



## Evidence-based approach to prioritize SPS investments

This project aimed to enhance Belize authorities' ability to comply with Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) through development of a strategic five year plan for SPS implementation. Building on the results of previous SPS capacity evaluations (by the IPPC, OIE, IICA), the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) used this project to apply a new decision-support tool to prioritize SPS investments for market access in collaboration with public and private stakeholders. The project focused attention on the importance of SPS capacity, generated information to inform resource-allocation decisions and helped to obtain additional resources for SPS capacity building.

A results story on the project is available [here](#).

**STDF/PG/365**

**Status**

Completed

**Start Date**

08/01/2012

**End Date**

08/09/2012

**Project Value (US\$)**

\$30,000

**STDF Contribution (US\$)**

\$30,000

**Beneficiaries**

Belize

**Implementing Entities**

Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA)

**Partners**

Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE)

Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture, Belize

**Background**

Belize exports a range of agri-food commodities. Like many small developing countries seeking to expand exports and access higher-value markets, Belize faces extensive demands to enhance SPS capacity. However, resources are insufficient to finance all the identified needs, and difficult choices and decisions must be made. To inform decision-making processes, public and private sector stakeholders used a new decision-support tool, developed by the STDF and based on Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), to prioritize SPS investment options offering the greatest returns in terms of trade and other public policy

objectives. Building on the results of previous SPS capacity evaluations (by the IPPC, OIE, IICA), the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) used this project to prioritize SPS investments for market access in collaboration with public and private stakeholders. The project focused attention on the importance of SPS capacity, generated information to inform resource-allocation decisions and helped to obtain additional resources for SPS capacity building. Belize is one of the few countries in the world that has adopted an integrated approach to the management and implementation of SPS measures. BAHA is recognized as a competent and proactive organization, and has effective mechanisms for collaboration with other concerned public organizations and the private sector. These factors provided an "enabling environment" for BAHA to use (and re-use) this decision-support tool for SPS planning purposes.

## **Results**

### ***Increased ability to prioritise SPS investments for market access***

Under this project, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), in close collaboration with relevant national stakeholders, applied a new decision-support tool to prioritize eight distinct SPS investment options for market access, based on clearly articulated decision criteria and weights. The investment options were identified on the basis of stakeholder inputs and previous work carried out by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and others to evaluate SPS-related capacity building needs. In addition to the report produced, which is being fed into the development of a prioritized action plan to enhance SPS capacity, the complete dossier of SPS information and data compiled during the process is a useful output.

### ***Enhanced capacity to convince policy-makers and attract resources for SPS capacity building***

Data collection and analytical work carried out under this project helped to communicate the trade-related impacts of particular SPS investments to policy-makers at a glance. Clear and concise charts and graphs illustrated the returns on different types of investment, providing evidence to convince policy-makers of the value of addressing particular SPS-related issues and attract additional resources from the national budget. Within six months of the project's conclusion, new investments to improve animal health controls for live cattle facilitated new exports to Mexico. The analysis also revealed some oversights in previous work to estimate the costs of some SPS investments, which enabled missing data to be incorporated so that resources could be allocated most effectively.

### ***Strengthened decision-making process in BAHA and other agencies***

Based on the success of this project, BAHA realised that the results generated can allow for better decision-making processes in other areas as well. BAHA has therefore re-used this decision-support tool in food safety and animal health areas, such as Agricultural Services Project funded by Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). BAHA has also used the tool to support the development of a new Strategic Plan. The Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) has used it to prioritize areas for intervention with micro and small and medium-sized enterprises.

### ***Enhanced dialogue and transparency in SPS priority-setting***

The project built on the strong relationships BAHA had already developed with other government agencies and the private sector. Relevant government agencies, the private sector and other stakeholders with an interest in SPS issues were actively consulted on their views and perspectives on the range of SPS investment options to be considered, as well as decision criteria and weights to be used to prioritize the different options. Open discussions enhanced stakeholders' appreciation of what is required to gain and maintain market access for agri-food products, the role of BAHA in this regard, and the importance of adequate funding to ensure that functions are carried out effectively. BAHA expects that this will translate into greater support for its work in the future.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Enhance the capacity of SPS authorities to analyse investment needs and options***

This project demonstrated that implementation of the MCDA framework is enhanced when the SPS authorities have the capacity to effectively lead the data collection, analysis and review process. In similar future projects some initial training is recommended to enable national SPS authorities to understand the scope and limits of this prioritization tool, guide the various stakeholders involved through the steps involved (including to distinguish genuine SPS investment options from other non-SPS issues), obtain and incorporate the "best" available data, address issues related to data quality, utilize the computer software, and effectively communicate the results. Clearly documenting and sharing all the data and information used is key so that stakeholders can query the findings, and perceptions of bias are avoided. Decision criteria and weights should be assigned objectively to rule out subjectivity.

### ***Use sector-specific capacity evaluation tools to identify SPS capacity needs as a first step***

Applying sector-specific capacity evaluation frameworks, including the IPPC's Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Tool, the OIE's Tools for the Evaluation of the Performance of Veterinary Services (OIE-PVS) and Gap Analysis, and IICA's Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) Tools, is important to enable all SPS-related capacity needs to be identified systematically. Using these sector-specific tools as a first step is recommended in order to inform the process of prioritizing cross-cutting SPS investments for market access.

### ***Engage private and public stakeholders***

Effective participation by the public and private sector enhances the process of using this decision-support tool to prioritize SPS investments for market access and the results achieved. It also helps to improve access to available data and information, and to build ownership and support for follow-up. While SPS technical expertise is essential, it is also beneficial to include experts with a broader perspective on trade and socio-economic development.

### ***Prioritise SPS investments for market access on an ongoing basis***

Use of the MCDA framework in Belize focused on gaps in SPS capacity that impede exports of specific agri-food products to particular markets. Application of this tool should not be seen as a one-off exercise, but rather as an approach which can be used on an ongoing basis and re-used to inform decision-making processes for imports and exports, or in other areas.