

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING
14-15 MARCH 2016
WTO, GENEVA**

1 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. The meeting was chaired by Ms Sun Biney (Sweden). She informed members on the organizations (ITC, IICA, CABI, Switzerland, UNIDO and OIRSA) that were granted observer status for the meeting. The agenda was adopted with no amendments. A list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

2.1 Selection of Working Group vice-chairperson for 2016

2. Members selected Ms Renata Clarke (FAO) as vice-chairperson of the Working Group in 2016 (and hence chairperson in 2017).

2.2 Selection of SPS experts from developing countries (2016-2017)

3. The chairperson recapped the selection process and introduced the three new developing country experts: Ms María Clara Vidal (Argentina), Mr Babacar Samb (Senegal) and Dr Ravi Khetarpal (India).

2.3 Implementation of outstanding recommendations of STDF mid-term review

4. The Secretariat referred to two outstanding actions in the "Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the STDF mid-term review", agreed by the Working Group in 2014, namely in relation to Recommendation 2.4 ("STDF Secretariat to perform an analysis of user data of the Virtual Library and discuss the results") and Recommendation 2.2 ("identify a speaker to make a presentation to the Working Group on One Health (FAO/OIE/WHO)").

5. Members were reminded that there was agreement to conduct the analysis of user data of the Virtual Library towards the end of 2016. In terms of the action related to recommendation 2.2, FAO, OIE and WHO had informed the Secretariat in February 2016 that they identified a speaker, Dr Alan Reilly, to make a presentation to the Working Group on One Health. Members agreed to schedule this presentation at the next Working Group meeting in October. The FAO noted that the organizations concerned (i.e. FAO, OIE and WHO) will also have input to provide in the One Health discussion and viewed this as an interactive activity. The Secretariat noted that it will work with FAO, OIE and WHO to formulate the agenda for this session of the next Working Group meeting.

6. Members recognized the cost implications of Dr Reilly's travel to Geneva and suggested a possibility could be for the Secretariat to explore the possibility of organizing the delivery of Dr Reilly's presentation through video conference.

2.4 Staffing and financial situation

7. The Secretariat informed that the WTO recently contracted a consultant, Ms Elena Von Essen, to assist in strengthening communication and information dissemination aspects of STDF's work. Ms Von Essen will start her work with the Secretariat in May 2016 and is tasked, *inter alia*, to analyse the use of STDF's current communication tools and to develop a brief and practical communication strategy for the Facility. The Secretariat also flagged that a new intern, Ms Valerie Brockman, would start working in the Secretariat on 1 April.

8. The Secretariat reported on the financial situation of the Facility as of 31 December 2015, with reference to the tables in the annotated agenda. Eleven donors contributed to the STDF in 2015 totalling US\$4,689,792 (i.e. close to STDF's annual target of US\$ 5 million). Total expenditures in 2015 amounted to CHF4,504,505. It also reported on contracted and uncontracted commitments and reported that the STDF (at the end of 2015) shows a negative balance of US\$1,208,915.

Pledges for 2016 were made by The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Chinese Taipei¹ and the United States, amounting to approximately US\$ 2.8 million. Taking into account staffing commitments for the year 2016, it reported that the STDF effectively has a budget of approximately US\$600,000 to cover its operating expenditures in 2016. In order to continue approving and funding project proposals and implement STDF work program in 2016 and beyond, new - and ideally multi-annual - contributions are required. On a positive note, it was highlighted that the WTO is close to signing a new multi-annual contribution agreement for a period of five years with the European Commission.

2.5 Implementation of M&E framework – presentation/discussion of survey results

9. The STDF consultant, Mr Jens Andersson, presented the results of the survey. He reminded members of the agreed rationale behind the survey, i.e. to capture the perception of Working Group members every two years (indicator 1) in order to monitor the Facility's progress at the outcome level (as outlined in STDF's strategy). In addition, the survey focused on the identification of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative/regional approaches to SPS capacity building facilitated by STDF activities and projects/PPGs (indicator 2), i.e. impacts beyond STDF's immediate activities.

10. The survey was discussed and adopted by the Working Group in October and circulated in November 2015. It comprised 14 questions and was sent to 88 potential respondents, i.e. all participants (members and observers) in the Working Group in 2014-2015. Of these, 39 respondents completed the first two questions while 30 respondents completed the entire survey.

