪ Regulator involved in Central America project
- ▪ Regulator involved in East Africa project
- ▪ Regulator involved in West Africa project
- ▪ Private sector representative (vTPA programme owner; FBOs)

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

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[1] These include a project in Central America (Honduras and Belize) led by IICA, a project in West Africa (Senegal and Mali) led by UNIDO, and a project in East Africa (Rwanda and Uganda) led by Land O'Lakes Venture 37.

AFTERNOON SESSION

4. Capacity building initiatives (1.5 hours)

This session will share available tools to support the use of vTPA programmes, and explore capacity building opportunities in support of risk-based approaches in national food control systems. It will include a presentation on the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)/STDF vTPA capacity assessment tool and UNIDO vTPA readiness checklist, followed by a panel discussion.

Speakers: TBD

UNIDO: vTPA capacity assessment tool (presentation)

Panel discussion:

- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) - Experiences and Lessons Learnt as Implementing Partner to STDF/PG/682 "Piloting the use of TPA Programme in Central America (Belize and Honduras) to improve food safety" Project.

- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (TBC)

- Canadian-funded SafeGrow Project Viet Nam (TBC)

- Other speakers (TBD)

Followed by Q&A session and discussion moderated by UNIDO.

5. Next steps: scaling public-private partnerships by addressing gaps identified through vTPA pilots (1.5 hours)

The vTPA pilot initiatives had different levels of success in terms of piloting the approach itself. However, they have led to several lessons learned and the identification of potential gaps, creating challenges for developing countries in participating in food trade under equal terms. Some challenges can be addressed through technological innovation, but others would require more strategic public-private engagement to overcome shortcomings related to the costs of international vTPA programmes or the lack of auditors. The vTPA approach has shown promising results in terms of optimizing public resources but there are still shortcomings in terms of data standards to ensure structured data sharing among actors.

Speakers: TBC

- Codex Alimentarius Commission

- National regulator

- UNIDO

- Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environment (SSAFE)

- Red tractor scheme

Followed by Q&A session and discussion

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