Rolling out phytosanitary measures to expand market access

The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of the member countries of the Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE) to implement phytosanitary measures in order to maintain and improve their phytosanitary status, facilitate trade in agricultural goods in the region, and help to maintain or improve access to foreign markets. To that end, the goal was to build up a regional phytosanitary information system, enhance the capacity for pest risk analysis, improve inspection and phytosanitary certification, and create tools to strengthen phytosanitary capacities and to assess the impact of the implementation of phytosanitary measures.

This project was evaluated by an independent evaluation team. Find out more about the evaluation and its findings [here].

STDF/PG/502

Status
Completed

Start Date
01/11/2015

End Date
30/04/2019

Project Value (US$)
$1,796,998

STDF Contribution (US$)
$1,084,270

Beneficiaries
Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay

Implementing Entities
Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

Partners
International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)
National Plant Protection Organisations of all of the beneficiary countries
Southern Cone Plant Health Committee (COSAVE)

Background

The growth in trade in plants and products of plant origin over the past decade has led to a significant increase in the risk of introduction and spread of regulated pests. Countries face the challenge of facilitating the international movement of people, goods and services while ensuring that their phytosanitary status does not present risks exceeding the level identified as appropriate by the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs). This means protecting plant resources on the basis of scientific knowledge without negatively affecting trade flows more than strictly necessary. The challenge is considerable, particularly for the developing countries.

The countries participating in this project are major producers, exporters and importers of plants and products of plant origin, and have a significant share in intra and extra regional trade. The implementation of phytosanitary measures is therefore a major concern for them, as is trade facilitation and market access. Despite significant differences when it comes to implementing phytosanitary measures in each country, all of them recognized the need to improve their procedures.

The project aimed to create tools and build up capacity so that the beneficiary countries could improve the implementation of their phytosanitary measures on the basis of a regional and innovative approach. The tools and capacity building that were developed targeted specific concerns identified through collaborative work done at the regional level by technical panels and the COSAVE Steering Committee and through the IICA Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) tool.

Results

**Strengthened phytosanitary surveillance (general and specific)**

Some 54 professional staff from the region’s seven NPPOs improved their knowledge and skills in collecting and organizing information on pests and in designing and implementing specific procedures for general surveillance and specific surveys. The region now has support tools to implement the phytosanitary surveillance procedures indicated in International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) No. 6 that take into account the specificities of each country. This process required strong regionwide institutional coordination and collaboration, thanks to which strategic measures were jointly established for the region.

**Strengthened capacities in the area of pest risk analysis**

The region’s capacity to implement, design or assess pest risk analysis for transporting plant products nationally, regionally and globally improved. Some 37 professional staff at the NPPOs of COSAVE member countries improved their knowledge and skills for implementing ISPM No. 11 by strengthening their capacity to assess the economic, nontrade and environmental impact of a pest’s introduction. They also improved their skills in assessing the risk of introducing plants as pests (weeds). The countries in the region now have tools to help them implement the components of ISPM No. 11.

**Strengthened inspection and phytosanitary certification capacities**

The project bolstered the Virtual Regional Phytosanitary Inspection School, a tool providing comprehensive, systematic training on inspection and phytosanitary certification used by the seven NPPOs comprising COSAVE. The school’s international module, which covers topics common to all the countries, is now up and running. The module has been completed by 54 officials and a new group will start in 2020. To supplement the international module, each country has designed a programme of study for a national module, which is already being implemented in some countries. The international module teaches participants how to conduct an inspection based on the concepts and definitions set out in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and based on the ISPMs of the IPPC. The Virtual School model and experience from setting it up have been made available to other countries and regions of the world.

**Assessment of the impact of implementing the phytosanitary measures**

A methodology to assess the impact of implementing phytosanitary measures has been created, developed and validated. At least 20 professional staff at NPPOs have acquired skills in using the methodology. Countries can now assess the costs, identify the benefits and desired – as well as undesired – effects of implementing specific phytosanitary measures, and identify the adjustments required to implement them and thus achieve the desired goals. The methodology is a tool to maintain and improve the phytosanitary situation, open up access to markets and facilitate trade.

Recommendations
Joint management and coordination arrangements

The arrangements used for managing the project, with coordination taking place at various levels among directors and high level officials from the NPPOs and COSAVE, allowed proper follow up and decision making to take place, as a result of which the desired results were achieved on time. Furthermore, planned activities were successfully carried out, thanks to constant communication and consultation between the NPPOs and the implementing agency (IICA), as well as the active, leading role played by the NPPOs and COSAVE through the various coordination mechanisms.

A regional and participative approach

The training and the development of tools through a regional and participative approach proved to be an effective strategy for strengthening the network of specialists in the areas addressed, improving cooperation among officials from the countries in the region. This approach fostered the harmonization of concepts, criteria and common technical language, as well the harmonization of processes, identification of common operational issues and finding of joint solutions. It can be assumed that the gap between the countries of the region in their implementation of phytosanitary measures, especially ISPM Nos. 6 and 11 and the ISPMs on inspection and certification processes, have been reduced, thus helping to improve negotiating capacities at the national and regional level.

Shared experience with other countries and regions

A good practice identified during the project was to replicate the experience gained during the implementation of the project, including the coordination management arrangements, in other interested countries and regions. All of the materials and tools developed during the project are available on the websites of the IICA, STDF and IPPC, so that they can be used throughout the world.

It is hoped that the tools and methodologies developed (case studies) will be replicated within beneficiary countries and that the experiences will be shared with other countries and regions. It is also hoped that this positive experience will serve as a basis for the development of future projects that address regional priorities in the area of plant health, as well as other areas across the region and globally.