

**STDF WORKING GROUP
20-21 JUNE 2024****WTO - ROOM E****SUMMARY REPORT****1 OPENING****1.1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The STDF Working Group met in person on 20-21 June 2024 at WTO Headquarters in Geneva. The meeting was chaired by Sarah Brunel (IPPC). She welcomed participants and explained the modalities of the meeting. She also listed the observers attending the Working Group: International Seed Federation (ISF), CABI, New Zealand, COLEAD, Minor Use Foundation (MUF), African Union Commission (AUC), African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), SSAFE, African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, UNIDO, and ITC.

2. Members adopted the agenda with a minor amendment following a request from France to discuss some project and PPG applications not tabled for consideration. The list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**. All presentations delivered are available on the STDF [website](#).

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**2.1 STDF programme evaluation**

3. The Secretariat gave a brief overview of the external evaluation of the STDF that was conducted by Project Economics Consulting (PEC) and completed in May 2024. The final report was shared with the Working Group prior to the meeting and is available on the STDF [website](#).

4. The recommendations in the external evaluation report were discussed in the STDF Policy Committee on 12 June. The Secretariat will prepare a summary report of this meeting and publish the final report on STDF's [website](#) in July. Five out of six recommendations were accepted, subject to clarification and further discussion in the Working Group in the context of the development of the next STDF Strategy. The Policy Committee welcomed a discussion about new SPS challenges and opportunities, considered that the STDF has a strong foundation and should remain fit for purpose.

5. The Secretariat also drew attention to three individual project impact evaluations that were delivered as part of the external STDF evaluation. These evaluation reports were also shared with the Working Group and published on the STDF website. A presentation on one of these evaluations could be scheduled at the next Working Group meeting.

2.2 Development of new STDF Strategy

6. The Secretariat thanked all STDF founding and other partners, donors and developing country experts (DCE) for their active participation in the Strategy workshop on 19 June and provided a brief report on the event, as well as the partner retreat that was held separately on 18 June. The Secretariat will prepare and share a summary document of the strategy development workshop, for participants' consideration.

2.3 Staffing and financial situation

7. The Secretariat recalled the staffing recommendation in the external evaluation, which could be funded through STDF's budget or via secondment. The WTO will explore how to fill this position in the coming period, as well as the feasibility of secondment, which may administratively be more complex. Partners and donors interested in secondment were requested to contact The Secretariat.

8. The Secretariat updated participants on STDF's current staffing situation. Chenge Nyagweta had left the Secretariat on 31 March 2024 and the Secretariat hired two short-term consultants to deliver on a range of communication products in the meantime, with the invaluable support of Paola Michelutti. The COMMS position in the STDF will be advertised in the coming months. The Secretariat praised the work of Morgane Martin, STDF's current intern, and Joel Eshun, a WTO intern from Ghana. Finally, the Head of the Secretariat, Melvin Spreij, announced that he will join the World Bank in September 2024 on a two-year secondment from the WTO. The WTO will handle his replacement in the coming months. Marlynne Hopper will be acting Head of the STDF in the interim.

9. The Secretariat further briefed participants on the financial situation of the STDF Trust Fund, with reference to Annex 1 of the Annotated Agenda. In 2024, contributions were received from Australia, Canada, Finland, and Germany, totalling CHF 3,176,263. Expenditures in 2024 amounted to CHF 2,526,628. Regarding uncontracted commitments, two PPGs and two PGs were reported as still awaiting to be contracted. The Secretariat reported a real-time balance in favour of donors of CHF2,586,631 (or US\$2,833,112), which is available under agenda item 4 for new projects and PPGs.

10. France informed the Working Group that they will renew and slightly increase their contribution to the STDF for the next three years, totalling EUR 1.6 million. Australia informed participants about its intention to renew its partnership with the STDF in the coming months.

2.4 Communications

2.4.1 STDF 2023 Annual Report

11. The Secretariat presented the STDF's 2023 Annual Report titled "From Global to Local: Safe Trade in Partnerships." The report reflects that collaboration is at the heart of STDF's multistakeholder network, focusing on partnerships for safe trade facilitation. The report includes stories from Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, showcasing how diverse organizations, from government authorities to industry associations, regional and international organizations, and others, are partnering to deliver safe trade results and impacts that benefit people on the ground. Following the presentation, the IPPC noted that it had engaged with the STDF Secretariat to consolidate communication efforts to reach a wider audience. FAO commended the visuals and case studies in the Annual Report.

