

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING

10 October 2008

WTO Headquarters, Geneva

Adoption of Agenda

1. The agenda was adopted with one amendment. The OIE requested to make a statement on STDF project 219 under item 8 (Evaluation of projects received). A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

Election of vice-chair

2. The Secretariat recalled that the OIE's term as Chair of the STDF Working Group expired at the end of the meeting. As Vice-Chair, Ms Sofie Flensburg (Mission of Denmark) would automatically become Chair. It was agreed that Working Group members would consult each other on possible candidates for the vacant position of vice chair.

Overview of Operation of the Facility (STDF 275 and G/SPS/GEN/877)

Implementation of Operating Plan 2008-09: Status report by Secretariat

3. The Working Group discussed the Secretariat's plans to organize two more thematic workshops in 2009 back-to-back with the meetings of the SPS Committee, one of cost-benefit analysis (February) and one on climate change (June). It was recommended that both events should be scheduled as half day events. The Working Group suggested that the workshop on cost-benefit analysis could possibly be held on a larger scale, depending on the funding situation. One member of the Working Group questioned the value added of an STDF event on climate change given the large number of other on-going initiatives on this topic.

4. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that six companies had responded to the re-launched tender for the DVD. It was hoped that a company would be selected by the end of October. The draft preliminary scripts (STDF 228 add.1) for the three case studies had been discussed with delegates from Belize, Benin and Viet Nam and additional stakeholders in each country identified. The Secretariat would draft editorial text to frame and connect the three case studies.

5. It was commented that while the case studies for Belize and Benin had a clear message, the storyline of the Viet Nam / Avian Influenza case study would need to be clarified. Avian Influenza had not driven trade restrictions in Viet Nam but had led to an assessment of veterinary services and improvements in animal health. The Secretariat requested Working Group members to provide written comments on the draft script outlines by 24 October.

6. The WTO (Mrs Sue Harrison) made a presentation on the Trade Capacity Building Database (TCBDB) outlining efforts within the WTO to improve reporting related to previous, existing and future planned SPS-related technical assistance and its sub-categories (i.e. food safety, animal and plant health). Further development of the TCBDB continued to receive high priority within the WTO as a mechanism for coordination and sharing information. It was also clarified that the OECD would not be involved in this exercise (instead concentrating on its reporting role through the Creditor Reporting System for Aid for Trade) and that any additional costs involved would be borne by the WTO.

7. Guidelines on how to report on SPS assistance to the TCBDB will be circulated to development partners by February 2009. The Working Group was requested to nominate reporters to start this work on a pilot basis by early 2009. The Secretariat explained the background to the

initiative and highlighted the importance of STDF maximizing its coordination potential through improved reporting of past, present and - notably - future planned SPS assistance to the TCBDB. The Working Group appreciated the Secretariat's efforts but also highlighted the multitude of players in this area and the importance of partners and donors coordinating better within their respective organizations.

Discussion of items for STDF Policy Committee (STDF 274)

8. The Secretariat invited the Working Group to comment on the draft agenda for the STDF Policy Committee, to be hosted by FAO on 16 December 2008. A deadline for the submission of items for the Policy Committee agenda was set at 28 November 2008, close of business.

Discussion of STDF Aid for Trade activities

9. The Secretariat introduced document STDF 270, providing a draft first phase overview of the SPS needs and assistance of eight LDCs: Benin, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal and Yemen. The report was prepared at UNIDO's request to complement and strengthen UNIDO's broader programme proposals aimed at addressing the supply-side needs of the eight LDCs. The Secretariat had presented the draft report at a preparatory Expert Working Group meeting on 8-9 September 2008 in Kigali, Rwanda. A final report would be presented at the LDC Ministerial Conference on 19-20 November 2008 in Siem Reap, Cambodia,.

10. UNIDO expressed its appreciation for the STDF work and further explained the background to the events in Rwanda and Cambodia within the context of Aid for Trade and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF). The report was being taken into account in the finalization of the eight country programme proposals. The Secretariat mentioned that it intended to put parts of the UNIDO report on the STDF website as individual country briefings. This would complement work on compendia where the Secretariat intended to put regional SPS briefings on the website following the three STDF Aid for Trade consultations in Central America, the GMS region and East Africa.

