



Strengthening the national SPS committee

To consolidate the institutional framework of the Honduran National Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (CNMSF) in order to ensure more efficient management and develop national expertise that may be extended to other countries in the region.

STDF/PG/284

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/07/2010

End Date

28/02/2013

Project Value (US\$)

\$342,355

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$273,035

Beneficiaries

Honduras

Implementing Entities

Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA)

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG), Honduras
National Agricultural Health Service (SENASA), Honduras

Background

Agriculture is the leading sector of the Honduran economy, accounting for 60% of the country's exports and 38.4% of employment. However, the Honduran SPS system displayed a number of weaknesses which affected the efficiency of its performance. These included limited physical and financial resources, a weak institutional framework, poor organization, and high turnover of staff in the system's institutions.

Honduras therefore needed to consolidate and strengthen its National SPS Committee, which is the advisory technical body that coordinates public and private efforts and promotes compliance with the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement). Implementation of this project led to better management of the CNMSF, consolidated its institutional framework (development of IT, management, communication and participation systems/schemes) and strengthened its technical capacities (capacity building workshops and seminars).

The project also led to evaluations, recommendations and measures for action developed under an inter institutional approach, which will help build up Honduras' existing sanitary and phytosanitary institutional capabilities.

Results

Strengthening the Honduran National SPS Committee at institutional level

The results achieved at institutional level include the following:

- more efficient management the CNMSF once the strategic vision, objectives and guidelines for the preparation and application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures had been laid down;
- implementation of the CNMSF's National Agenda on the basis of a common cross sectoral vision, which included setting up cross sectoral commissions and working groups to evaluate the national SPS policy and to review and propose amendments to the project;
- formalization of agreements between the public and the private sector, including links between the universities and various government departments, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Planning, the National Competitiveness Council and the Congress of the Republic;
- development of a methodology for monitoring and evaluating public/private SPS related coordination mechanisms;
- assessment and confirmation of the need to provide the CNMSF with a new institutional structure;
- organization of workshops and production of outreach materials on transparency and SPS enquiry and notification points; and
- implementation of technical cooperation arrangements with the media in order to disseminate awareness raising programmes.

Technical capacity building for the preparation, adoption and application of SPS measures

The SPS capacity building programme was one of the project's most significant achievements. A number of specialized national seminars were held with a view to building up technical capacity for the preparation, adoption and application of SPS measures. These included: (i) workshops on the application of HACCP systems; (ii) programmes for the control of pesticide residues in fresh fruit and health risk analysis; and (iii) workshops on trade agreements and national SPS policies.

A training programme was set up for trainers specializing in SPS matters, using an interactive teaching method to provide a clear understanding of the importance and implications of applying SPS measures.

New curricula including SPS issues were also developed in cooperation with the universities. Lastly, the project established a network of SPS specialists, which is available on the CNMSF platform or at this [website](#).

National experience to be extended to other OIRSA countries

OIRSA has undertaken to extend the experience of Honduras to other OIRSA member countries in the short and medium term, but connections have already been established with some of these countries. Thanks to the training workshops held under the project, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay shared their experiences in setting up their national SPS committees. The first workshop was attended by the Technical Secretariat of the SPS Committee of the Dominican Republic, which presented its experience and the lessons it had learned to the members of the Honduran SPS Committee. The second contribution came from the SPS Committee of Paraguay, which explained its working procedures and emphasized the key lessons it had learned.

Recommendations

Flexibility during project implementation

The project was approved by the STDF in a political context that led to changes in the Honduran authorities responsible for implementing SPS measures. This delayed the launching of project activities, because the representatives of the CNMSF institutions had to be informed and made aware of its relevance. Even the terms of reference for previously agreed consultancy work were revised by a commission established by the CNMSF. In such cases, it is important to allow a reasonable amount of time for initial activities and provide for adjustments to some project activities in view of potential changes in the beneficiaries' priorities.

Taking into account the level of expertise required to address the issues and consequences for the project

Difficulties arose in carrying out some of the planned consultancy work because of the highly specialized issues involved and the fact that there were no experts on the spot to carry out the task. For similar projects, it is therefore recommended that a budget line be provided for contracting international assistance.

Improving the evaluation method

The studies conducted with a view to evaluating the economic situation and the competitiveness of agricultural production showed that the country's current sanitary and phytosanitary conditions are restricting access to international markets, which indirectly affects the country's prosperity.

For future projects of this type, consideration might be given to developing new evaluation methods that would yield more specific results.