12. The Working Group approved the STDF's 2023 Annual Report (in accordance with STDF Operational Rules, para. 11b.) The report is available on the [STDF website](#).

2.4.2 New STDF website

13. In 2023, the Secretariat started working on a new STDF website, with the support of an external company (Softescu) as well as WTO IT colleagues. This included upgrading of the website platform ("Drupal") and the restructuring of content, including knowledge work, to make it more accessible and user friendly. In part, this work was carried out in response to the previous 2019 external evaluation of the STDF, in particular to implement recommendation 4(ii).

14. The Secretariat introduced the new STDF website, focusing on the homepage where new content, such as stories and good practices, is highlighted. The new webpage for project applications and the project portfolio were also presented. The Working Group commended the Secretariat for this work and shared ideas for future improvements such as implementing a chatbot or a Q&A section, integrating key data from Logalito related to PGs and PPGs, integrating knowledge contributions from STDF partners, and improving the visibility of knowledge work.

2.4.3 STDF@20

15. STDF's 2024 Work Plan includes a small budget to celebrate STDF's 20th anniversary in 2024, including a dinner/reception for Working Group members, as well as a reception for SPS and Aid for Trade delegates during the SPS Committee week/Global Review of Aid for Trade in June 2024. In March 2024, the WTO had informed the Secretariat that this reception in June would not be possible.

16. The Working Group was invited to discuss alternative dates for organizing the STDF reception. Possibilities include a reception during the next meeting of the SPS Committee (13-15 November 2024) or the Codex Alimentarius Commission (25-30 November, Geneva). The WTO suggested to organize a joint SPS/STDF reception to also celebrate the SPS Agreement's 30th anniversary. Another suggestion was made to organize the reception in a beneficiary country. The Secretariat also plans to organize an STDF photo exhibition in the WTO Atrium later this year.

2.4.4 Update from Working Group participants

17. With reference to Annex 2 of the Annotated Agenda, the Secretariat provided an overview of STDF events and other external meetings in which the Secretariat participated since the last Working Group meeting in November 2023. These included five STDF webinars attended by almost 400 participants, three STDF events during UNCTAD's e-week, and an STDF event to celebrate Francophonie Day in 2024. The Secretariat also published seven newsletters and encouraged participants to share information for inclusion in future newsletters.

18. Founding and other partners, donors and experts shared information on their efforts to communicate about the STDF and support implementation of STDF's Communications Plan. This includes joint efforts with the IPPC Secretariat to coordinate communication efforts and close collaboration with the African Union.

2.5 Surveys of STDF Working Group in 2023

19. The Secretariat presented the results of two surveys carried out after the Working Group meetings in 2023. The first survey gathered 18 responses, and the second one received 24. One suggestion focused on the inclusion of applicants in the Working Group meeting. In response, the Secretariat had requested applicants to submit a short video to introduce their project applications which would be presented under item 4 of the agenda. Another suggestion was to develop a strategy for sharing experiences among developing country experts. The Secretariat is currently brainstorming ideas, including the establishment of a WhatsApp group.

3 KNOWLEDGE WORK

3.1 Public Private Partnerships (PPP) – knowledge product

20. The Secretariat introduced work by the STDF Practitioner Group to co-create an STDF PPP Guide. Some Practitioner Group members (CABI, COLEAD and WTO) have guided this work, led by an external expert (Mr Peter Stanbury). Others have been interviewed and engaged during the process. Mr Stanbury presented his work on the [PPP Guide](#), which builds on STDF PPP case stories and work by other STDF partners (including WOH). He explained how PPPs can leverage public and private sector skills and capabilities to accomplish shared objectives. The Guide categorizes three types of PPPs: policy and regulation, (hard and soft) infrastructure, and operations and delivery. Key success factors include an enabling environment, clear rationale and aims, appropriate and stable funding, and trust and inclusivity. The "magic dust" identified is trust, the presence of the right people, and effective communication (noting that technology can play an enabling role).

21. In response to questions, Mr Stanbury indicated that many of these findings would likely transfer to other sectors beyond SPS. Several members stressed the importance of in-person engagement for trust-building. IPPC noted that it was developing guidance for third-party entities to conduct phytosanitary services for NPPOs. The US shared examples of how it had promoted the GRP guide, suggesting a similar approach could be taken for the PPP guide. Mr Stanbury thanked members for the feedback and noted that the draft Guide would be shared with the Practitioner Group for comments and would be finalized before the next Working Group meeting.

