

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING**  
**16-17 OCTOBER 2019**  
**WTO, GENEVA**

## **1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The chairperson of the Working Group, Ms Loraine Ronchi from the World Bank Group, welcomed participants and invited everyone to introduce themselves to the group. Members adopted the agenda without amendments.
2. The Secretariat informed members that one developing country expert was unable to attend the meeting due to personal reasons, namely Ms Sanniel Wilson (Chief Plant Quarantine Officer, National Plant Protection Organization - NPPO, Jamaica).
3. All presentations and other informational documents circulated to the Working Group are available on the [STDF website](#). A list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

## **2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**

### **2.1 Selection of new vice-chairperson (2020) of the Working Group**

4. The Secretariat welcomed expressions of interest for the position of vice-chairperson in 2020 (and hence chairperson in 2021). The Codex Secretariat expressed interest and noted that it would confirm the option in the following weeks. No objections were raised.

### **2.2 Selection of new SPS experts from developing countries (2020-2021)**

5. The Secretariat informed that three developing country experts (Mr Benoit Gnonlonfin, Ms Merriam Toalak, and Ms Sanniel Wilson) would leave the STDF at the end of 2019. Hence, new experts must be selected for the period 2020-2021, in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules. The Working Group agreed on a deadline of 1 November 2019 for members to send recommendations to the Secretariat, for consideration by the new chairperson of the Working Group, Ms. Julie Emond from Canada.
6. The experts nominated for the period 2019-2020 will continue to serve the STDF in 2020 (Dr Sanjay Dave, Mr Rogério Pereira da Silva, and Dr Ameha Sebsibe Woldemariam). Members thanked the outgoing experts for their service.

### **2.3 Staffing and financial situation**

7. Members were informed that the WTO completed the procedure to fill the vacancy in the Secretariat and that Ms Catalina Pulido would join the STDF team on 4 November 2019. The Secretariat thanked Mr Joaquin Landazuri (former intern) and Ms Nazia Mohammed (former temporary staff) for their excellent contributions to the work of the STDF and informed members that a new intern, Ms Angélica Cottica Grisuk, joined the Secretariat in September 2019. The Secretariat also recognized the excellent support provided by Ms Elena Immambocus (STDF communications consultant) to the STDF in 2019.
8. The Secretariat briefly summarized the financial situation of the STDF. Considering donor contributions (opening balance at the beginning of 2019 and the amount received throughout the year), general expenditures, contracted and un-contracted commitments, and including on-going staffing commitments until the end of the year, the STDF trust fund showed a current negative balance of US\$28,147. From 2019 to 2022, additional contributions under multi-annual agreements are expected from Denmark, the European Commission, France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.

## 2.4 STDF 2018 Annual Report

9. The Secretariat briefly introduced the [2018 Annual Report](#), released on 7 June 2019 (World Food Safety Day) and available in both print and web versions. Members who contributed stories and other information for the report, and/or helped to disseminate it through their networks, were thanked for their support. For the first time, an external company (Touchline), selected using WTO procurement rules and procedures, was responsible for the design and layout of the report, which was produced with support from across the STDF team. The experience of working with this external company was very positive. In response to a question, the Secretariat clarified that discussions were underway with the WTO Design Unit to determine whether the 2019 Annual Report could be produced in-house next year, and that this decision would also depend on the experience of producing the new STDF strategy document (to be produced by the Design Unit towards the end of 2019/early January 2020).

10. The Working Group approved the 2018 Annual Report.

## 2.5 Implementation of STDF communications plan

11. The Secretariat presented the new film "[Investing in Safe Trade](#)" which features voices from Canada, the EU, GFSI, IPPC, The Netherlands, the US, WTO, and former STDF developing country experts. Ms Immambocus (STDF communications consultant) expressed her appreciation to all members that had participated in the film. The film was well received, and several members noted that they already distributed the link to their respective networks. The Secretariat explained how the other film project that was due to launch in 2019, focusing on the importance of investing in SPS capacity, had run into problems with the production company concerning non-compliance with the Terms of Reference. The Secretariat noted that the WTO procurement section was currently in discussions to terminate the contract with the company, after which the Secretariat would consider hiring a new company to complete the film.