11. Possibilities for further work in the eight countries included STDF assistance in updating the SPS sections of existing DTIS (possibly through EIF Tier 1 funding) as well as project development based on the identified needs and priorities (possibly to be followed up through EIF Tier 2 funding). In particular, the creation of SPS action plans and strategies similar to those in Cambodia and Lao PDR was highlighted as an area for future STDF work. Donors expressed their appreciation with the work carried out by the Secretariat and foresaw multiple uses for the UNIDO report. Some donors stressed the importance of the eight UNIDO programme proposals taking a multi-stakeholder approach and incorporating the principle of beneficiary ownership.

12. The Secretariat introduced document STDF 253, discussing further options for STDF work in relation to the Aid for Trade roadmap for 2008-09, and highlighted the status of the Aid for Trade initiative and the role of the WTO. The main objective of the STDF in the Aid for Trade agenda was to raise the profile of SPS as a supply-side constraint. With regard to the impact of the three STDF Aid for Trade consultations in Central America, the GMS region and East Africa and any subsequent events to be held in other regions in 2009, it was suggested to await the conclusions of the STDF evaluation report. It was agreed in principle to further evaluate the impact of the three events, unless the Working Group considered the conclusions of the evaluation report sufficient in this regard.

Funding situation

13. The Secretariat provided an overview of contributions to the STDF in 2008 and the status of discussions with donors on the renewal of contributions. Finland had joined the STDF as a new donor, while the US and Germany had renewed their contributions. Discussions with the EC on a new contribution to the STDF were ongoing. The Facility currently had approximately CHF 1.9

million available in resources against approximately CHF 2.1 million in approved outstanding commitments, excluding funding for Secretariat staff (an additional CHF 0.7 million per annum). This also excluded commitments to be entered into at the Working Group meeting. With the Facility running short of funds, a call was made upon donors to renew their contributions. The crucial role of the Facility's evaluation report in this regard was acknowledged.

Workshop on Good Practice – 6 October 2008 (G/SPS/GEN/875)

14. The Secretariat briefed the Working Group on the conclusions of the Good Practice Workshop, organized in collaboration with the OECD on 6 October. The workshop agreed on the need to avoid "bad practice", however, while there was recognition that the Paris Principles provided a good framework to improve technical assistance, there was less clarity about how to implement good practice on the ground.

15. Discussions regarding follow-up work focused on: (i) the development and use of impact indicators; (ii) case studies on application of a value-chain approach to enhance trade performance for particular commodities or cumulative effects of SPS-related technical assistance; and (iii) ongoing cooperation with the EIF to integrate SPS issues into national planning and budgetary processes. The Secretariat planned to prepare a short publication to disseminate the findings of the good practice research and workshop more widely.

16. Members of the Working Group commented that the workshop had been useful. FAO reiterated the importance of avoiding a fragmented approach and stressed the STDF's role in improving coordination. The WHO noted the importance of absorptive capacity and ensuring that technical assistance targets small farmers. The EC expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present its work on aid effectiveness. The Secretariat also recalled that an overview document on SPS-related capacity needs assessment tools had been finalized, and related information would be updated on the web site.

Evaluation of the STDF (STDF 248)

17. Mr Stuart Slorach, provided a brief overview of the on-going evaluation of the STDF, explaining the approach that had been taken and summarizing his activities thus far. In terms of reporting, it was agreed that the deadline for comments on the draft evaluation report, to be circulated on 24 October 2008, would be extended by one additional week, i.e. until 7 November 2008. The final report would then be distributed on 14 November 2008. The importance of the evaluation was once again highlighted and Working Group members were encouraged to timely provide their views on the STDF to the evaluator.