3.2 Update and dialogue on STDF knowledge work

3.2.1 Electronic certification (eCert)

22. The Secretariat informed participants that the next meeting of the Practitioner Group on eCert will be held on 3 July. It also informed participants on the development of a "knowledge product" in the form of a short video on electronic SPS certification, for which filming in Morocco is envisaged in

September 2024. Additionally, the Secretariat will participate in the session "Innovating for Food Security: The Role of Digital Connectivity" during the 9th Global Review of Aid for Trade. The Secretariat is exploring the organization of a joint event, in collaboration with the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility (TFAF), on digitalization for trade facilitation, benefiting ALADI members.

23. WTO shared information on an SPS Committee thematic session on digital tools that would take place on 25 June 2024. The IPPC provided updated figures on the use of the ePhyto solution. WOH noted that it was currently revising the certification chapters in both the Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes and that the development of reference data models was expected to be completed by the end of the year.

3.2.2 Good Regulatory Practices (GRP)

24. The Secretariat provided an update on ongoing work to disseminate the GRP Guide in follow-up to the GRP workshop organized with the AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat, and the United States in September 2023. There is ongoing engagement with USDA on a complementary GRP toolkit. The Secretariat is also developing GRP case stories and there are plans for an online GRP session for COMESA Member States in the second half of 2024.

3.2.3 Evidence-based approach to prioritize SPS needs (P-IMA)

25. The Secretariat updated the Working Group on follow-up on the recommendations of the external P-IMA evaluation (presented to the Working Group in November 2023). The Secretariat referred to a document, distributed to the Working Group in advance of the meeting, presenting proposed actions to implement the seven recommendations of the evaluation. Participants were requested to share their views on the follow-up to the evaluation, including opportunities for alignment and synergies with their own SPS capacity development work.

26. The IPPC noted the potential synergies between the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Tool and P-IMA. The World Bank discussed the importance of sequencing these tools, questioning if P-IMA should precede the application of the PCE, based on their experiences in Nepal. FAO suggested that sectoral tools should collect data first, followed by P-IMA in order to prioritize possible interventions.

3.2.4 Gender mainstreaming

27. The Secretariat shared updates on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan. This included sharing ongoing efforts to mainstream gender in STDF projects. It also shared information on joint gender work that will be undertaken with FAO and WTO, as part of a new MoU between both organizations. This includes a joint event at the next WTO Public Forum in September 2024 and other joint webinars to share experiences and exchange best practices on gender mainstreaming in agriculture/SPS-related projects.

28. Australia and Ireland expressed full support for gender equality and economic empowerment initiatives in SPS, highlighting the STDF Gender Action Plan and the importance of gender-related targets and gender-disaggregated reporting. Australia also noted the new focus on disability and inclusion in their international development policy. The IPPC noted plans to study the introduction of gender mainstreaming in their PCE tool and to include a gender module within the joint COLEAD/IPPC course on project development and resource mobilization.

3.3 Risk management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), including external assessment on environment, biodiversity and climate change

3.3.1 Presentation by David Boyer, STDF consultant, followed by Q&A

29. A [presentation](#) was made by the STDF consultant, David Boyer, on the initial findings of the external learning assessment focused on environment, biodiversity, and climate change. As part of the assessment, he had conducted key informant interviews with representatives of STDF founding and other partners, donors and developing country experts, as well as other stakeholders. He presented five recommendations, including setting up a new Practitioner Group on this topic, establishing criteria for assessing how projects will/have integrated environmental mainstreaming,

and improving tracking of current STDF environment indicators through better data collection and story gathering from project partners.

30. Working Group members thanked Mr Boyer for his presentation. FAO and UNIDO referred to their processes for environment mainstreaming in projects, noting the importance of a strong evidence-base, indicators and robust assumptions. Others highlighted win-win options to promote science-based decision-making and new solutions to strengthen SPS systems that benefit the environment, noting that STDF could pay more attention to environment mainstreaming in the next strategy. FAO highlighted the need to reduce food waste (especially safe food that is rejected due to incorrect allergen or other labels) and address water contamination. Others recommended developing criteria to support environment mainstreaming in relevant STDF projects. In response to questions on linkages between the STDF assessment and other WTO work on the environment, and trade and sustainability, the consultant noted that he had chosen to maintain a neutral stance. In interviews, there were diverse perspectives on the political aspects surrounding SPS, TBT, and green trade. Recognizing the complexities involved in reaching consensus among the different parties, he decided it would be prudent to avoid delving into these topics.

