

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING  
20-21 MARCH 2017  
WTO, GENEVA**

**1 ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

1. The meeting was chaired by Ms Renata Clarke (FAO) who informed members that Australia, United Kingdom, CABI, COLEACP, Food Industry Asia (FIA), Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), IICA, ITC, OIRSA, Safe Supply of Affordable Food Everywhere (SSAFE) and UNIDO were granted observer status for this meeting. The agenda was adopted with no amendments. A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

**2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**

**2.1 STDF Policy Committee**

2. The Secretariat noted that the Policy Committee last met in March 2015. Members agreed to organize its next meeting in early 2018, in particular to discuss and prepare for the next external evaluation of the STDF scheduled for the second half of 2018. The funding situation of the STDF and the need for a further review of the STDF Operational Rules should also be discussed.

3. The Secretariat reminded members that in May 2016 the Policy Committee had formally adopted a number of amendments to the Operational Rules (through a silence procedure), following the work of an electronic working group established for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> This group still exists to continue discussions on further amendments to the Operational Rules, if needed. However, the group had not undertaken any additional work since May 2016.

4. The Secretariat also informed members that donors are currently represented in the Policy Committee by The Netherlands, Sweden and the United States (for the period 2016-2017). Donors were invited to consult and select three donors among themselves for the period 2018-2019 (and hence to represent them in the next Policy Committee in early 2018). Donors were requested to inform the Secretariat of the selected donors for 2018-2019 at the next meeting in October 2017.

**2.2 Selection of SPS experts from developing countries**

5. Members were informed that the chairperson of the Working Group had selected three new developing country experts to participate in the STDF in 2017-2018: (i) Ms Michèle Paultre (Director of Haiti's Bureau of Standards); (ii) Dr Isa Kamarudin (Chief Veterinary Officer of Malaysia); and (iii) Mr Kenneth Msiska (Head of the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) of Zambia). Two of STDF's current experts, Mr Ravi Khetarpal and Mr Babacar Samb, will continue to serve the STDF in 2017.

6. Members were also informed that STDF's sixth expert, Ms Maria Clara Vidal, recently moved to Argentina's National Foreign Service Institute and was therefore no longer able to continue her services in 2017. In consultation with the chairperson, it was decided not to replace Ms Vidal in 2017. The Working Group discussed the possibility of inviting a new expert from the Latin American/Caribbean region to participate in the next meeting in October. Members agreed for the chairperson and the Secretariat to further consult on this matter and inform members by e-mail.

**2.3 STDF Annual Report**

7. The Secretariat briefed members on the status of the STDF 2016 Annual Report, including identification of successful stories of STDF impact and mentioned that it would welcome additional stories from members highlighting collaboration and impact. Work was undertaken with a graphic designer to better highlight major achievements of the STDF partnership. The draft 2016 Annual Report would be circulated among members for their approval in May 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> Members of this electronic working group include: FAO, OIE, WTO, Codex and IPPC Secretariats, European Commission, Ireland, The Netherlands, Sweden and United States.

## 2.4 Staffing and financial situation

8. The Secretariat informed members on the staffing situation. Mr Pablo Jenkins was granted special leave without pay for one year, starting on 1 May 2017, and would be replaced, on a temporary basis, by Ms Nazia Mohammad. Ms Kenza Le Mentec had recently moved to a new position in WTO's Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) and would be replaced, on a temporary basis, as of 1 April 2017, by Mr Giles Chappell. The recruitment process to fill the new vacancy in the STDF (at grade 8) was already initiated, in accordance with WTO procedures. If no suitable candidate would be identified internally in the coming weeks, the vacancy would be issued externally.

9. The Secretariat acknowledged the excellent work of STDF's current intern, Mr Martin Tusl. A second intern will join the Secretariat in May 2017. The WTO Young Professional Programme (YPP), financed from the WTO budget, was mentioned as another possibility to strengthen the STDF Secretariat. Members were invited to identify candidates from developing countries who may be interested to work in the STDF Secretariat for one year, and to encourage them to submit their candidature to the WTO for consideration under the YPP.

10. The Secretariat provided information on the financial situation of the STDF Trust Fund and referred to the tables in Annex 1 of the Annotated Agenda. As of 31 December 2016, taking into account uncontracted commitments, the STDF showed a slight positive balance of US\$572,195. As of 28 February 2017, however, again taking into account uncontracted commitments and including ongoing staffing commitments until the end of the year, the STDF showed a negative balance of US\$360,105.