Forthcoming SPS-related technical assistance activities

Forthcoming initiatives of partners and donors

18. The WHO briefed the Working Group on its Initiative to Estimate the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases, launched in 2006 by its Department of Food Safety Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases. The aims of the Initiative were to obtain reliable epidemiological estimates on current, projected and averted morbidity, disability and mortality of foodborne diseases and to provide countries with simple, user-friendly tools to conduct their own foodborne disease burden studies and examine the effectiveness of their prevention and intervention efforts. The Initiative would operate against a 5 year time frame. The inability of many developing and least-developed countries to

perform risk assessments as stipulated in the SPS Agreement due to the lack of efficient surveillance systems on foodborne diseases was highlighted.¹

19. The IPPC informed the Working Group that an Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the Development of an IPPC Capacity Building Strategy had been re-scheduled to take place from 8-12 December 2008 at FAO Headquarters in Rome. The IPPC invited the STDF to participate in the OEWG and to prepare a background paper for discussion at the December meeting.

20. The WTO recalled that it organized up to four regional training events per year as part of the WTO regular technical assistance programme. On the back of these events, more specific training could be provided to participants with a phytosanitary (IPPC) and food safety (Codex) background. Similar training was being provided to participants with a veterinary background in close collaboration with the OIE.²

21. UNIDO provided a brief overview of its work on methyl bromide, encompassing two types of projects: demonstration projects aimed at selecting suitable methyl bromide alternatives while taking into account climatic conditions, crops and the mode of operation; and so-called phase out projects aimed at implementing selected alternatives by transferring technology and knowledge to farmers to reduce their dependence on methyl bromide. None of UNIDO's current work is directed at looking at alternatives to methyl bromide as quarantine treatment. Over the last 10 years, approximately 80 such demonstration and phase-out projects had been implemented by UNIDO. The Working Group, welcomed the opportunity to share experiences with UNIDO on this technical topic. UNIDO's report was particularly welcomed by IPPC which noted that it had recently adopted a recommendation on the phasing out of methyl bromide as a quarantine treatment.

22. UNIDO also invited Working Group members to participate in its International Conference on Sharing Innovative Agribusiness Solutions to be held on 26-27 November 2008 in Cairo, Egypt.³ UNIDO also referred to its Young Professionals Programme, and requested that the Working group encourage suitably qualified applicants to apply.

23. The Secretariat provided an overview of regional co-operation in West Africa. In October 2000, West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA/WAEMU) and FAO had signed an agreement for a major food security programme (Programme Spécial Régional de Sécurité Alimentaire). As part of this programme, UEMOA/WAEMU initiated SPS harmonization of the regulatory structure. This work encompassed three components: preparation of the legislative and regulatory structures within the eight UEMOA/WAEMU member countries, training of government officials to understand and implement the treaties, and enforcement of inspection and laboratory testing. A Plan of Action was developed to achieve the objectives of this initiative. UEMOA/WAEMU was currently mobilizing internal and external resources to implement the Action Plan. Work on the animal health side was the most advanced and complementarities were being sought with UEMOA/UNIDO Quality 2 programme on the laboratory aspect.

24. WTO raised the issue of regional standard-setting and the development of so-called SPS protocols and felt that more technical assistance would be needed to guide these developments. Harmonization with international standards developed by Codex, OIE and IPPC should be the starting point and only in exceptional cases there should be room for regional standard setting practices. One problem encountered by WTO was that under its regular programme, funding to attend technical assistance training events could only be given to WTO Member States – and not

¹ More information on the Initiative could be obtained at: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/foodborne_disease/ferg/en/index.html

² More information on the OEWG could be obtained on the IPPC website: <https://www.ippc.int/IPP/En/default.jsp>

³ More information could be obtained at the conference website: <http://www.agribusiness-solutions.org/>.

regional organizations. In response, the EC briefed the Working Group on a new initiative where the issue of more effective participation in international standards setting might be further addressed, i.e. the PAN SPSO project (€3.8 million). Another EC training programme focusing on capacity building in the areas of food and feed safety, animal health and animal welfare, as well as plant health would focus on African regions (starting early 2009, €4.5 million).