31. The consultant thanked Working members for their feedback on the presentation. The draft report is being finalized and will be distributed by the end of the European summer.

3.4 Presentation by Mr Peter Stanbury, COLEAD consultant, on COLEAD pilot study "Spillover effects from trade-related SPS capacity-building projects in Kenya", followed by Q&A

32. A [presentation](#) was made by Mr Peter Stanbury to present the results of a COLEAD pilot study focused on spillover effects of trade-related SPS projects. This work by COLEAD links closely to STDF's previous work in this area under STDF/PPG/535, implemented by Michigan State University, and the resultant [STDF briefing note](#) on this topic.

33. Mr Stanbury's research identified issues which, while not strictly spillovers, are relevant to include as they impact how future programs may be planned. Technical training interventions designed to support Kenya's export horticulture sector had significant impacts on economic development at national level and on incomes for individuals. Although interventions had focused on export horticulture, there have also been broader impacts on the country, such as through better organization of farmers. Spillovers at a technical and operational level have evidently altered behaviours and attitudes at a deeper level, impacting power dynamics and relationships.

34. The Netherlands referenced research work on urban food systems that had been conducted by Wageningen University that may be useful to this work. Mary Grace Mandigma (DCE) shared information on a study from the Philippines on implementing good agricultural practices, noting spillover effects on workers' health and economic growth.

4 PPGs AND PROJECTS

4.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects and PPGs

35. The Secretariat referred members to document [STDF/WG/Jun24/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of ongoing projects and PPGs. The Secretariat informed members that 28 projects and 11 PPGs are ongoing, and that 2 projects and 2 PPGs are awaiting to be contracted.

4.2 Overview of new project and PPG applications not tabled for consideration

36. The Secretariat briefly introduced the PPG and project applications not tabled for consideration at this meeting. These applications, including the reasons for not tabling them, are listed in document [STDF/WG/Jun24/Review](#). The Secretariat drew attention to one application which was not tabled for consideration:

STDF/PPG/1001 – Capacity building in sanitary and phytosanitary diagnostics to strengthen operationalization of the Mwami/Mchinji One Stop Border Post (Zambia/Malawi)

37. This PPG request was submitted by The Department of Plant Quarantine and Phytosanitary Service of Zambia and the National Plant Protection Organization of Malawi. It aims at assessing the strengthening and operationalization of a One Stop Border Post (OSBP) to uphold SPS compliance as well as enhancing market access for plants and plant products between the two countries. While the proposal is eligible, there is a possible overlap with a project proposal that will be discussed later in the Working Group that aims at fostering and strengthening work at the same border post. Applicants have been informed about the two applications and encouraged to work together.

38. France requested more information about STDF/PG/997 "Fortalecimiento de la capacidad sanitaria y fitosanitaria para incrementar la sostenibilidad de la cadena de valor del cacao en Nicaragua y las oportunidades comerciales," stating that the application addressed an essential new pest problem in cocoa. In response, the Secretariat clarified that the draft proposal was well-written, but that its focus was still too broad. In addition to the pest, it mentioned many other contaminants and non-SPS issues, and therefore some additional work is needed.

39. MaryLucy Oronje (DCE) referred to STDF/PPG/987 "Enabling Uganda access export markets for animals and animal products through creation of disease-free compartments", stating that the PPG application had taken on the characteristics of a project proposal and as such, that the application would have to be redefined. She also suggested that it might be useful to focus on a regional approach for this specific issue.

4.3 Consideration of new PPG applications

40. The chairperson affirmed that there are no conflicts of interest regarding any of the PPG applications.

STDF/PPG/944 - Preparation of a project proposal to facilitate market access through enhancing phytosanitary capacity in Uzbekistan

41. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application subject to some revisions. Members found the PPG demand-driven, relevant to the STDF and supported by public and private stakeholders. However, they provided comments that should be taken into account during the development of the project proposal: (i) ensuring compliance with international standards for phytosanitary measures (ISPMs); (ii) supporting current efforts of the country towards its accession to the WTO; (iii) considering a value chain angle; (iv) considering integrating a specific gender component; and (v) considering a One Health approach and possible links with STDF/PPG/962 (Preparing a project proposal to strengthen the national food safety control system in Uzbekistan) also approved by the STDF. In addition, members recommended to look carefully at linkages and synergies with past and ongoing initiatives in Uzbekistan, such as some that are being supported by the EU, to ensure complementarities and avoid duplication with these efforts.