12. Ms Immambocus reported on ongoing and upcoming communication and outreach activities. In addition to the 2018 STDF Annual Report, she drew attention to a new publication "Developing National SPS Systems" by Kees van der Meer (former chairperson and WBG representative in the STDF Working Group), due to be published - in collaboration with the STDF - in the coming months. She highlighted that the STDF has been visible and present in different events and emphasized the importance of using more social media via the #STDF hashtag. She noted that a new STDF business card with key contact details was developed and that the key activity of refreshing the STDF brand featuring partners, donors, and members was currently being undertaken, in parallel to development of the new strategy. Some members drew attention to how they had been helping with communication tasks of the Secretariat.

## 2.6 External evaluation of the STDF

13. The Secretariat reminded members that the external evaluation of the STDF had produced recommendations that had been considered by the STDF Policy Committee at its meeting in June 2019. Based on a draft [Action Plan](#) prepared by the Secretariat, the Working Group was requested to decide on how best to implement the recommendations.

### 2.6.1 Actions to implement recommendations of the external evaluation

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1: FOCUS ALL DELIVERABLES ON THE SAME KEY ISSUES**

*(i) Thematic topics should be used as the over-riding guide for all STDF activities where the STDF selects thematic topics that are current, relevant and important SPS topics that are trade enablers;*

14. The Working Group agreed that the word "taskforce" caused confusion and replaced this word with "advisory groups" in the first proposed action. The Working Group agreed to remove the proposed action related to the creation of a mechanism for selection and approval of new thematic topics. The Working Group deemed the current practice of selecting and approving new topics in the Working Group, based on consensus, to be adequate. It was further noted that thematic topics may guide STDF projects and other activities, but these should not be strictly limited to thematic topics. Responsibility for implementing the actions was attributed to the Working Group.

**(ii) Calls for proposals for all PPGs and PGs should only be in the agreed thematic areas, and should contribute to learning around the topic, i.e. they should be innovative, testing theories and ideas so as to contribute to existing knowledge in trade-related SPS issues;**

15. This recommendation was not accepted by the Policy Committee and the Working Group did not discuss this recommendation.

**(iii) In addition to calls for proposals, partners and the Secretariat should be able to develop PGs and PPGs as a test bed for innovative ideas (although as with implementation, those organisations proposing PPGs and PGs should not be included in the approval process);**

16. The Secretariat clarified that it did not agree with the recommendation that the Secretariat should be able to develop PGs and PPGs, due to both resource constraints and the fact that applications should be demand-driven. The Working Group agreed with the Secretariat on this point. The Working Group agreed to return the question of whether partners should be able to elaborate PGs and PPGs to the Policy Committee for consideration at a next meeting. Responsibility for implementing this action was attributed to the Policy Committee.

**(iv) Since PGs and PPGs will be learning tools, the results and impact do not end when the project ends, and therefore the STDF should build in mechanism for concrete monitoring and follow-up of PPGs and PGs, to examine long-term effects and sustainability;**

17. Members discussed the feasibility of long-term monitoring and the availability of resources for fulfilling this recommendation. The Working Group agreed to continue the current practice of randomly selecting a subset of projects for ex-post evaluations, while simultaneously exploring the inclusion of practical approaches to track sustainability during development and implementation of the new Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) framework. Responsibility for implementing this action was attributed to the Secretariat.

**(v) Learning from all deliverables should be embedded into best practice and guidance for developing country beneficiaries and partners, including taking the global lead in thematic topics and actively promoting learning.**

18. The Secretariat explained that this work was already being done and that more could be done through advisory groups on specific thematic areas. The Working Group decided to change the text of this action to "Continue to embed learning into good practice and practical guidance; the specific advisory groups on thematic work play an important role in this effort." Responsibility for implementing this action was attributed to advisory groups on thematic work and the Secretariat.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2: RE-ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT OF REAL RESOURCES AND INPUTS FROM FOUNDING PARTNERS.**

**(i) Establish clarity of purpose of the STDF and the relationships and responsibilities of the different partners, so that each fully understands (and institutionally commits to) its role. (Consider using a memorandum of understanding approach which would raise awareness to highest institutional levels);**

19. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

**(ii) Ensure that the future STDF strategy and work plans explicitly link to elements within founding partners' own strategies and plans, so each founding partner (and its staff) can see the link to its own agenda and feed into institutional objectives and staff performance (ensuring better buy in and commitment);**

20. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

***(iii) Establish a mechanism for the founding partners to guide the Secretariat in technical direction, approving the thematic topics and providing an SPS expert forum for discussion and exchanges on direction and scope of selected thematic topics;***

21. This recommendation was not accepted by the Policy Committee and the Working Group did not discuss this recommendation.