25. IPPC noted that phytosanitary capacity evaluations had recently been conducted in all UEMOA countries. Regional organizations should be concerned with identifying pests of regional importance affecting plant health and exports for which regional standards could subsequently be developed. Codex concurred with the concerns expressed by WTO. It was suggested that a channel for communication with regional standard-setting bodies should be found.

26. ITC informed the Working Group on two new Export Quality Bulletins (www.intracen.org/eqm) which were published in English in October 2008. The first one contained a Directory of marks and labels related to food safety, environmental integrity and social equity (EQM 86). The second one (EQM 85) was entitled "An Introduction to ISO 22000 – Food Safety Management System". ITC mentioned that the French and Spanish versions of the bulletin on "Exporting Seafood to EU" (EQM 84) would be available in November 2008 while discussion about translation into Arabic and Portuguese of the same bulletin was ongoing. ITC also updated the Working Group on its SPS-related programmes in Bangladesh, Yemen (STDF-funded), Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Forthcoming initiatives of donors

27. DFID announced two new initiatives. The first one included a four-year grant to the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of approximately US\$ 1.3 million to carry out research on SPS issues, both from a public and private sector perspective. A separate component dealt with livestock standards in particular. It was mentioned that the research of NRI should support the work of STDF. DFID also announced a grant to the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) of up to £9.5 million for a programme focusing on combating infectious diseases of livestock for international development. The programme would support high quality basic and strategic biological and biotechnological research into infectious diseases of livestock species in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.⁴ Both initiatives were welcomed by the Working Group.

28. The Secretariat presented on-going activities to coordinate donor assistance in the area of the West African fruit fly. A scoping study, commissioned by the EC and validated by ECOWAS Members in July 2008, was a vehicle for this coordinated approach. The study laid out a set of recommended actions needed at national and regional level to control the pest and limit damage inflicted on fruit. In order to mobilize donor assistance in this area and to secure ownership of the initiative by the regional economic commissions (UEMOA/WAEMU and the Economic Community of West African States) the proposed action plan needs to be clearly budgeted. The STDF was planning to host a donor/ stakeholder workshop in early 2009 to ensure that donor actions were aligned with recommendations laid out in the EC study and complementary to existing initiatives. The World Bank fully supported proposed actions to control fruit fly and urged donors to work together on national and regional actions, as proposed in the EC study.

29. The Netherlands reported on an International Seminar on Setting Food Safety Standards attended by 175 participants from the public sector and international organizations held in the Hague on 9-12 June 2008. The seminar was organized by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, in cooperation with FAO and WHO, and with the Dutch ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport, and of Foreign Affairs – Development Co-operation. The objective of the

⁴ Further information could be found at: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/opportunities/2008/combating_infectious_diseases_livestock.html

seminar was to develop recommendations to governments, as well as to FAO and WHO, for a new policy approach that better provides market opportunities for developing countries while ensuring health protection. It was recommended that the recommendations arising be disseminated widely.⁵

30. The United States reported on a pesticide maximum residue limit harmonization initiative which aimed to develop a programme to help move forward initiatives discussed at the Global Minor Use Summit on MRL harmonization. A summary of the programme was distributed at the meeting which outlined how USDA was seeking to combine its own efforts with those of others to help support 1) participation of additional countries to the harmonization workshops, 2) travel for technical experts from other regions (Europe, Canada, Australia, others) to help plan and lead the workshops, 3) some local costs of holding the workshops.

Overview of implementation of on-going projects and PPGs (STDF 273)

31. The Secretariat reported on progress made in the implementation of projects and project preparation grants. Special emphasis was given to a project in Burundi on which discussions were on-going on seeking funding through the EIF. Discussions were on-going with a series of donors about co-financing a project in Sierra Leone. The Secretariat also requested assistance from the EC in following up on a project in the fisheries sector in Cape Verde.

32. It was agreed that extensions would be granted for project STDF 79 and 65 until the end of 2008. The Working Group stressed the need for timely delivery of project implementation and requested that its view be communicated to the project implementation organizations. To ensure appropriate dissemination of project results within Codex and elsewhere, it was agreed that STDF would cover the cost of an FAO staff member to attend the final workshop for project STDF 114.