STDF/PPG/962 - Preparing a project proposal to strengthen the national food safety control system in Uzbekistan

42. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application. The Secretariat received several written comments on this PPG application before the meeting, including inputs from the United States, WHO, and Martin Kimanya (DCE). The Working Group broadly supported the PPG and its relevance. Some comments emphasized the importance of aligning the PPG with international standards and incorporating an analysis of traceability and environmental compliance measures, including strategies for managing food loss. Additionally, it was requested that the results of the recent assessment conducted using the tool developed by WHO and IFC be taken into account.

STDF/PPG/989 – Enhancing compliance with sanitary standards to develop the meat value chain in Chad

43. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application and made several recommendations for its improvement. Members found the PPG demand-driven, relevant, and in line with Chad's

development priorities. However, members highlighted the environmental risks associated with the livestock and meat sector. They also made several recommendations to improve its implementation and the resulting project: (i) ensuring that environmental risks are properly taken into consideration; (ii) including WOAHA and exploring synergies with the Regional Project to Support Pastoralism in the Sahel - Phase 2 (PRAPS-2) financed by the World Bank, for which WOAHA is implementing the animal health component; (iii) including an assessment of market potential for Chad's meat exports and exploring potential niche markets, and finally; (iv) including an assessment of the potential risks that climate change may have on the livestock and meat sector as well as its potential impacts on the profitability of the sector.

4.4 Consideration of new PG applications

44. The chairperson informed members that there were conflicts of interest regarding the following PG applications: CABI with STDF/PG/789, FAO with STDF/PG/993, WTO with STDF/PG/1000, and FAO/OIRSA with STDF/PG/984. As such, these organizations should refrain from taking part in the discussions linked to these applications.

STDF/PG/789 – Improving SPS compliance of small-scale cross border traders in Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania

45. The Working Group **approved** a grant of US\$100,000 to conduct an assessment to further improve the project proposal. The assessment should cover the following elements: (i) a preliminary assessment of the specific SPS challenges facing small-scale cross-border traders (SSBTs) in the three targeted countries; (ii) identifying the agri-food products to be target by the project and the SPS issues facing these specific value chains; (iii) an in-depth gender analysis to better understand specific gender needs, challenges and opportunities related to SPS issues; (iv) consultations with SSBTs, especially women and youth, on the reason(s) why they prefer to trade through informal channels; and (v) a cost-benefit analysis of formalization for SSCBTs.

STDF/PG/993 - Enhancing Sanitary capacity and market access of small ruminants' and their products for Zambia

46. The Working Group **did not approve** this application and concurred with the Secretariat's review. It agreed that the proposal needs more work and improvement in several areas: (i) clarification on the trade aspects (providing more information on current trade with DRC and Tanzania which are PPR endemic) and on future market opportunities and related costs and benefits; (ii) clarification on the sustainability of the project, i.e. the financial resources and related tasks that will be needed to maintain the disease-free status after project completion; and (iii) other areas, such as the implementation arrangements, the logical framework, the budget, the in-kind contribution, and complementarity to existing and regional initiatives. The Working Group recommended the applicant to revise and re-submit the proposal for consideration by the Working Group at a future meeting.

STDF/PG/1000 - Improving the use of the ePing SPS&TBT Platform to enhance transparency for market access

47. The Working Group **approved** this application subject to: (i) removing the Training of Trainers (ToT) component from the project; and (ii) receiving the missing letter of support from Tanzania. The Secretariat clarified that the IT enhancements to the ePing system will be fully covered by a US\$325,000 co-funding contribution to the WTO from the European Union. The Secretariat also noted that it had consulted with WTO's Legal Counsel on potential conflicts of interest (as this project would be implemented by the WTO), and that there was no objection, as long as there would be a clear separation of duties. This separation would be accomplished by having WTO's Trade and Environment Division be the official implementing entity, while the WTO Agriculture and Commodities Division (which houses the STDF) will approve report and payments for project activities.

48. The Secretariat also clarified that IT changes to the ePing system will not be based solely on an assessment in the five countries applying for the proposal - but rather on a consultative process that will involve the entire WTO membership. This will be done through a survey to all WTO members (SPS and TBT Committee) that would incorporate findings of the initial assessment. The Secretariat highlighted the lack of information regarding Output 4 (ToT Programme), including on how certified

trainers will be used at the end of the project, which raised questions regarding the sustainability of this component. The Secretariat suggested that a separate project to implement a ToT programme can be developed and submitted to the STDF for consideration by the Working Group at a future meeting.