***(iv) Assign Codex and IPPC as "founding members" in their own right, as these are required to be fully engaged and contribute important knowledge to STDF;***

22. This recommendation was not accepted by the Policy Committee and the Working Group did not discuss this recommendation.

***(v) Provide secondment (funded by the STDF) to the STDF Secretariat from each of the founding partners to both engage better with headquarters and build technical capacity of the Secretariat. Secondees should be selected by the Secretariat through a competitive, open process in each organisation to ensure that high-performing staff are seconded to the STDF.***

23. This recommendation was not accepted by the Policy Committee and the Working Group did not discuss this recommendation.

### ***RECOMMENDATION 3. FURTHER IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS AND MONITORING & EVALUATION***

***(i) More emphasis on measuring results and impacts (not just outputs) across all STDF activities should be made, especially when this is needed for learning. (Care should be taken not to simply target impact on e.g. the poor in the short-term, but the lesson learning that could benefit the poor longer-term);***

24. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

***(ii) Explicitly define a theory of change and improved logical framework based on innovation and lesson learning for SPS issues in unlocking trade;***

25. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

***(iii) Make better use of learning from all deliverables, including from PGs/PPGs, knowledge platform research and coordination efforts among partners; and make better use of existing research, especially from the founding partners, to enhance knowledge in selected thematic areas;***

26. The Working Group agreed with the first proposed action and decided to replace the word "research" for "activities" in the second one. The Working Group also agreed to add a second sentence referring to how the Working Group will explore additional approaches to ensure better use of learning. The second proposed action now reads as follows: "Partners and other members to share more information with the STDF Working Group and Secretariat on existing (and planned) activities relevant to STDF's work. The Working Group will dedicate time to generate additional approaches to ensure better use of learning."

***(iv) Improve the provision of knowledge to ultimate beneficiaries (in developing countries) through promotion of learning to developing country governments, authorities and business organizations through, inter alia, communication multipliers (e.g. country offices of partners), interactive webinars, WG learning sessions, training courses, podcasts etc.***

27. The Working Group agreed with the proposed action and agreed to add developing country experts to the list of responsible entities.

**(v) Make better use of lessons and best practice by partners (especially donors) in their SPS capacity-building work by strengthening interaction and promotion of STDF's work to trade and SPS capacity-building units within partners and their country and regional offices.**

28. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

**RECOMMENDATION 4. BUILD THE STDF'S REQUIRED OPERATIONAL CAPACITY.**

**(i) Increase STDF Secretariat's resources, including increased staff and budgets associated with this capacity (not significant increases in PPG or PG budgets);**

29. The WTO informed members that the recommendation on staffing is currently under review. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

**(ii) Strengthen accessibility of knowledge platform so that all the good work and best practice is more easily searchable and available to beneficiaries. This will require redesigning this part of the STDF website, with clearer cross-referencing to external resources and project outcomes. It will, however, also require content that clearly guides users, possibly including online training and other media;**

30. The Working Group agreed with the proposed actions and responsible entities as indicated in the draft Action Plan document.

**(iii) Allocate staff and resources within partner organisations to work with the STDF and STDF activities to ensure that this is a core part of their jobs and not an add-on. (This also relates to the recommendation on identifying explicit links to founding partner agendas);**

31. The STDF partner representatives explained that they do not have the authority to approve allocation of staff and resources for the STDF. Some members also viewed that the development of a general directory of experts/specialists within partner organizations could be an overly onerous task. The Working Group agreed to adjust the language of the proposed actions to *(i) partner organizations to ensure staff and resources are enabled to contribute to the work of the STDF; (ii) respond to topic-specific calls with names of experts upon demand.*

**(iv) Provide training and awareness for partners' staff on STDF structure and objectives and the roles of founding partners, so that engagement with their staff is more productive, efficient and fruitful, including contributions to coordination and communications activities, assessment of PGs and PPGs and contributions to knowledge platform development;**

32. The Working Group agreed that training and awareness-raising sessions should be conducted on an ad-hoc basis rather than systematically. The Working Group agreed to change the language of the action to "prepare a training seminar module to present at every opportunity of scheduled visits to partners and donors."

**(v) Increase participation by developing countries at Working Group level for better developing country context and potential for knowledge multipliers with RECs SPS Unit membership (resourced).**

33. The Working Group agreed to further discuss how to better accommodate the participation of regional organizations/networks in the STDF. However, the Working Group chose to postpone the decision of revising the criteria for the selection of developing country experts to a later stage and thus this reference was removed from the draft Action Plan document. It was agreed that further discussion on the selection criteria could occur at the next Working Group meeting.