33. The Secretary reported that a letter of support had been received from the Cambodian government for project STDF 246 and that FAO had agreed to act as the implementation agency for the project. The Secretary reported that discussions were on-going on project STDF 238 (Guatemala) to ensure there was no duplication with on-going USDA or Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) activities. FAO had also undertaken a mission to Mozambique and established that project STDF 230 was complimentary to other on-going initiatives.

34. The Secretariat noted the conflict of interest it had in the case of both STDF 19 and STDF 20, since both projects had been developed by WTO. On STDF 19, the Secretary reported that it had contacted GTZ to evaluate the project as part of follow-on activities being considered by GTZ. On STDF 20, it was agreed that Mr Spencer Henson would carry out the evaluation.

35. The Secretariat reported that it had received the names of consultants from several Working Group members. Further names of evaluation consultants were required. It was suggested that a call for consultants be placed on "The Economist". The suggestion stimulated discussion of current procedures to select evaluators as well as implementing agencies. Changes to broaden the current consultant base were agreed and it was suggested that the issue be discussed further in the Policy Committee.

⁵ Information could be found at the following website:
http://www.hetlnvloket.nl/portal/page?_pageid=116,1640390&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_document_id=111109&p_node_id=1448708&p_mode=BROWSE

Evaluation of projects and PPGs received (STDF 271 and 272)

Projects not considered for funding by the STDF:

36. The Secretary provided an overview of issues arising in its evaluation of those projects which were not accepted for consideration at the STDF Working Group (STDF 272). On STDF 256 (Capacity Building for implementation of SPS compliant Hygienic Meat practices, Pakistan), it was stated that the objective of the project preparation grant was eligible. However, the capacity of the WELDO (Women Empowerment Literacy and Development Organization) should be further investigated. On STDF 257 (Fish smoking installation, Suriname), the Secretary stated that it would work with the applicant to submit a revised proposal, perhaps to an alternate funding source. On project STDF 266 (Model program for SPS standards application and WTO related negotiations for Brazil), the Secretariat explained that it would work with the applicant to organize the required training as part of the WTO's technical assistance plan.

37. On project STDF 219 (Enhancing governance of veterinary services through improving their capacity to carry out essential functions), the OIE underlined that the concerns raised by the Working Group and the Secretariat with this project had been reviewed and all issues raised had been addressed. The revised proposal: (i) had broad support; and (ii) included a financial contribution from the OIE (as specified in the budget). OIE suggested that paragraph 47 of the operational rules be considered at the next Policy Committee to allow a more flexible approach on a case by case basis.

Project requests resubmitted from previous Working Groups

STDF 155: Nicaragua market oriented training service on standards

38. The Working Group approved STDF 155 for STDF funding, subject to the resolution of outstanding issues identified in the Secretariat review. It was suggested that IICA be approached as a possible supplier of supervisory services for the project

STDF 116 rev.1: Development and implementation of a traceability system in the livestock sector in Costa Rica

39. The Working Group approved STDF 116 for STDF funding, subject to the resolution of outstanding issues identified in the Secretariat review. It was also recommended that the project pay attention to sharing lessons learned to ensure experiences were shared widely with other countries in the region. The Secretariat proposed giving the beneficiary the choice of a range of implementing organizations. The use of Argentina's co-operation agency or IICA for project supervision were given as examples.

STDF 172: Expanding Nigeria's SPS capacity for sesame seeds and shea nuts.

40. The Working Group agreed that before making a decision on funding, the Secretariat and FAO should clarify particular issues raised during the discussion of the project. Concerns raised included in relation to (i) contradictions between the requesting agency's mandate as a regulatory body and the project's focus on developing exports; (ii) questions as to whether the applicant was the most appropriate body to implement the project; (iii) unclear justification of the request for mainly basic equipment that should generally be present in regulatory labs; (iv) limitations of the use of the proposed Elisa technique in the field and questions regarding the appropriateness of this technique; and (v) limited details about the capacity of regional laboratories to perform aflatoxin analysis. There was agreement to clarify these issues before making a decision on the project, which would be communicated to the Working Group by e-mail for its confirmation.