11. The survey generally illustrated great appreciation for the work of the STDF and its Secretariat. The following immediate issues emerged: (i) finding a balance between expectations for strong involvement in PPG/project review on the one hand and expectations for cost-effectiveness on the other; (ii) how to strengthen collaboration between members and in particular what possibilities does the STDF have to influence collaborative and innovative work beyond STDF's own activities; and (iii) how can members and observers work with the STDF Secretariat to disseminate the Facility's work more widely. The Secretariat noted that the issue of the PPG/project review process was also being addressed in the ongoing review of the STDF Operational Rules.

12. Members engaged in a rich discussion on the survey results. The chairperson urged members to see the value of this survey and noted that a higher response rate should be encouraged. One member noted that from some organizations only one response was received (whereas the survey, as agreed by the Working Group, was sent to several individuals from these organizations). The EC and FAO explained the importance of a single response from both organizations as it demonstrates an organizational response rather than an individual response. From a methodological point of view to avoid skewing interpretation, the FAO suggested weighting the responses to represent the number of individuals it represents. Members agreed however that from a methodological point of view the response group (i.e. all individuals from organizations that engaged in the Working Group) should remain the same for the next survey.

13. The Secretariat sought suggestions on ways to collect cases of collaborative/innovative approaches that illustrate the impact of STDF beyond its immediate activities. The consultant noted that from an M&E perspective, the challenge is to find the bridge between the projects and activities directly financed within the STDF and other capacity building initiatives outside the STDF's purview. The chairperson noted the importance to identify activities that are inspired or influenced by STDF work/outputs.

14. Sweden recalled that it is vital to discuss how the information gathered through the survey would be taken forward. The Secretariat indicated that the draft 2015 Annual Report includes a chapter on the "outcome" of the STDF and that the results of the survey and today's discussion among members would feed into this chapter. This chapter could also highlight ideas to follow up on the results of the survey.

¹ Chinese Taipei is a WTO Member in application of Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement (1994). WTO membership has no implication regarding the sovereignty of the Member pursuant to international law.

2.6 Implementation of M&E framework – presentation/discussion of draft 2015 Annual Report

15. The Secretariat briefly introduced the draft 2015 Annual Report. Several members thanked the Secretariat for providing information on the different areas of the STDF's work. Sweden considered that from a donor perspective this report, along with the STDF Budget and Work Plan, is a key document. The draft report followed the structure of the Work Plan very well and provided interesting examples of collaborative approaches. It recommended that the financial report should provide a comparison between the estimated budget and actual expenditure. Sweden was also pleased to know that consultants were hired to assist in strengthening STDF's communication and M&E work. The draft report could be strengthened by adding more analysis of STDF's activities from a development perspective resulting from SPS capacity development interventions. Examples included the Secretariat's participation in external events and the projects completed in 2015. Sweden highlighted current funding constraints related to global development programmes and hence the importance of showing value for its contributions.

16. The FAO viewed that the collaborative cases identified in the report are good examples and viewed that some cases could be further strengthened by highlighting the key and fundamental role of the partners and other Working Group members. The case of the African Union Task Force was mentioned as a case in point. In the introduction chapter of the report, FAO would like to see text added which reflects the STDF mission which focusses on increasing capacity to implement SPS standards, guidelines and recommendations to improve food safety, animal and plant health, not only market access as the paragraph now states.

17. The Secretariat thanked members for their feedback. Members agreed on 1 April 2016 as the deadline to provide comments. The Secretariat will finalize the report in April, taking into account all the comments received as appropriate and where possible. The final Annual Report will be circulated to the Working Group for electronic approval.

3 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AMONG PROVIDERS OF SPS CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIALOGUE AMONG RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS (OUTPUT 1)

3.1 Interventions by STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and observer organizations

18. The World Bank (Mr William Gain) made a presentation on relevant work in the World Bank: (i) trade facilitation and border management work; (ii) the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP); and (iii) the Enabling the Business of Agriculture report.² The IPPC Secretariat informed members that Mr Gain had agreed to serve on the advisory committee on the STDF-funded E-phyto project (STDF/PG/504).