11. The Secretariat noted that in 2017 contributions were received from Canada (US\$70,000 in March), The Netherlands (US\$870,000, also in March), and the United States (US\$74,925, in February). Contributions were expected from Sweden (US\$1,130,000, multi-annual agreement, 2015-2018), the European Commission (US\$640,000, multi-annual agreement, 2016-2020) and the United States (US\$350,000, multi-annual agreements with FDA (2014-2018) and USDA (2015-2020)). The total amount of contributions received/pledges for 2017 was approximately US\$3 million.

12. Ireland confirmed a new contribution of €150,000 in 2017. France also announced a new contribution of €50,000 in 2017. The Secretariat thanked donors for their support and welcomed additional support, preferably in the form of multi-annual commitments, where possible.

## 3 IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE TO SUPPORT SPS CAPACITY BUILDING (OUTPUT 3)

### 3.1 Use of implementation of international standards – how can the STDF partnership contribute?

13. Ms Gracia Brisco from the Codex Secretariat made a [presentation](#) on the Secretariat's efforts to monitor the use of selected Codex standards by members. Monitoring is important to identify problems faced by members in the implementation of the standards. Although no formal monitoring mechanism exists, an online survey was recently developed for each Codex regional coordination committee, and distributed to members. The survey focused on the implementation of selected numerical Codex standards (e.g. Maximum Level of additives, maximum residue levels, (MRL), etc.) and on text-based standards (e.g. standard relating to labelling of pre-packed food, general principles of food hygiene, etc.). The reply rate of the survey was about 60% and revealed that, on average, Codex standards are adopted only partially. Challenges include shortcomings in the national food control system (in particular laboratory capacity), alignment of Codex standards with national legislation and language limitations.

14. Ms Ketevan Lomsadze made a [presentation](#) on IPPC's Implementation Review and Support System (IRSS) and experiences to date. The IPPC has several tools to review the implementation of ISPMs, including the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool and the IRSS, which aims to facilitate implementation of the Convention and ISPMs by IPPC Contracting Parties and to avoid disputes among them. Regular surveys are held within the IRSS in order to identify priority areas for capacity development and inform the development of guides and manuals for standards implementation. The IRSS also conducts studies.

15. In the third [presentation](#) Ms Tomoko Ishibashi presented different OIE initiatives to strengthen implementation of OIE standards. The application of the OIE Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway plays a key role in improving the implementation of OIE standards. Results of a questionnaire recently sent to ten African countries showed that in order to strengthen capacity to implement OIE standards, competencies of veterinary staff should advance, as well as their technical education. Communication skills should improve and legislation should be prepared and implemented more efficiently. Ms Ishibashi noted that there is not a specific tool to monitor implementation of OIE standards. However, work on a new initiative, the OIE Standards Observatory, will start in May 2017.

16. Members thanked the keynote speakers from the standard-setting bodies. The WTO reminded members that information on the use of international standards is also available online through WTO mechanisms (SPS-IMS, SPS-NSS). Canada proposed that STDF should consider thematic work around OIE zoning standards ("regionalization") to increase understanding of this concept and identify challenges that developing countries are facing. The World Bank expressed an interest in discussing closer collaboration with the standard-setting bodies in trade facilitation workshops and more generally in supporting implementation of international standards as they apply to cross-border trade. The FAO and WHO briefed members on their support to developing countries in assessing whether implementation of a Codex standard is appropriate. The FAO updated members on the forthcoming FAO/WHO food control assessment tool, which includes a component focused on implementation of Codex standards at country level.

17. Mr Khetarpal (developing country expert) observed that the discussion lacked focus on how the STDF partnership can contribute to the use and implementation of international standards. He also highlighted the importance of coordination and ensuring synergies among donors providing assistance for implementation of standards in developing countries. OIRSA reminded that it continues to provide support to ministries of agriculture in the Central American region in developing animal, plant health and food safety plans, which incorporate the principles of the standard setting bodies. In response to a question from the EC how countries are using the IPPC helpdesk to identify resources for solving difficulties in implementation of the Convention and its ISPMs, IPPC informed that its regional workshops include practical exercises on the use of the IRSS webpage and helpdesk. In addition, the IRSS webpage (and helpdesk) was updated recently and made more user-friendly.