Requests for project preparation grants (PPGs)

STDF 261: LAO PDR – Establishment of a reference laboratory for enteric diseases

41. The Working Group agreed on the need for clarifications before a decision could be made on the PPG request. It was noted that the overall impression of the Working Group was not favourable. Questions were raised regarding the under-utilization of existing clinical services, the innovative nature of the proposed activity and inadequate information on the linkages and synergies of the proposed activity with related projects and initiatives. The applicant was requested to answer these issues before considering whether or not to resubmit the PPG request.

STDF 262: Renforcement du contrôle des maladies animales et préparation à l'accès des viandes sahéniennes aux marchés des pays de l'Afrique du Nord

42. The Working Group agreed that the applicant should revise the PPG request to address concerns and questions raised. In addition, there was agreement that OIE and FAO should clarify the relationship of the PPG application to activities carried out under STDF 13 to avoid any duplication. It was suggested that emphasis be placed on the promotion of trade in high-value meat products, rather than live animals. Clarification was also requested about the use of the OIE PVS tool and whether it would make sense to complete the gap analysis before reviewing this PPG request.

STDF 268: Strengthening the Institutional Framework for SPS Management System in Tanzania

43. The Working Group agreed to fund the PPG request which responded to a priority need already identified in previous assessments, as well as during the STDF Aid for Trade regional workshop in Kampala, Uganda.. There was agreement on the need to ensure close coordination between activities carried out under this PPG and (i) support for the Tanzania Horticulture Association (STDF 126); and (ii) FAO's biosecurity activities in Tanzania.

Project requests from LDCs or OLIEs

STDF 255: Regional Initiative on the fight against fruit flies in West Africa

44. The Working Group approved STDF 255 for funding. The Working Group agreed that the project would help bridge the gap between the validation of the EC study and action plan on a regional response to fruit flies in West Africa - not expected to begin before the second half of 2009.

Project requested received from other developing countries

STDF 254: Mycotoxin prevention and control measures in Turkey for dried figs, hazelnuts, and chilli pepper

45. The Working Group decided not to approve the project for funding. There was general recognition of the quality of the project and it was stressed that at a technical level the Working Group strongly endorsed it. However, it was felt that the project could secure funding outside the STDF. There was agreement the scarce funding currently available in the STDF should be targeted to other funding applications.

STDF 259: Improve safety and quality for fresh vegetables through the value chain approach in Viet Nam

46. The Working Group requested the applicant to address concerns raised by the Working Group before submitting a revised application. Concerns raised included that the involvement of the

private sector seemed to be missing from the project. The comment was made that the private sector might be interested in cost-sharing given benefits to in terms of improved quality etc. Other concerns included the level of the administrative overheads. It was also suggested that links to other on-going initiatives, such as those of the EC (through the FAVRI and private sector programmes), and the US (through the APHIS attaché in Bangkok) be explored.

STDF 265: Compartmentalization

47. The Working Group approved the project, but declined to offer funding for the portion requested from the STDF. The Working Group appreciated the demonstration value and pilot nature of the project in assisting in the wider use of the concept of compartmentalization. However, it was felt that in view of the scarce funding available in the STDF, the applicant would be invited to implement the project with the support of the STDF partner agencies involved, but be requested to cover any costs related to their involvement in the project. The applicant was encouraged to proceed with the project, with the active support of the OIE, and report to both the Working Group and the STDF so that its results could be disseminated more widely.

STDF 267: Devising a National GAP Programme and a Commercial GAP Standard in the Philippines

48. The Working Group requested the applicant to address questions raised by the Working Group before submitting a revised application. Questions raised included the relationship between the national GAP programme and the development of national GAP standard, clarity on private and public sector involvement in the project, and the need to further specify the capacity building components of the project. It was recommended that the plant health representative in the STDF work with the applicant to answer the concerns raised by the Working Group.

ANNEX 1
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