19. The European Commission confirmed that it is close to signing a new multi-annual contribution agreement with the WTO in relation to the STDF. It also informed members that the final evaluation of the PIP II programme is available in the STDF Virtual Library and that the final evaluation of the EDES programme is expected to be finalized in 2016. A new programme is being negotiated with COLEACP as a continuation of the PIP II.

20. The WTO recalled that it provides training on the SPS Agreement, primarily targeted to government officials but also including private sector and academia. As a matter of routine, information on the STDF is built into these trainings. Reference was made to document G/SPS/GEN/997 (update to the SPS Committee) outlining WTO's planned technical SPS training for 2016. It also informed members that a thematic workshop, focused on Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs), is planned on the margins of the SPS Committee in October 2016. This event could be a good opportunity to draw attention to relevant work under the STDF's three regional MRL projects.

21. The OIE referred to its recently renewed cooperation agreement with the World Customs Organization (WCO) with a focus on coordinated border management. The OIE has also conducted a survey among its 180 countries on trade facilitation, using WCO's template with modifications. The response rate was considered low (49 countries), as compared with OIE's surveys on animal health issues. Among these, 26 countries indicated that a national trade facilitation committee had

² A copy of Mr Gain's presentation can be found here: http://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/WorldBank_BillGain_WGMar16.pdf

been established and 14 indicated that a veterinary official had been invited to become part of that committee. The OIE noted that further awareness raising and participation of veterinary services in the national committees is important. The OIE also informed members that it will organize the 4th Global Conference on Veterinary Education in Bangkok, Thailand on 22-24 June 2016.

22. FAO highlighted the completion of several key manuals, including on risk based import food control to ensure the safety of food imports³, and on enhancing early warning capabilities and capacities for food safety.⁴ It also expected to finalize work soon on evidence-based decision-making considering multiple factors. The new Codex Trust Fund was launched at the beginning of 2016, and an FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool for countries to self-assess their national Codex programme was also published on line.⁵ Work is continuing by FAO, WHO, Codex Secretariat to revitalise and strengthen the Codex Regional Coordinating Committees as key food safety and quality meetings in each region. Lastly, FAO referred to a planned joint FAO/WTO publication on food safety and trade.

23. The IPPC Secretariat noted that it is also working towards a partnership agreement/memorandum of understanding with the WCO. The WCO recently agreed to serve on the permanent technical advisory committee under the E-phyto project (STDF/PG/504). Members were also informed about a workshop on *Xylella fastidiosa* in Bari, Italy from 19-22 April 2016.

24. France confirmed its contribution to the STDF for 2016. It also drew attention to the three-week summer courses provided by the National Veterinary Services Schools (ENSV), a collaborating centre for the OIE, for senior veterinary officers from developing countries. In 2016, two training sessions are planned in English on animal health and food safety, respectively.⁶

25. IICA observed that the value of STDF is in bringing together providers of SPS-related technical assistance and providing a platform for information exchange and dialogue (which in turn ensures that there is no duplication in efforts). IICA briefed members on several of its projects. With support from FDA, USDA and USAID, IICA is continuing a capacity building programme to support the implementation of the US Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) in developing countries and reducing negative trade impacts. Under the EU-funded SPS programme in the Caribbean (10th EDF), work is ongoing with Ohio State University on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) training. IICA is also implementing a pilot project to establish AMR surveillance in seven Caribbean countries.

26. CABI reported on several STDF projects under implementation. Under project STDF/PG/346 it is working with COMESA to simplify SPS measures and focusing on specific commodities in order to reduce trade costs, while maintaining the appropriate level of protection. COMESA obtained additional funding from the African Development Bank to do similar work in other countries and for other commodities, based on STDF's work. CABI also reported on a recently completed STDF project in Uganda (STDF/PG/335). As a result of this project, the interception of roses from Uganda to Europe fell from 34 in 2013, 18 to 2014, to only one interception in 2015. CABI also noted that a letter of intent is being finalized to formalize its relationship with the IPPC.

27. UNIDO drew attention to its recent Trade Standards Compliance report (peer reviewed by the STDF Secretariat).⁷ Work is under way to produce similar reports for East Asia and Latin America. The report mainly focuses on border rejections. A database is under development to assist developing countries in comparing the challenges that they face and as a guidance tool on where to invest in SPS-related capacity building.