18. The Working Group concluded that more stories should be identified highlighting successful examples of implementation of international standards. It also noted the key role played by the STDF partnership, including through its PPGs and projects, in strengthening the use and implementation of international standards.

### **3.2 Planned STDF work on Good Regulatory Practice**

19. Several members expressed support for this work and the approach/steps proposed. The EC and the US offered to share additional information on their ongoing work. While some concerns were raised about questionnaire fatigue, there was general consensus to prepare a simple "survey" (or call for information) as a first step to obtain information from SPS authorities in developing countries on their knowledge and/or use of Good Regulatory Practice (GRP). Some members (Codex, EC, FAO, IPPC, OIE, WTO, World Bank and US) offered to review and provide feedback on the draft survey prior to distribution to a wide audience (including delegates to the WTO SPS Committee, contact points for Codex, IPPC, OIE, TFA, etc.).

20. Members agreed that this new STDF work should tap into existing knowledge in STDF partners and other relevant organizations (OECD, APEC, etc.) to ensure synergies. There was further consensus to hold a dedicated session on GRP as part of the next Working Group meeting to present the "survey" findings and learn about ongoing GRP work supported by STDF partners, donors and others (with a focus on experiences in developing countries), in order to inform the Working Group's decision on possible follow-up work. Subject to further discussions, this may comprise an STDF event on GRP, case stories on GRP, and/or a checklist of good practices to improve the quality of SPS regulations<sup>2</sup>, an STDF briefing note, etc. The World Bank highlighted

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<sup>2</sup> The Secretariat agreed to provide a link to an existing checklist used by the WTO in its technical assistance activities to help regulators assess whether their SPS measures are consistent with the SPS Agreement. This checklist was attached in Annex 2 (page 46) of Ms Jennifer Rathebe's [regional report](#) on Facilitating Safe Trade in Southern Africa (with a focus on Malawi, Zambia and South Africa).

the expected value of a checklist for their operational work on SPS capacity building, and proposed that it should include links to available resource materials and tools.

### **3.2.2 Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA)**

21. The Secretariat reported on ongoing and planned efforts to promote the [P-IMA framework](#). In February 2017, it presented the use of the P-IMA framework in an information session at ITC and discussed possible further collaboration. A WTO national SPS seminar, involving FAO, is planned in Pakistan in May 2017, where an interactive exercise on P-IMA has been requested to consider potential application for project development in the future. The STDF has also been invited back to the Swedish National Board of Trade Academy in October 2017 to do a half-day session on P-IMA. In addition, some of the PPGs to be tabled for consideration by the Working Group include application of the P-IMA framework.

### **3.2.3 STDF briefing notes**

22. The Secretariat introduced the new four-page [briefing note](#) on SPS capacity building and gender entitled "Inclusive trade solutions: women in SPS capacity building" which was published in December 2016. The note includes specific examples of how STDF projects positively impact women's economic empowerment and their role in agricultural value chains. It contains key messages on how to incorporate gender issues into SPS capacity building activities. The note was disseminated during a high-level panel organised at the WTO on 8 March 2017 to celebrate International Women's Day. Members were asked to help to disseminate it further.

23. The Secretariat also presented a new [briefing note](#) on involvement of the private sector in STDF projects. This note titled "Partnering with the private sector: delivering SPS outcomes" explains how STDF is partnering with the private sector and how the latter is benefiting from STDF projects. The Secretariat shared information on a new briefing note on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools, which is under development. The objective of this note is to provide brief information on the key tools of OIE, IPPC and FAO/WHO and draw attention to case stories which illustrate the benefits of application of these tools. The Secretariat has been working closely with partners to identify and develop the case stories. It is expected that the note will be finalized by mid-2017.

### **3.3 Global Aid for Trade review – STDF session on SPS e-cert**

24. The Secretariat introduced a short background note on the planned STDF session on SPS electronic certification (SPS e-cert) during the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade. This Review with the theme "Promoting connectivity" will take place at the WTO on 11-13 July 2017. A 90-minute session by the STDF on SPS e-cert is planned on either 12 or 13 July, on the margins of the SPS Committee, also planned in that week. Members concurred with the proposed approach.

