



SPS action plan

The objective of this project was to develop a Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Action Plan for Cambodia. The project emerged from a recommendation of an STDF regional workshop on the mobilization of resources for SPS capacity building, which took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 21-22 May 2008 under the Aid for Trade Initiative. Discussions during this workshop highlighted the value of developing SPS action plans to set out a comprehensive, rational approach to SPS capacity building, promote coherence in the prioritization of activities, and mobilize additional resources.

STDF/PG/246

Status

Completed

Start Date

20/04/2009

End Date

30/07/2010

Project Value (US\$)

\$199,360

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$199,360

Beneficiaries

Cambodia

Implementing Entities

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia

Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia

Ministry of Health, Cambodia

Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy, Cambodia

Background

Cambodia joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2003, making a commitment to implement the SPS Agreement by January 2008. As a developing country with a significant proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, a number of studies were undertaken from 2005 till 2009, on how Cambodia could comply with the SPS Agreement to promote trade. Several areas of agriculture and food production were identified with high exports potential (rice, cashew, cassava, etc.), which could contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. At the same time, various weaknesses in SPS capacity were identified as a challenge to

realize this potential.

As part of the Aid for Trade Initiative, the STDF organized a regional workshop in Cambodia in May 2008 on the mobilization of resources to build SPS capacity in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. This workshop concluded a year-long process by the STDF to synthesize the results of SPS capacity evaluation studies conducted by international organizations (FAO, the OIE and the World Bank), map out existing and planned SPS assistance, and identify outstanding needs. As the workshop highlighted the value of developing SPS action plans, this project was developed in this context.

Results

Comprehensive review of the current SPS situation and capacity needs

The project team carried out a detailed examination of Cambodia's capacity to identify, evaluate and control risks in relation to food safety and animal and plant health, taking into consideration both import and export trade. In-depth studies were conducted on the capability of analytical laboratories to support SPS objectives, and on the SPS barriers affecting exports of Cambodian fishery and plant products. The FAO team worked closely with a national task force that included representatives from the ministries of commerce, agriculture, industry and health in Cambodia. Development partners and teams implementing related projects in Cambodia, including projects funded by the Asian Development Bank on SPS management systems and trade facilitation, were consulted.

Development of an SPS Action Plan for Cambodia

The FAO project team and national task force developed an SPS Action Plan, which included a set of recommendations on immediate and long-term actions to improve the operation and performance of the SPS management system in Cambodia. The Action Plan addressed key strategic needs to improve SPS capacity, including the merits of creating new arrangements to group biosecurity functions more closely and to consolidate food safety functions in a stand-alone agency. It also identified specific initiatives to improve SPS functions based on strengthening inspection and testing capacity along the food chain. Indicative priorities and cost categorization are set out for 66 individual projects under some 44 headings. The Action Plan identified as next steps the formulation of an implementation strategy, to be followed by the design and costing of specific programme activities (including development of a Laboratory Action Plan to rationalise and enhance diagnostic capability). It anticipated that support for these steps would be available from the donor community. The Action Plan was submitted to the Senior Minister/Minister of Commerce, and presented to the Sub-Steering Committee on Trade Development and Trade-related Investment. The Minister of Commerce endorsed the Action Plan for implementation in January 2011.

Recommendations

Ensure government commitment on follow-up

If action planning for SPS capacity building is to be of practical value, there must be strong commitment at the outset, on the part of development partners and the government, to agree on how to implement the Action Plan, once produced. In this project, in spite of the initial interest shown by the government and donors at the start of the project to use the Action Plan to guide their future investments in SPS capacity building, the Plan has still to be formally implemented by the Royal Government of Cambodia and appears to have been only minimally used by donors. In the meantime, other SPS capacity building projects, including a major multi-year project financed by the Asian Development Bank, have been initiated. In future SPS action planning projects, it is recommended that a prior commitment is obtained from the host government, at a sufficiently senior level, on the procedures to be followed domestically to consider, evaluate and act upon the Action Plan, once it has been completed. Obtaining a firm national commitment on follow-up is likely to be particularly important in cases where SPS Action Plans address sensitive issues (e.g. related to institutional roles and responsibilities, etc.)

Build SPS action planning into donor's agenda

Experiences under this project highlighted the importance of concerted and ongoing efforts to ensure donor coordination and collaboration in the planning and delivery of SPS technical cooperation. Despite the stated commitment and best intentions of donors to work together, in some cases it is difficult to achieve it in practice. Proactive efforts are needed to catalyse and sustain donor interest in the use of a coherent SPS Action Plan as the basis for capacity building at the country level. Engaging effectively with local development partners through technical working groups and directly linking SPS action planning to multi-donor trade sector-wide approaches is likely to be useful in this context. Consultations with donors before, during and after the development of the Action Plan should encourage donors to build the Plan into their forward budgeting for technical cooperation so that funds are available as soon as the Plan is ready.

Integrate SPS action planning, project design and funding

SPS Action Plans should be accompanied by detailed project proposals for specific investments to address the most immediate and highest priorities identified. If budgeted project proposals are not presented simultaneously with Action Plans, donor interest (as well as the relevance of the Plan itself) is likely to progressively fade over time. Terms of reference and budgets for action planning projects should therefore cover the analytical phase, Action Plan formulation, the design of priority follow-up projects and stakeholder consultation activities.