³ FAO Risk Based Imported Food Control: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5381e.pdf>

⁴ Enhancing Early Warning Capabilities and Capacities for Food Safety: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5168e.pdf>

⁵ FAO/WHO Diagnostic Tool for assessing status of national Codex programmes: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-standard/DiagnosticTool-En.pdf?ua=1

⁶ Details are available at: www.summerschool.ensv.fr.

⁷ The report is available here: http://www.unido.org/fileadmin/user_media_upgrade/Resources/Publications/TCB_Resource_Guide/TSCR_2015_final.pdf

4 IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE TO SUPPORT SPS CAPACITY BUILDING (OUTPUT 2)

4.1 STDF seminar on E-certification in the SPS area (5 July 2016) - background note

28. The Secretariat introduced the background note on the planned STDF seminar on electronic certification in the SPS area, including the provisional programme and budget. Members agreed to the note and the proposed program for the workshop, to be held on the margins of the SPS Committee meeting in June 2016.⁸ The objective is to review the state of play in electronic sanitary, veterinary and phytosanitary certification worldwide and consider challenges and opportunities to expand the uptake of this technology in developing countries. This work also aims to identify good practices and consider options to support the transition in developing countries from paper-based to automated SPS control systems, including integration in national single windows.

29. As part of the proposed budget, members agreed to hire a consultant to develop a short background paper for the seminar *inter alia* to clarify relevant terminology and provide an overview of the electronic systems currently available in the areas of food safety, animal and plant health. Finally, members agreed to evaluate the seminar at the next meeting of the Working Group in October, including possible follow-up actions. Members requested the Secretariat to look into the possibility of making the seminar available via podcast and/or web link.

4.2 Implementation of SPS Measures to Facilitate Safe Trade - STDF briefing note

30. The Secretariat thanked members for providing comments on the draft briefing note. The final briefing note, which was issued in December 2015, highlights a number of good practices to improve the implementation of SPS measures in a way that facilitates safe trade, based on the STDF research conducted in Southeast Asia and Southern Africa as well as similar work by partners.⁹

4.3 Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA) - Final guidance document and STDF briefing note

31. The Secretariat referred to the recently finalized guide on Prioritizing SPS Investment Options for Market Access (P-IMA), which aims to help developing countries in improving SPS planning and decision-making. A new STDF briefing note provides a concise introduction to the P-IMA framework, explains the key principles behind the approach, and outlines the steps in applying the framework. The Secretariat noted that various experts from developing countries had provided valuable input during the development and finalization of the guide on the P-IMA framework. Demonstrated benefits of applying the tool include enhanced public-private dialogue, better evidence to support project design and fundraising, increased high-level awareness about the value of investing in SPS capacity building and more transparency. The Secretariat informed members that COMESA is giving the consideration (under the CAADP programme and with possible support from the EU) to further expand the use of the P-IMA framework.¹⁰

4.4 New STDF film on SPS issues in the cocoa value chain

32. The Secretariat brought members up-to-date on the production of the new STDF film on SPS compliance in the cocoa value chain. Filming missions had taken place in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, with assistance from their respective national cocoa boards. The film would likely focus on concepts such as the role of smallholder farmers in cocoa production, the importance of plant diseases in the sector, quarantine procedures for the exchange of cocoa germplasm, import and export inspection procedures, and food safety issues in the production of chocolate. The Secretariat expects to complete the film by mid-May 2016.

⁸ It was recently confirmed that the seminar will be organized on **Tuesday 28 June 2016**.

⁹ The new STDF Briefing Note is available here: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/facilitating-safe-trade>.

¹⁰ The P-IMA guide and the new STDF Briefing Note are available here: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/prioritizing-sps-investments-market-access-p-ima>.

4.5 Liaison with other relevant initiatives/participation in selected external events

33. The Secretariat reported on meetings and events it had attended since the last Working Group meeting to inform stakeholders about ongoing STDF projects and thematic activities. More detail on these events was provided in a list attached to the Annotated Agenda.