### **3.4 Implementation of STDF communications plan**

25. The Secretariat is working on updates and enhancements to the STDF website. Impact of STDF projects on biodiversity/environmental protection was identified as an interesting topic for an additional STDF briefing note later this year. Also, a number of additional project result stories will be developed and published throughout the year. Currently, there are six [stories](#) available on the STDF website and up to 15 new stories will be available by end of 2017. Finally, the Secretariat is planning to develop new film material in the coming months, which will focus on short animated explanatory clips, for instance on "what is the STDF" or "how to apply for funding".

26. The Secretariat also provided an overview of its participation in selected external events/initiatives and referred to the overview in Annex 2 of the Annotated Agenda. Finally, it drew attention to an [event](#) organised on 27 March 2017 by the Permanent Missions of Canada and France, in close collaboration with the STDF, to celebrate the International Francophonie Day. This event will highlight the results of three STDF-funded regional projects in West Africa.

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

### **4.1 Interventions by STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and other observer organisations**

27. The chairperson reminded that the objective of this session was to inform each other and engage in an interactive exchange to ensure synergies in various SPS related capacity building initiatives. The World Bank, on behalf of the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP), introduced a concept note outlining a proposed African Food Safety Capacity Building initiative, aiming at helping donors, governments and industries to better target and coordinate investments in food safety. The proposal includes four elements: high-level mapping of current and recent efforts, interviews with key public and private stakeholders, country-level stakeholder engagement and a final project report. UNIDO highlighted the need for involvement of the EC in this work (being the largest investor in food safety capacity building in Africa). Other members highlighted the need for value chain development projects in Africa to also incorporate a thorough food safety approach. The US noted that it may have some funding available this year for food safety work. The ITC, which is implementing a number of food safety projects in Africa involving both public and private sectors, expressed an interest in collaborating on the high-level mapping component.

28. The WTO informed members that its annual document highlighting SPS technical assistance (G/SPS/GEN/977/Rev.7) is available [online](#). A regional SPS workshop for Latin America will be held in June 2017 in Costa Rica, in collaboration with IICA. A regional (follow-up) SPS workshop is also planned for Arab countries in November in Kuwait. The annual advanced SPS course (in English) will take place in Geneva in October. Moreover, WTO underlined a continuing high demand for national seminars on the SPS Agreement, which are already scheduled in Bangladesh, Botswana, Colombia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Pakistan, Paraguay and Tunisia for 2017. The STDF Secretariat frequently participates in these seminars and provides a more practical perspective on implementation of the Agreement.

29. Mr Khetarpal (developing country expert) viewed that developing countries should improve their "SPS diplomacy" skills to facilitate trade negotiations. This includes improving negotiation skills - technical and social. The FAO briefed members about the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, which will be released in 2017. It is also working to develop a meat inspection guidance document for countries to improve inspection programming and help countries to focus their limited resources on the most important risks. Testing of this document will take place in Zimbabwe in 2017. The FAO also referred to an FAO assessment tool for laboratories and Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) surveillance systems, which will be published shortly. The FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the OIE, have begun to respond to a Codex request for scientific advice on foodborne AMR. In addition, at the request of member countries, the FAO in collaboration with WHO developed a smaller tool to strengthen national codex programmes.

30. The World Bank reported on its work on trade facilitation and border management. It noted that some measures in the TFA are difficult to implement, in particular border agency collaboration and coordination, which may take several years. Generating private sector input to support TFA implementation is also difficult. The World Bank will organize a seminar on 14 July 2017, on the margins of the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade, which will look at ways to enhance border agency collaboration and coordination, sequencing of reform, and monitoring and measuring implementation of the TFA. The STDF Secretariat is invited for this event. The WTO highlighted that there is currently a lot of attention, activities and funding available in the trade facilitation area. SPS agencies should be made aware of this, take advantage of available resources and participate in TFA implementation at national level. The chairperson highlighted that one of STDF's goals is to share and disseminate information and materials which identify best practices to improve implementation of international standards. She urged members to make use of the information and the guidance documents developed by various organizations.