34. After concluding the discussion on the draft Action Plan, members generally viewed that the proposed creation of a sub-group of selected members to work on a proposal for a further revision/clarification of the STDF Operational Rules was not necessary at this stage. The chairperson noted that none of the proposed actions require an immediate modification of the STDF Operational

Rules. In future, two actions that require further discussion in the Policy Committee and Working Group, respectively, have the potential to elicit a change to the Operational Rules, namely (i) whether partners should be able to develop PGs and PPGs (recommendation 1(iii)); and (ii) options to better represent regional views, which may require changing the criteria for selecting developing country experts (recommendation 4(v)).

35. The Working Group agreed that the Secretariat will revise and circulate the final Action Plan to address the evaluation recommendations. The final document will be tabled in future meetings of the Working Group to monitor implementation of the recommendations.

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

#### **3.1 Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019 – "Navigating NTM Measures towards Sustainable Development" – presentation by UNESCAP/UNCTAD**

36. Mr Yann Duval (UNESCAP) and Mr Ralf Peters (UNCTAD) [presented](#) a new joint publication that provides an overview of non-tariff measures (NTM) trends and developments in the Asia and the Pacific region, and explores the relationship between NTMs. and the Sustainable Development Goals. The presenters explained: (i) the rise of non-tariff measures in the region; (ii) why these measures matter for sustainable development; (iii) the impact of NTMs. on trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region; (iv) the relation of these measures with international standards; and (v) the importance of streamlining NTMs. for sustainable benefits.

#### **3.2 Structured exchange among Working Group members and participants:**

##### **3.2.1 Information about new/emerging SPS initiatives and issues – STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and observer organizations**

37. Members, including FAO, OIE, World Bank, WTO, IPPC Secretariat, Canada, European Commission, United States, developing country experts (Dr. Ameha Sebsibe, Mr Benoit Gnonlonfin and Dr. Sanjay Dave), African Union Commission, CABI, COLEACP, IDB (remotely), IICA, ITC and UNIDO provided information on their new/emerging SPS initiatives and issues. The consolidated [slides](#) for this information exchange session can be found on the STDF website. Regarding the new structure for this agenda item, which entailed two slides and two minutes for each presentation, members noted that the session could perhaps be separated into two or three sessions throughout the two days to allow more time for questions and follow-up discussions during the breaks.

##### **3.2.2 Identification of case stories of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative/regional approaches facilitated by STDF activities (i.e. key indicator to measure STDF's performance)**

38. Members were requested to share case stories with the Secretariat of new approaches facilitated by STDF activities. The Secretariat noted that these case stories would be included in the 2019 Annual Report.

#### **3.3 Evaluation of projects STDF/PG/337, STDF/PG/359 and STDF/PG/436 (Global MRL projects) – presentation by Ms Andrea Spear (evaluator)**

39. Ms Andrea Spear presented the *ex post* evaluation of three STDF Pesticide Residue Data Generation Projects (2013-2017). She explained the objectives, achievements and impacts of the three projects, and provided evidence on how the objectives of the projects had been largely met. All of the project stakeholders were highly committed which was paramount to its success. She explained the challenges and areas for improvement but emphasized the very good and practicable results that had been achieved. The [presentation](#) is available on the STDF website. COLEACP further explained that it takes a significant amount of time and resources to do this type of work and expressed its appreciation for these types of initiatives that are able to pool different expertise and resources. Members welcomed the establishment of the Minor Use Foundation that has derived from the work of these projects. Ms Spear concluded by saying that this evaluation had been one of the best she had ever worked on in terms of both the results achieved by the projects, as well as the support received from the STDF Secretariat and the stakeholders involved.

### **3.4 IPPC response to the external evaluation report of project STDF/PG/350 ("IPPC Manuals")**

40. The IPPC Secretariat drew attention to the responses submitted to the Working Group and noted that the document provides information on how the IPPC Secretariat intends to approach some of the evaluation's recommendations.

### **3.5 Ongoing STDF thematic work/groups:**

#### **3.5.1 Prioritizing SPS Investment for Market Access (P-IMA)**

41. The Secretariat provided an update on recent work and outreach on P-IMA, including an IPPC capacity development seminar on linkages between the PCE and P-IMA, organized at FAO on 8 October 2019 for the IPPC Strategic Planning Group and interested FAO staff. The event drew on the experience of using P-IMA in an STDF PPG in Madagascar, following the application of the PCE and development of a national phytosanitary action plan budgeted at US\$27 million. The evidence produced through the P-IMA analysis has mobilized financing from COLEACP to address phytosanitary challenges facing pepper exports to the EU. During the IPPC seminar, opportunities were identified to use P-IMA in Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, and Sierra Leone, which recently conducted or are planning PCEs. The STDF Secretariat thanked the IPPC Secretariat for this valuable opportunity to identify and discuss more strategic collaboration and linkages between the PCE and P-IMA.