4.6 Joint EIF/STDF study on SPS issues in Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) – presentation by the consultant (Ms Ambra Gobena) followed by discussion

34. The EIF/STDF consultant, Ms Ambra Gobena, presented the methodology, key findings and recommendations of the study jointly commissioned by the EIF and STDF. The main recommendations focused on: (i) strengthening the analysis of SPS compliance issues in DTIS reports; (ii) enhancing national capacity to implement SPS-related recommendations in the reports; and (iii) exploiting synergies in EIF and STDF-related processes.¹¹ The Secretariat drew attention to a new joint four-page EIF/STDF Briefing Note, circulated to members in hard copy that summarized the key findings and recommendations of the study. The new Briefing Note would be circulated electronically in the coming weeks.¹²

35. Members welcomed the study and the briefing note and viewed that the EIF should be encouraged to consider many of the recommendations, including the option of adding an "SPS checklist" to the EIF guidance note. The World Bank noted that much of the value of the DTIS is not only in the analytical work but rather in the follow-up actions that are taken on the ground after the studies are completed. Ms Gobena gave the example of Cambodia where good results are observed in terms of implementing SPS-related DTIS recommendations. She viewed that in order to promote the engagement of SPS authorities in the DTIS process it is necessary to demonstrate the value and benefits of participation, given that staff in SPS authorities is often overstretched in terms of resources.

36. The Working Group was informed that the EIF and STDF Secretariats will present the study to the WTO LDC Sub-committee in April and that the findings and recommendations will also be considered at the next EIF Board and Steering Committee meetings. The Working Group also suggested that the EIF Secretariat participate in the next Working Group meeting to share information on follow-up actions. Both Secretariats thanked the STDF partners who had provided feedback on the draft report in 2015.

4.7 Future STDF thematic work – discussion

37. The Secretariat explained that STDF's strategy and logical framework foresees that the STDF addresses at least one thematic topic annually. The purpose of the discussion in the Working Group was to reflect, at an early stage, on topics for future STDF thematic work, in view of the preparation of STDF's new work plan for 2017-2018. The Secretariat further highlighted that such work could focus on previously identified topics not yet addressed, namely: (i) benefits of standards harmonization and implementation; and (ii) good regulatory practice in the SPS area. However, future work could also complement and build on topics that STDF has already addressed in the past. Examples included climate change and SPS risks, public private partnerships (PPPs) to build SPS capacity and the use of economic analysis to inform SPS decision-making. Some of these topics had also been mentioned by members in the Working Group survey (see section 2.5 above).

38. Members reflected on the different topics and also identified additional ones such as the impact of strengthening SPS compliance on poverty reduction, the importance of using a value chain approaches in building SPS capacity, the need for strengthening animal health and husbandry systems including the use of antimicrobials and vaccines referring to the concern of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR). Some members viewed that a combination of topics could also be envisaged. The OIE stated its view that the issue of AMR has been treated in various fora and by relevant organizations including the OIE and should not be discussed in the context of trade which would be counterproductive.

39. In response to the question to the STDF partners on whether there is anything relevant STDF could do related to combatting AMR, FAO advised the Working Group that AMR is a priority issue

¹¹ Ms' Gobena presentation is available at: http://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/EIF_STDF_DTISstudy_Mar16.pdf

¹² The new EIF/STDF Briefing Note is available at: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/stdf-briefings>

for FAO, and there is significant ongoing work through the Tripartite of FAO/WHO/OIE. This work includes global actions and supporting country level work. Apart from the Tripartite there are also a number of major global initiatives to combat AMR. Information can be provided to Working Group if needed.

40. After a lengthy debate, the Working Group tasked the Secretariat to prepare two short concept notes in order to provide a basis and focus for a follow-up discussion in the next Working Group in October on the following two topics: (i) meeting SPS requirements and implementation of international standards in a PPP context (which should also pay attention to private certification schemes); and (ii) good regulatory practices to support standards implementation. Impacts on poverty reduction and trade facilitation should be highlighted in both cases.

41. The FAO, OIE and WHO, referring to their ongoing activities on AMR, advised that they would continue such efforts within the Tripartite, and agreed, as suggested by the chairperson, to consider including information on AMR in the planned One Health session at the next WG in October 2016.

5 SPS CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS IN SPECIFIC AREAS (OUTPUT 4)

5.1 Presentation of project applications not accepted for consideration

42. The Secretariat introduced the project applications not tabled for consideration by the Working Group. The applications and the reasons for not tabling them were listed in Table 3 in document STDF/WG/Mar16/Review.