31. The ITC informed that it had recently started implementation of a trade-related technical project in Afghanistan, with quality and SPS capacity building being an important major pillar. The project "Advancing Afghan Trade" is funded by the EC and aims to lay the foundation for strengthening the country's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment. The project develops identify priority sectors and develop the first national export strategy for identified priority sectors and with cross-functional strategies such as quality and SPS. Afghanistan does not have a national SPS committee and would benefit from lessons learned from other

countries. At the request of the EC, a donor coordination committee on trade was recently established. A document summing up all SPS-related activities by the ITC is available [online](#).

32. The OIE introduced three areas of work related to capacity building. On 4-6 April 2017, the OIE will organize a "think-tank" meeting, for which the STDF Secretariat is invited, to discuss future development of the PVS Pathway. OIE's work on building capacity of veterinary para-professionals and harmonize and improve the level of veterinary education is ongoing. A first report of an expert group, which will identify the critical competencies needed for veterinary para professionals, will be published shortly. The OIE, with support from the Gates Foundation, will also embark on a new three-year project on Public Private Partnerships. The objective is to support OIE member countries in creating an adequate environment for the development of sustainable PPP arrangements to improve the quality of veterinary services.

33. UNIDO briefed members on its activities in the field of SPS capacity building. Work is ongoing in various regions (in particular MENA, SAARC and Central Africa) and at a national level in Namibia, Zambia, Swaziland, Malawi, Iraq, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. Furthermore, UNIDO informed members about a half-day meeting on the margins of the Global Food Safety Conference (GFSC) in Houston, Texas (27 February – 2 March 2017), which convened around 25 food safety regulators. This was followed by another half-day session, during which the regulators and food industry representatives met and discussed recognition of third party certification. UNIDO also briefed members on its 2017 Trade Capacity Building Resource Guide, which is under preparation and will be available online as a practical tool. It will reflect the focus of the Sixth Global Review of Aid for Trade on promoting connectivity and provide information for developing countries about existing programs on SPS capacity building, including the STDF. The background document shared by UNIDO is available [here](#). GFSI confirmed that the meeting with and between regulators and business representatives was successful and that a similar meeting is planned at the next GFSC in Tokyo in March 2018. In the coming months, GFSI will be working on a new approach to its Global Markets Programme.

34. COLEACP shared information on its recently launched [programme](#) "Fit for Market", funded by the European Development Fund (EDF). Its objective is to enable smallholders, farmers' organisations and SMEs in ACP countries (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) to access international and domestic horticultural markets by complying with SPS measures and other market requirements. Particular attention is given to SPS issues, such as fruit fly and MRLs, which continue to cause major trade disruptions. Under the programme, national action plans will be developed, with an emphasis on inspection services. In addition, COLEACP has additional projects in the pipeline, including with COMESA on addressing SPS compliance issues.

35. OIRSA informed members that it participates in the negotiation of a customs union between Guatemala and Honduras, which is now operational. The United Kingdom generally noted the importance of the information exchange in the STDF, which facilitates coordination. Information provided by some other members and observers, including CABI, SSAFE and the African Union Commission (AUC), on their SPS related activities is available [here](#).

36. At the end of this agenda item, the Secretariat sought members' input on the eligibility of "tourism projects" focused on improving safety/quality of food products delivered to hotels and restaurants (based on an expression of interest received from an eligible organization in Rwanda). On the one hand, this may not be considered an SPS issue *per se*, as products do not cross an international border. On the other hand, and from a development perspective, tourism can be considered an important market and projects in this area can act as catalysts in strengthening domestic food safety, improving linkages with local producers, food inspection programs, etc.

37. While many members were supportive, some others expressed reservations. The EC considered that STDF could fund this type of activity. ITC referred to a project in Myanmar (funded by The Netherlands), which is linked to sustainable tourism. This project includes a food safety component, through which small operators, restaurants, hotels and market vendors are able to implement good hygiene practices. Overall, ITC considers tourism as an "export market". Similarly, the World Bank noted that inclusive agro-tourism is one of the "holy grails" of agro-business development.

38. FAO noted that simply focusing on ensuring food safety for tourists may encourage the creation of a dual system. UNIDO considered that within the UN cluster on trade capacity a number of programs are implemented in Lao PDR, which touch on tourism development and

include a food safety component. Some members noted that eligibility of this type of project requires further and careful consideration, notably in view of the current load on the Secretariat and budgetary constraints. One member thought that this issue should be further discussed in the STDF Policy Committee. Finally, members agreed that the Secretariat would inform the applicant of the discussion in the Working Group and the reservations expressed.