42. Reference was made to an upcoming regional training workshop on P-IMA for the EAC, to be organized by TradeMark East Africa in Nairobi in mid-November. This workshop will build on and benefit from ongoing work under the STDF-funded COMESA project on P-IMA, in partnership with EIF. The Secretariat brought members up-to-date on upcoming events under the COMESA project, including national consultations in Kenya and Rwanda. The Secretariat is compiling a calendar of planned P-IMA events, which will be shared with interested STDF members. To keep members informed about future P-IMA work, and also to identify and discuss possible future opportunities for synergies, the Secretariat plans to organize periodic teleconference calls with interested members. More information will be shared in due course.

43. In response to a question about possible synergies between P-IMA and other sector specific capacity evaluation tools, including the PVS (OIE), the STDF Secretariat and OIE indicated that they would welcome further dialogue to explore these linkages. The FAO drew attention to the FAO/WHO food safety capacity evaluation tool and encouraged members to explore the use of this tool.

#### **3.5.2 Good Regulatory Practice**

44. The Secretariat provided a brief update on the ongoing work, supported by a consultant, to develop a guidance document and practical checklist on the use of GRP in the SPS area. The OIE, US and OECD, which provided comments on the draft study on GRP, were thanked for their inputs. The Secretariat indicated that additional comments from other members of the GRP peer review group would be very welcome to help finalize the draft document, which will be presented to the Working Group in 2020. The Secretariat referred to an initial discussion on opportunities for further synergies between the STDF GRP work and operational work on GRP by the World Bank Group, noting increased attention to GRP provisions in regional free trade agreements.

#### **3.5.3 Public Private Partnerships**

45. The Secretariat noted that work is ongoing under the STDF PPGs on the use of voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programmes in Central America and Africa, and that regional project applications are expected for the next Working Group meeting. Belize intends to propose the organization of a thematic session on vTPA programmes during the SPS Committee meeting in March 2020, drawing on the STDF PPGs. Other work to identify and document examples of SPS-related PPPs is ongoing and information from members on relevant PPP examples would be welcome.

## 4 IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE (OUTPUT 2)

### 4.1 Future STDF thematic work/groups:

#### 4.1.1 Spillover effects of trade-related SPS capacity building on domestic health ([concept note - STDF/Coord/728](#))

46. The Secretariat presented the concept note for continued STDF work to develop and validate, in close collaboration with interested STDF members, a practical framework on how to optimize the domestic spill-overs of trade-related SPS capacity investments and projects. The new work builds on and learns from the experiences of the PPG ([STDF/PPG/535](#)), led by Michigan State University (MS.U) with support from interested STDF members through a "technical group", as well as subsequent discussions with some partners and donors. The Secretariat recalled the discussion on the results of the MSU-led PPG in the Working Group in October 2018 and clarified how the proposed work (including through its focus on spill-overs of trade-related food safety, animal and plant health interventions) differed from the PPG. It reiterated that the framework to be developed would aim to be of use and value for all STDF members that provide substantial funding for SPS projects (i.e. it would not only be relevant for STDF projects).

47. Several members emphasized the importance of being able to maximize the domestic spill-overs of trade-related interventions, also linked to the SDGs, while simultaneously acknowledging the difficulties faced (including with regard to obtaining and measuring data). Some members cautioned that the task is more complex than what is proposed in the concept note, that more thought needs to be given to how best to frame the measuring of spillover effects, as well as to rethink and simplify the proposed approach (e.g. start with case studies and avoid another literature review). While a few members questioned whether the STDF should lead on this work, several expressed the view that the STDF is uniquely placed to carry out this work, including to convene and draw on the expertise of different members and to develop a methodology that would support their work and investments.

48. In response to questions, the Secretariat clarified that: (i) most of the projects considered by MS.U in the PPG were STDF projects (as it was difficult to find evidence of spill-overs in projects funded by other donors), and that the STDF Briefing Note provides specific examples; and (ii) the new work proposed would develop a practical framework to identify, target and measure spill-overs to ensure that trade-focused projects can produce and show these benefits on the domestic situation (i.e. it would not be a research/academic exercise to collect and compile information, given the challenges faced during the PPG). The Working Group agreed for the Secretariat to organize a conference call with interested members and organizations to further discuss the concept note and agree on a way forward. Subject to this call, and drawing on inputs from interested members, the concept note could be further revised, clarified and improved for consideration at the next meeting.