5.2 Consideration of project applications and decision on financing and prioritization (if required)

STDF/PG/496: National phytosanitary service enhancement project in Armenia

43. The Working Group did not approve this application for funding. While members reiterated that the project is relevant for the country, they expressed the following concerns: (i) Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) has entailed a change in policy, which in turn has a considerable impact on the regulatory framework and access to markets. Notably, a new law on inspection bodies has a significant impact on the SPS inspectorates in Armenia's State Service for Food Safety (SSFS). This change in policy and the regulatory framework requires a significant revision and modification of the application; (ii) Members generally observed that issues previously raised by the Secretariat, to which the Working Group concurred, had not been addressed in the revised application. Additionally, some members observed that there was some inconsistency in terminology (related to the WTO SPS Agreement) in the application; and (iii) the IPPC Secretariat considered that most of the needs expressed by Armenia, which primarily relate to strengthening the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), are widespread and shared by many developing countries. In this regard, the application would benefit from a revision and shift in scope, including through exploring the possibility of a regional or a global approach to address some of the needs identified in the application that are commonly shared by other countries, to allow for replication.

44. Members concurred with IPPC's intervention and suggested it be further explored. Members more generally considered that the STDF should focus on funding projects that are broader in scope, replicable and cross-cutting. Projects should also have a strong linkage to trade and market access.

STDF/PG/487: Towards a Regional Total Diet Study in Latin American and Caribbean Countries

45. The Working Group acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of generating data on food contamination and human dietary exposure of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, but agreed that the application document required further work and clarification in several instances. It was recommended that the application be revised, taking into account the comments and suggestions made at the meeting.

46. The main issues discussed included: (i) the need for an important budget revision (linking expenditures to specific project activities); (ii) a clear definition of the project management

structure (the establishment of an international independent scientific committee, similar to the one of project STDF/PG/303 - Regional TDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, was suggested); (iii) clarification regarding the involvement of Cuba, Dominican Republic and Jamaica (for which there are no specific budget allocations); (iv) the inclusion of indicators to measure progress at the output level (in the logical framework); (v) adjustments needed in the work plan and the project reporting schedule; (vi) consideration to be given to harmonize the generated data in a compatible format with the FAO/WHO CIFOSS and GIFT databases; and (vii) clarification of the linkages between the generation of data and market access of agri-food products (trade link).

47. Members also noted that Aruba is not eligible to receive support from the STDF, since it is not listed in the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients, and that Chile and Uruguay will graduate from this list as of 1 January 2017, which will make them not eligible either for STDF support from 2017. If the application were to be resubmitted to the STDF, project design and budget should be clear on how this fact is handled. Sweden noted that it's critical for the STDF to prioritize low-income countries, to which the EC and Germany concurred.

48. In addition, members agreed to strongly encourage the applicant to explore other funding (co-funding) opportunities for the project, also in light of the large amount of funding requested and STDF's limited resources. Mechanisms such as the World Bank Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) and the Codex Trust Fund were mentioned.

STDF/PG/557: Support for the establishment of a pilot poultry traceability system in and around Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

49. The Working Group decided not to approve this project request and recommended that it be revised taking account of the comments at the meeting and re-submitted. While recognizing that the project is strongly aligned to national objectives and increased demands of Vietnamese consumers for improved food safety, members questioned the project's expected contribution to market access. Members asked for clarifications on various points, including: (i) the objective and focus of the proposed pilot traceability system; (ii) the trade aspects (export expansion and attention to imports); (iii) the expected benefits for small-scale producers (in addition to larger companies); and (iv) the linkages to other related projects (e.g. World Bank's Livestock Competitiveness and Food Safety Project).

50. The OIE referred to a recent mission to evaluate the veterinary services which confirmed limited capacity to develop and implement traceability systems in Viet Nam, and recommended greater attention to compartmentalization. The Working Group agreed for the application to be revised and re-submitted based on the comments and suggestions. The applicant and FAO (proposed implementing organization) were encouraged to actively explore other (co-) funding opportunities, in particular through the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP).

5.3 Overview of ongoing and completed projects

51. The Secretariat referred to document STDF/WG/Mar16/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of all on-going projects.

52. Members agreed to a 6-month no-cost extension for project STDF/PG/242: Strategy to strengthen the SPS system in Comoros, a 6-month no-cost extension for project STDF/PG/303: Regional Total Diet Study for Sub-Saharan Africa, and a 12-month no cost extension for project STDF/PG/401: Training of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Facilitators.