## **5 NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND PROJECT PROPOSALS (OUTPUT 3)**

### **5.1 Overview of ongoing and completed PPGs**

39. The Secretariat referred to document STDF/WG/Mar17/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing PPGs.

### **5.2 Overview Presentation of new PPG applications not accepted for consideration**

40. The Secretariat introduced the PPG applications not tabled for consideration by the Working Group and referred to Table 2 in document STDF/WG/Mar17/Review.

### **5.3 Consideration of PPG applications**

#### ***STDF/PPG/498: Application of the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Tool in the Republic of Guinea***

41. The objective of this PPG application was to: (i) apply the PCE tool in Guinea; and (ii) draft a project proposal for consideration by the STDF and/or other interested donors. The IPPC informed that implementation of the PCE tool will be carried out in Guinea, as a pilot country, under project STDF/PG/401 ("Training of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation Facilitators") and completed before the end of September 2017. The Working Group approved the PPG, subject to development of specific terms of reference by the Secretariat, and only in relation to development of the project proposal. The resultant proposal will need to focus on strengthening the country's phytosanitary capacity to increase market access for plants and plant products with export potential, taking into account the findings and results of the PCE.

#### ***STDF/PPG/566: Improving post-harvest practices to reduce aflatoxin contamination in maize in Burkina Faso***

42. The Working Group approved this PPG application and further recommended elaboration by the Secretariat of specific terms of reference. It highlighted the importance of ensuring the participation and commitment of the competent food safety authorities, proper identification of linkages with other initiatives in the area of reducing aflatoxin and other mycotoxin contamination, as well as further dissemination of the results of the PPG, which could be replicated in other sectors, countries or regions. In addition, the Working Group welcomed the support and involvement of the World Food Program (WFP) in the implementation process.

#### ***STDF/PPG/575: Prioritization of SPS investments for market access and value chains in Madagascar***

43. The Working Group approved this PPG application. The PPG will use the STDF P-IMA framework to prioritize SPS investment needs in key value chains with export potential. Members agreed that the PPG would also be valuable to build capacity on the P-IMA framework, which would be relevant for COMESA's application for a regional P-IMA project (if approved). There was agreement that implementation of the PPG should: (i) build on the completed OIE PVS evaluation in Madagascar, and the ongoing PCE with IPPC; and (ii) engage relevant STDF partners and donors, in addition to government authorities, the private sector and other stakeholders.

#### ***STDF/PPG/576: Development of a Feasibility Study for value addition in the fruit and vegetable (F&V) sector of Sri Lanka through PPP and a Strategic Plan for the Lanka Fruit and Vegetable Producers, Processors and Exporters Association***

44. The Working Group approved this PPG, subject to confirmation in writing from the EC and the World Bank (within two weeks after the meeting) that the work proposed would not overlap

with their ongoing and planned SPS capacity building initiatives in the country. Members requested the Secretariat to coordinate confirmation of this information from the EC and the World Bank and inform the applicant accordingly.

***STDF/PPG/593: Improving the SPS safety and quality of Penja pepper in Cameroon***

45. The Working Group approved this PPG application. It further recommended elaboration of specific terms of reference by the Secretariat. It highlighted again the importance of ensuring the participation and commitment of the competent food safety authorities to effectively address the identified SPS challenges. Based on previous experiences, the Secretariat suggested to consider an increase in the budget (up to USD 50,000) for international expertise, and to include two field missions, to which members agreed.

***STDF/PPG/594: Preparation of a Project on assessment and decision-making tools for implementation of e-SPS and pilot testing in Asian Countries with Special Needs***

46. The Working Group did not approve this PPG application and welcomed a resubmission at its next meeting in October 2017. While members acknowledged the relevance of the PPG aiming to formulate a project proposal to develop and pilot test decision-support tools for the automation of SPS certification, some reservations were also expressed. In particular, members would welcome more clarity on the specific purpose of the proposal. This includes clarification and additional information on: (i) the main objective (i.e. the Working Group recommended focusing on developing a methodology for diagnosis and assessing preparedness to adopt electronic certification); (ii) the consultation process (i.e. findings and lessons of discussions with stakeholders to take into account existing methods and approaches); and (iii) recognition of the specificities of the three SPS areas – food safety, animal health and plant health – which may have to be assessed separately. In addition, the Working Group strongly recommended holding consultations with partners, in particular the World Bank, on linkages with their ongoing work on SPS and Trade Facilitation and any other relevant initiative in the area of automation of processes.