#### 4.1.2 Creation of SPS e-Cert advisory group ([concept note - STDF/Coord/559](#))

49. The Secretariat briefed members on STDF's work on SPS electronic certification (e-Cert), including the related two ongoing projects (e-Phyto: STDF/PG/504 and e-Vet: STDF/PG/609). It was noted that the two projects currently have advisory groups, but these would cease to exist once the projects will end. The concept note tabled for consideration of members, therefore, proposes the creation of an SPS e-Cert advisory group, under the auspices of the STDF, to bring together the organizations working on SPS e-Cert to share information on their initiatives, facilitate linkages and synergies between these initiatives, and to maximize outputs and avoid duplication.

50. Several members supported this proposal. UNECE stated that the organizations should continue to exchange and learn from ongoing and planned initiatives and supported the creation of the group. Following questions from members, the Secretariat clarified that the group would include one participant from each organization, and that other organizations, including possibly from governments and the private sector, could be invited to join or to participate on an ad hoc basis, when necessary. The advisory group would be self-funded and as soon as the group is created, a chairperson would be elected who would then help define clear objectives and priorities, and further address the composition of the group. The Working Group approved the formation SPS e-Cert advisory group.

#### **4.1.3 Managing SPS risks at the border (concept note)**

51. The Secretariat informed members that due to limited resources in the Secretariat and the ongoing strategy development process, it had not been possible to prepare a concept note on the topic of managing SPS risks at the border. The Secretariat suggested that a member could take the initiative and prepare the concept note for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting.

52. The World Bank Group explained that most of its trade facilitation work is related to streamlining clearance processes at the border and agreed to prepare a presentation on this topic for the next meeting.

#### **4.2 Evaluation of project STDF/PG/344 (Improving food inspection through a virtual school) – presentation by Ms Ana Marisa Cordero, IICA (implementing organization)**

53. Ms Ana Marisa Cordero (IICA) presented the results of the [evaluation](#) of the STDF project "Establishment of a Regional Virtual Food Inspection School in Central America and the Dominican Republic." (STDF/PG/334). The presentation highlighted the importance of political involvement and commitment at both the regional and local level. In terms of sustainability, she noted how IICA is currently using the training modules for a pilot project in El Salvador to train Ministry of Health inspectors and that there are current discussions on developing new training for other geographical regions.

54. OIRSA shared how it had collaborated with IICA in setting up its own online training for auditors in food safety. More than 4,000 individuals are currently enrolled in OIRSA's various online courses related to animal and plant health and food safety. Mr Dave (expert) noted that a similar platform would be useful to have in South Asia and informed IICA that he will be in touch bilaterally to obtain more information on the course. Ms Cordero's [presentation](#) is available on the STDF website.

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

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

55. The Secretariat referred to document [STDF/WG/Oct19/Overview](#), which provided an overview of the implementation status of ongoing PPGs.

56. The Working Group granted 3-month extensions to contract two PPGs, namely STDF/PPG/672 (Senegal) and STDF/PPG/709 (Ecuador).

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

57. The Secretariat briefly introduced the PPG applications not accepted for consideration by the Working Group and referred to the document ([STDF/WG/Oct19/Review](#)), which summarizes the reasons for not tabling these applications. The Secretariat also explained that it includes all received PPG and PG applications in the abovementioned document, for monitoring and transparency purposes.

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

##### ***STDF/PPG/669: Promote compliance with international SPS requirements in food of animal origin and feed for food-producing animals (Afghanistan)***

58. The Working Group approved this PPG but recommended that the implementing agency: (i) explore synergies with the ITC project on food testing capacities of Afghan laboratories; (ii) consider a training-awareness-raising component in the action plan on the proper use of antimicrobial agents; (iii) explore the development and dissemination of Codes of Practice (e.g. good animal husbandry, good veterinary and good hygiene practices); and (iv) conduct a desk review of preliminary data on contaminants and residues, as well as information that validates the functioning of laboratories. The FAO recommended that it would be advisable to also develop a back-up plan, should laboratory analysis in Afghanistan fail for any reason. Lastly, the World Bank Group noted that it has several agriculture projects in Afghanistan and encourages the implementing agency to coordinate with the various projects where there may be some overlap.