5.4 External evaluations of STDF projects

53. The Secretariat presented the main findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation of project STDF/PG/326: Market access through Competency Based Education and Training in Horticulture (MACBETH) in Thailand and Vietnam, performed by Mr Andrew Graffham (Natural Resources Institute, NRI) in November-December 2015. The report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The evaluation concluded that the project improved management of food safety risks within fruit and vegetable value chains, enhanced access to higher-value markets (domestic and export) and increased sales (volume and value). Beneficiaries reported improved market access, higher incomes and lower levels of product rejections following their participation in the project. The project's outputs have been integrated into training programmes

currently being delivered by government extension services and the private sector in both countries, as well as the academic programmes in Kasetsart University (KU), Thailand and Can Tho University (CTU), Viet Nam.

54. The evaluation report included recommendations to further improve the training materials produced and facilitate their wider dissemination and use in Thailand and Vietnam. While it identified growing potential for blended learning, it recognized the ongoing challenge of limited internet access in rural areas. The evaluation identified opportunities to use the project's outputs to support the development and adoption of harmonized training systems within ASEAN, as well as potential future activities under GFSP. It further highlighted the value of tailoring food safety training to value chains to improve uptake and the potential to encourage PPPs to strengthen food safety management and address training needs on a cost-sharing basis.¹³

55. The Secretariat also referred to a number of ongoing external ex post evaluations of STDF projects STDF/PG/155 - Nicaragua, STDF/PG/284 - Honduras, STDF/PG/328 - Beyond Compliance, and the evaluation of a combination of four projects: STDF/PG/255 - West Africa Fruit Fly Initiative (WAFFI), STDF/PG/283 - Mali, STDF/PG/287 - Fruit Fly Newsletters and STDF/PG/313 - WAFFI phase 2. These evaluations will be completed in 2016. The Secretariat intends to invite at least one of the evaluators to the next Working Group meeting in October 2016 to present the results.

56. The chairperson selected two projects completed in 2015 for an external ex-post evaluation: STDF/PG/336: Enhancing the control of transboundary animal diseases in Cameroon; and STDF/PG/350: Global Phytosanitary Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures and Training Kits.

6 NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND PROJECT PROPOSALS (OUTPUT 3)

6.1 Presentation of PPG applications not accepted for consideration

57. The Secretariat introduced the PPG applications not tabled for consideration by the Working Group. The applications and the reasons for not tabling them were listed in Table 2 in document STDF/WG/Mar16/Review.

6.2 Consideration of PPG applications

STDF/PPG/517: Capacity building and knowledge sharing to combat SPS issues in spices

58. This PPG was approved by the Working Group subject to revision of the application to include clarifications requested by members and the Secretariat at the meeting. Specifically, members requested revision of the PPG application to include clarity and detailed information on: (i) relevant past and on-going capacity building initiatives and programmes (including inter alia programmes like the US Food and Drug Authority's partnership with the Joint Institute for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (JIFSAN) for capacity building of Indian spices); (ii) ongoing Codex work on spices, including work in relevant committees (e.g. Codex Committee on Spices and Herbs); (iii) revision of the budget and clarification on implementation modalities; and (iv) the scope of activities envisioned under the PPG. Members noted that it is imperative to include the above information, incorporate comments provided by the Secretariat and members, and accordingly revise the PPG application.

STDF/PG/539: Development of a project for a biosecurity classification system and registration for SPS Laboratories in Guatemala

59. The Working Group approved this request for funding subject to the development of specific Terms of Reference (ToRs) for its implementation, which will take into account the issues discussed at the meeting. Members recognized the need of the country to address a specific problem that has been identified (i.e. development of a system for the importation of laboratory samples into the country), but also viewed that the application document still lacked clarity.

60. Specifically, members suggested that the ToRs should: (i) clearly state the specific objective of the PPG; (ii) ensure the participation of national authorities as well as the involvement of official

¹³ The evaluation report, as well as other project documentation, is available at: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-326>.

laboratories during PPG and project implementation; (iii) look at a possible regional impact and approach; and (iv) further explore possible linkages and synergies with other national and regional projects in the field of laboratories, notably project STDF/PG/495 (which recently started and is implemented by OIRSA).