## **6 SPS CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS IN SPECIFIC AREAS (OUTPUT 4)**

### **6.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects**

47. The Secretariat referred to document STDF/WG/Mar17/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing projects. The Working Group agreed to six-month no cost extensions for STDF/PG/303 (total diet study for Sub Saharan Africa) and STDF/PG/489 (West Africa Fisheries project).

### **6.2 Presentations of project applications not accepted for consideration**

48. The Secretariat briefly introduced the project applications not accepted for consideration by the Working Group at this meeting and referred to Table 3 in document STDF/WG/Mar17/Review.

### **6.3 Consideration of PG applications**

***STDF/PG/477: Improving sanitary capacity and facilitating export trade of livestock and livestock products from Ethiopia***

49. The Working Group approved this project, which results from a PPG supported by the STDF, subject to some conditions (in particular focused on some adjustments to the proposed implementation arrangements). The Working Group acknowledged the importance of strengthening the capacity of the livestock regulatory authority, and agreed that this project would complement other ongoing programmes and projects focused on the livestock sector in Ethiopia. It supported the suggestions outlined in the Secretariat's review of this application to further improve the project document.

50. In particular, the Working Group agreed on the need to reconsider the proposed implementation arrangements for this project, for the reasons outlined in the Secretariat's review, including identifying an external organization to lead implementation, in close collaboration with relevant ministries and any other relevant stakeholders in Ethiopia. In this regard, four members

of the Working Group (France - Agence Française de Développement, FAO, UNIDO and World Bank) offered an initial indication of their potential willingness to implement the project, subject to further internal discussions within their organizations, and subject to agreement of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (the applicant) and other relevant stakeholders in Ethiopia.

51. The Working Group recommended the Secretariat to contact the applicant to receive its views on the above, including confirmation that the applicant agrees to the Working Group's recommendation to amend the implementation arrangements, prior to discussing this matter further with the STDF Working Group members mentioned above.

***STDF/PG/503: Beyond Compliance Global - sharing tools for enhanced application of Systems Approach and market negotiation on plant pest risk***

52. The Working Group approved this project. Members noted the potential usefulness of this project in supporting countries to implement an integrated systems approach in pest risk management. The Working Group further requested the Secretariat to work with the applicant to finalize the logframe and address other minor outstanding issues, prior to contracting the project.

***STDF/PG/447: Enabling Market Access for Tajik Agricultural Products through Improved Food Safety System***

53. The Working Group approved this project, which results from an STDF supported PPG. It acknowledged the project's focus on building SPS capacity in agricultural value chains with potential export growth (notably apricots and honey), including through targeted attention to the needs of Tajik smallholders and SMEs. The inclusion of activities to identify and secure the financing needed to enable food enterprises to upgrade their food safety management capacity was recognized as innovative. Some members provided recommendations to further enhance the expected results of the project, for instance by linking activities on the design and implementation of a risk-based monitoring system to ongoing work by FAO, identifying ways to promote synergies with ongoing food safety capacity building work supported by FAO and WHO, and considering additional support to enable a national laboratory to obtain international accreditation for residue monitoring. The Secretariat will consult colleagues in ITC, FAO and WHO on these recommendations, including on the specific role for FAO to play in project activities, prior to contracting.

***STDF/PG/481: Strengthening the Phytosanitary Capacity of Zambia's Plant-based Export Sectors***

54. The Working Group did not approve this project. While it acknowledged the relevance of the proposal and praised the innovativeness of the Zambia-led regional plant quarantine pest surveillance programme proposed, some reservations were also expressed by members. In particular, the rationale for the selection of New Zealand as host country for study placements was questioned. Additional evidence of the interest and commitment of neighbouring countries to participate in the proposed regional surveillance pilot was recommended. Establishment of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) to engage relevant stakeholders in project implementation was also suggested. In addition, the IPPC recommended taking into account during project implementation the results of the PCE currently under application in the country. The Working Group invited the applicant to revise and resubmit the application for consideration at its next meeting in October 2017.