***STDF/PPG/707: Preparation for a project proposal to improve sanitary standards for Kenyan cattle and beef export***

59. The Working Group did not approve this application. Members noted that despite being a resubmission, the application still lacked detail and clarity. The application referred to improving beef exports, however contained information on other livestock products, which diluted the focus of the main sanitary challenges. Members also questioned how the PPG would build on previous and recently completed livestock development programmes and welcomed more information on this aspect. Overall, members suggested that the application would benefit from further revision to refine its scope, clearly outline its objective and complementarities with other livestock initiatives.

***STDF/PPG/716: Development of a proposal for a Food Safety Risk Analysis capacity building program in Latin America based on South-South cooperation and an e-learning model***

60. The Working Group approved this PPG and agreed on the relevance of this proposal to the STDF, in particular given its focus on south-south collaboration, its innovativeness, increased collaboration among a large number of organizations and the possibility of generating spillover effects on the domestic public health. Members recommended to consider: (i) clarifying the results chain of the project, which should focus on providing guidance to strengthening Food Safety Risk Analysis (FSRA) capabilities and harmonization of the FSRA systems, in accordance with the Codex FSRA Framework; (ii) identifying links to specific SPS measures that could have an impact on trade; (iii) clarifying some individual budget lines; and (iv) requesting a letter of support from the Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASA) of Argentina.

***STDF/PPG/720: Strengthening Capacity for the Establishment of a Disease-Free Compartment in Egypt***

61. The Working Group did not approve this PPG application. Several members expressed support for the general concept of the PPG and noted that it could serve as a learning experience for other countries. However, others emphasized how the high cost of establishing and maintaining a compartment could very much exceed the economic benefits of trade, particularly given the fact that its establishment does not guarantee market access. Experiences in other countries have provided evidence of the serious challenges in gaining recognition of disease-free compartments. The Secretariat clarified that the PPG would help to prepare a road map to create compartments rather than assessing the viability of the compartments. The Working Group indicated the possibility of considering a new PPG application to conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine whether the establishment of a compartment would be feasible and/or worth the investment.

***STDF/PPG/721: Strengthening food safety and quality compliance in select Sri Lankan spices through the application of geographical indication schemes***

62. The Working Group approved this PPG, subject to the condition that it would not include a component to support registration of a Geographical Indication (GI) road map or support for any GI related work under the PPG. Some members were concerned that this element has no direct relation to SPS issues. Furthermore, members made suggestions to improve the PPG, including to: (i) consider CODEX standards for spices, specifically the code of hygiene practice spices and dried herbs spices; and (ii) focus on the application of good agricultural practices. The Codex Secretariat emphasized that it is open to consultations to support work under this PPG.

***STDF/PPG/722: Piloting the use of Regulatory Impact Assessment within the realm of Good Regulatory Practices in the agriculture and fisheries sector in the Philippines***

63. The Working Group approved this PPG. Members acknowledged the role of the PPG in the realm of Good Regulatory Practices with potential to build on the work that has been undertaken in APEC. Specifically, members welcomed this application as a practical way to improve the application of regulatory impact assessment in developing countries.

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

### 6.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects

64. The Secretariat referred to document [STDF/WG/Oct19/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing projects. The Working Group approved: (i) 3-month extension to contract STDF/PG/569 (Kyrgyz Republic); (ii) 12-month no-cost extensions to implement projects STDF/PG/432 (Asia/Pacific) and STDF/PG/521 (Solomon Islands); and (iii) 18-month extension to implement project STDF/PG/495 (Central America), including a proposal from the implementing organization (OIRSA) to use remaining funds to cover additional animal health diseases.

### 6.2 Presentation of project applications not tabled for consideration

65. The Secretariat briefly introduced the project applications not accepted for consideration by the Working Group at this meeting (see [STDF/WG/Oct19/Review](#)).

66. In response to an enquiry from Food Industry Asia (FIA), the Secretariat clarified that STDF/PG/591 (Indonesia) had not been tabled for consideration of the Working Group because it was perceived as over-ambitious and more work should be done to narrow the scope and build on the recommendations of the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool applied in the country. Mr Rogério Pereira da Silva (expert) requested further information on STDF/PG/725 (Guatemala). The Secretariat clarified that the project document required more detail on the capacity building methodology, sustainability section and the logical framework.

### 6.3 Consideration of new PG applications

#### ***STDF/PG/567: Establishment and maintenance of fruit production areas free and under low prevalence of fruit fly pests in South Africa and Mozambique.***

67. The Working Group approved this application and agreed to exceptionally allow an allocation of 16% of the STDF contribution towards procurement of minor field equipment to support surveillance under the project.