STDF/PPG/546: Establishment of a Centre for HACCP Innovation and Certification in Sierra Leone

61. The Working Group acknowledged the importance of providing training for food safety matters in Sierra Leone but agreed that the application required clarification on several matters, namely on the focus of the PPG and on the scope and sustainability of the training centre and its curricula. The Working Group recommended that the application be revised, with support from the Secretariat, and resubmitted for consideration at a future meeting. Members noted that if resubmitted, additional letters of support will be necessary to demonstrate that the general concept has been thoroughly discussed with all relevant stakeholders.

STDF/PPG/550: Feasibility study for establishment of a fresh meat producing compartment in Zimbabwe

62. The Working Group approved this PPG application, submitted by the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services, subject to some conditions. The feasibility study was considered innovative given recent changes to the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Some members provided suggestions to enhance the value of the study. For instance, it was recommended that the study consider all relevant factors (e.g. production management systems, policy and regulatory framework) as well as important risks (e.g. current business environment, international embargo) related to establishing a fresh meat producing compartment, and analyse how commercial farmers and smallholders could be linked in an integrated livestock value chain.

63. There was agreement to address all the outstanding issues and recommendations, and revise the budget, in the Terms of Reference for the PPG. The OIE encouraged the authorities in Zimbabwe to share the mission report of a recent OIE mission with the experts implementing the PPG.

STDF/PPG/553: Training of champion coffee and cocoa farmers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to adopt good agriculture practices (GAP) and to ensure compliance with SPS requirements to enhance trade

64. The Working Group approved this request for funding, submitted by the Department of Agriculture and Livestock, PNG, subject to some conditions. There was agreement that it would be essential to more clearly explain the rationale for the specific focus of the PPG and identify complementarities and linkages to other related programmes (including the Productive Partnership in Agriculture Project, the Trade Related Assistance Programme, and the STDF/PG/381 - "CocoaSafe" project) to ensure synergies.

65. The Working Group agreed to a possible increase in the budget for the PPG, up to the maximum limit for PPGs (US\$50,000), as considered necessary based on: (i) the need to map out and analyse SPS gaps in existing programmes; and (ii) the expertise required to implement the PPG. There was agreement that all outstanding issues and recommendations (including review of the budget) would be addressed in the Terms of Reference for the PPG.

6.3 Overview of ongoing and completed PPGs

66. The Secretariat referred to document STDF/WG/Mar16/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of all on-going PPGs.

7 REVIEW OF STDF OPERATIONAL RULES

67. The WTO briefed members on progress made by the e-working group on the review of the STDF Operational Rules. It explained the process and methodology used, and introduced a document with four specific amendments to the Operational Rules, aiming to address four specific outstanding recommendations of the STDF mid-term review. In 2014, the STDF Policy Committee

had decided that these recommendations be discussed as part of the review of the STDF Operational Rules.

68. The Working Group agreed to submit the document with the four proposed amendments to the STDF Policy Committee for electronic approval, and tasked the e-working group to continue discussions on other remaining issues, including the definition of "minimum technical criteria" for approval of projects and PPGs to be defined by STDF partners.

69. The chairperson and other members of the Working Group thanked the WTO, in particular Ms Gretchen Stanton, for the efforts to coordinate the e-working group in charge of the review of the Operational Rules. Members were reminded that Gretchen Stanton will retire at the end of March 2016. The Working Group agreed that the members of the e-working group will designate a new coordinator among them and inform the Secretariat accordingly by the deadline of 1 April 2016.

8 OTHER BUSINESS

70. The Secretariat reminded members about the deadline of 1 April 2016 to: (i) provide additional comments on the draft 2015 Annual Report; and (ii) inform the Secretariat as to which member will take the lead in the e-working group to continue the discussion on the review of the Operational Rules.

71. The Secretariat further informed members about the tentative dates for the next meeting of the Working Group in October¹⁴, and thanked Ms Sun Biney for chairing the Working Group meeting in an excellent manner.

72. Finally, the Secretariat, on behalf of the entire Working Group, paid tribute to Mrs Gretchen Stanton, who has been involved in the STDF since its inception by the partners in 2002. The Secretariat expressed its deep appreciation for all the input, knowledge and experience shared over the years and wished her all the best after her retirement from the WTO after 31 years of service at the end of March 2016.

73. The meeting was closed at 17.30.

¹⁴ The next meeting will be held on **20-21 October 2016**.

ANNEX 1

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