***STDF/PG/606: Mainstreaming SPS capacity building into the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and other national policy frameworks (COMESA – P-IMA)***

55. The Working Group did not approve the project. However, several members of the Working Group expressed enthusiasm and strong support for this application and welcomed use of the P-IMA framework to promote public-private dialogue and generate increased support for SPS investments as part of the CAADP process. To enhance the results and sustainability of the resulting project, the Working Group emphasized the need to receive letters of support from concerned SPS authorities in all the participating countries, as well as other key stakeholders (private sector, academia, think tanks, etc.), to be involved in this project. The Working Group agreed on the importance of fully embedding activities under the project in national policy and planning processes. In this regard, there was some discussion about how to obtain and maintain

effective in-country commitment for the project, for instance, through the identification of a specific national contribution (in-kind or financial) to support the in-country work on P-IMA, and/or implementation of some preparatory work in the country prior to engaging the trained regional facilitators.

56. Some members requested clarification on how the project will build on evaluations of SPS capacity using the official capacity evaluation tools, notably the new FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, the PCE and PVS tools. The Working Group also agreed that it would be beneficial to learn from relevant experiences and lessons under the ongoing STDF project, implemented by the IPPC, to train regional PCE facilitators (STDF/PG/401). Lastly, some additional suggestions to further improve the application and resulting project were offered. These included recommendations to: (i) consider how to implement the in-country work on P-IMA on a step-wise basis, based on evidence of national commitment and ownership; (ii) identify qualified regional P-IMA facilitators from within any COMESA member state; and (iii) target training for the regional P-IMA facilitators and include additional training on additional topics/competencies (e.g. communication and facilitation skills, policy dialogue, stakeholder relations) to create a group of highly-skilled experts (rather than also trying to create national P-IMA experts); (iv) identify opportunities to share experiences from this project with other Regional Economic Communities and to develop synergies with the African Union Commission; and (v) clarify linkages to other ongoing/planned projects focused on SPS capacity building within COMESA member states to avoid duplication. Finally, Members recommended and invited the COMESA Secretariat to revise and resubmit the application for its next meeting in October 2017.

***STDF/PG/578: Creation of an online system for the inspection, control and supervision of establishments that produce food of animal origin (Costa Rica)***

57. The Working Group approved this project and acknowledged the potential for replicating this system in other countries in Central America. Members appreciated the cost sharing structure of the project, in which STDF would contribute 40% of the total budget while SENASA would cover the rest. Sweden, Germany and the EC expressed their reservations in using limited STDF funds on Upper Middle Income Countries such as Costa Rica. The World Bank asked whether the system would be consistent with the World Customs Organization Data Model and whether it could eventually be connected to the national customs system. The FAO noted that the project would benefit from more explanations on the mobile system that is mentioned and suggested that the project be implemented as a pilot programme for certain regions/sectors before expanding to a nation-wide system as a means to manage overall costs.

***STDF/PG/580: Creation of a traceability system to guarantee the legality and safety of fish products from Argentina***

58. The Working Group did not approve this project application and recommended that it be revised and resubmitted. It acknowledged the relevance of the concept but agreed that the project document and general approach needs improvement. The OIE noted that the results of the PVS tool cited in the proposal are not directly relevant to this traceability system. It encouraged Argentina to conduct the PVS Aquatic Evaluation. The FAO noted that there are gaps in information on how to put the system into place. The World Bank suggested that the applicant explore integrating an evaluation within the project to measure impact of these technologies on local fishing communities in terms of poverty reduction.

#### **6.4 Decisions on prioritisation and funding**

59. No decision on prioritization and funding was made, as current commitments from donors until the end of the year were just sufficient to cover financing for all PPGs and projects approved.

### **7 OTHER BUSINESS**

60. The Secretariat informed members of the dates of the next meeting, i.e. 30–31 October 2017. Members thanked Ms Kenza Le Mentec for her commitment to the STDF and her excellent work throughout all the years that she has served the STDF partnership. They also thanked Ms Renata Clarke for chairing the meeting in an excellent manner.

### **8 CLOSURE**

61. The meeting was closed at 17:00.

**ANNEX 1****STDF WORKING GROUP  
20-21 MARCH 2017**

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

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