#### ***STDF/PG/681: Improving institutional capacity in Colombia and Ecuador to mitigate trade barriers due to high cadmium levels in cacao***

68. The Working Group approved this application. Members noted that the project aims to address a highly sensitive issue, which is gaining increased attention at the international level in light of the recent discussions and deliberations by the Codex Alimentarius Commission at its last session in July 2019, which calls for an urgent and coordinated solution. Members recommended to reformulate some of the technical components of the project proposal to focus on: (i) considering risk management options to reduce concentration of Cd in cocoa beans; (ii) identifying and implementing Good Agricultural Practices in areas where Cd levels in the soils are higher; and (iii) establishing links with the current work of the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food (CCCF), towards the development of a code of practice for the prevention and reduction of Cd contamination in cocoa beans.

#### ***STDF/PG/619: Safer spices: boosting food safety and market access for the peppercorn value chain in Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia***

69. The Working Group approved this application. Members recommended that prior to its contracting, the application should include elements to ensure sustainability of the project, such as clarifying the role and involvement of the private sector, as well as incentives for applying Codex practices. Members also recommended that the project should clearly build in implementation of good agriculture and hygiene practices. The Working Group recommended that the Secretariat ensure synergies and linkages with a recently commenced spices project in India (STDF/PPG/517) and planned work on spices in Sri Lanka (STDF/PPG/721).

***STDF/PG/634: Asia Pesticide Residue Mitigation through the Promotion of Biopesticides and Enhancement of Trade Opportunities.***

70. The Working Group approved this application. Members fully supported the project's regional and partnership approach to pilot an alternative way to mitigate pesticide residues through the use of biopesticides. Some members recommended that the project document include more specific details to guide implementation, and some questions were raised regarding which crops would be included and whether the biopesticides to be used were already approved by the countries concerned. The Secretariat noted that: (i) a table, including more detailed information for each of the participating countries on the targeted crops, pests, chemical pesticides currently used and biopesticide alternatives, has been prepared and will be annexed to the project document; and (ii) the project document explains that the biopesticides to be used are approved in the participating countries.

**6.4 Decision on prioritization and funding of PG applications**

71. In view of additional contributions from donors expected between now and the end of the year, no prioritization of projects was necessary.

**6.5 Outstanding evaluations of STDF projects – overview**

72. In addition to the two evaluations presented at this Working Group meeting, a third evaluation was completed in May 2019:

- STDF/PG/298: Mitigating the harmful effects of pesticide residues in cocoa in Africa (evaluation completed in May);

73. The Secretariat briefly presented the findings of this evaluation conducted by Prof. Samuel Godefroy. Although the evaluator encountered challenges such as organizational and financial constraints, he assessed the project as an overall success. He also identified recommendations to build on the STDF project, such as converting the training material into e-learning modules to increase their accessibility, and to explore the development of a food laboratory center of expertise at the regional level (ECOWAS). The evaluation [report](#) is available on the STDF website.

74. The Secretariat also clarified that contracting of three ex-post evaluations will be carried out in the coming months, in accordance with paragraphs 105 and 106 of the STDF Operational Rules:

- STDF/PG/401: Developing a network of PCE facilitators (selected in March 2018, with the caveat that this evaluation should commence after completion of the evaluation of project STDF/PG/350);
- STDF/PG/242: Strengthening the SPS system in Comoros (selected in March 2019);
- STDF/PG/345: Regional feed and food safety program in Latin America (selected in March 2019);

**7 OTHER BUSINESS**

75. The Secretariat reminded members of the following deadlines: 29 October (additional comments on the draft STDF strategy document) and 1 November (recommendations for the selection of developing country experts). It clarified that the revised Action Plan to implement recommendations of the external evaluation will be circulated in the coming weeks, together with a summary report of the Working Group meeting. An STDF side event on the three pesticide MRL projects will be held on 7 November, on the margins of the WTO SPS Committee meeting. The Secretariat also reminded members that the meetings in 2020 will take place on 7-8 April (kindly hosted in Rome by FAO/Codex/IPPC Secretariats) and 13-14 October (Geneva, WTO headquarters). Finally, the Secretariat thanked Ms Loraine Ronchi, on behalf of all members, for chairing the STDF Working Group meetings in an excellent manner.

**8 CLOSURE**

76. The meeting was closed at 15:49.

**ANNEX 1**  
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