49. The Working Group noted that the AfCFTA Secretariat may also be creating a notification system and encouraged project partners to coordinate with the AfCFTA Secretariat to avoid duplication and ensure that their needs, to the extent possible, are considered when determining potential enhancements to the ePing system.

STDF/PG/984 - Strengthening surveillance and risk management of avian influenza for safe trade in the SICA region

50. The Working Group **approved** this application. It acknowledged that the project is timely and relevant to the STDF, developed through a participatory process involving various public and private sector stakeholders, and demand driven. It also stipulated a number of conditions that should be met before starting implementation: (i) ensuring the involvement and active participation of the veterinary authorities of the beneficiary countries, including in the project steering committee; (ii) ensuring active participation of small farmers/poultry producers in the beneficiary countries; (iii) ensuring coordination with ongoing or planned initiatives and projects to avoid duplication of efforts; and (iv) making adjustments to the logical framework and work plan of the project, with support of the Secretariat.

51. In addition, the Working Group suggested that: (i) the first component of the project should focus on specific issues that require regulatory development and that WOAHA should be actively involved in this work; (ii) the second component should focus on capacity building of small producers (household/ domesticated birds); and (iii) the third component should consider surveillance of wild and domesticated birds, as well as passive surveillance.

4.5 Information exchange

4.5.1 IFC/WHO Food Safety Assessment

52. Katia Onul (IFC) and Simone Moraes Raszl (WHO) [presented](#) the new IFC/WHO Assessment tool on the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety. The IFC Global Food Safety Advisory, WHO Secretariat, and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Food Safety have worked together on designing an assessment tool to assist countries in assessing their baseline status and developing their own roadmaps for fully implementing the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety. The main objective of the tool is to propose a harmonized, objective, and consensual basis to analyse countries' Member implementation of the WHO Strategy.

53. The World Bank highlighted that many countries face a disconnect between food safety agencies and public health authorities, hindering the identification of food safety issues. UNIDO raised the idea of supporting member states in establishing performance monitoring frameworks to aggregate global data and address gaps in indicators.

4.5.2 Overview of the IPPC African Phytosanitary Programme

54. Mr Osama El-Lissy (IPPC) presented the Africa Phytosanitary Programme (APP). Invasive plant pests have grown by 40% in the past four decades. The APP program aims to empower African countries to effectively manage and combat these pests. It strengthens the capacity of NPPOs to achieve timely and efficient control of plant pests with regulatory, economic, and environmental significance. The APP focuses on early detection of pests, enabling NPPOs and RPPOs to be better prepared for outbreaks, respond swiftly, and recover effectively.

55. CABI highlighted synergies with their Plantwise Plus program and its pest preparedness pathways, emphasizing opportunities for knowledge sharing. The Netherlands highlighted the importance of the programme being owned by African stakeholders to ensure decisions are made locally. IPPC clarified that it would support capacity, while ministries would provide the structure and workforce for its implementation.

4.5.3 IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation: innovative steps toward supporting countries' phytosanitary systems

56. Rokhila Madaminova (IPPC) made a [presentation](#) on the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool. The PCE is a fully NPPO-led, facilitator-enabled, IPPC Secretariat-supported, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder process, used by contracting parties to understand their strengths and weaknesses in their phytosanitary systems, and develop plans to address capacity deficiencies.

57. The IPPC noted that the average cost of applying the PCE ranges from US\$60,000 to US\$90,000 and that several success stories on the application of the PCE could be found on the IPPC website. In response to a question on whether a developed country had ever applied the PCE, IPPC noted that Israel had shown an interest but has not yet undertaken the assessment. Mary Grace Mandigma (DCE) noted that the Philippines plans to conduct a PCE using its own funds to potentially revise legislation. MaryLucy Oronje (DCE) suggested that the IPPC should share the list of countries that had conducted a PCE on their website.

4.5.4 New/emerging SPS initiatives/issues and opportunities for future STDF work

58. The ITC informed participants about the start of a new STDF project in Nigeria, implemented with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council. It aims to address pesticides and microbiologic contamination in the cowpeas and sesame value chain. On 11 March, a launching event was held in Abuja with more than 100 participants. More information can be found in ITC's [information document](#).

59. The FAO shared [information](#) about a planned FAO/IAEA/UNIDO programme, "Safe Food in Africa" (SAFA). This programme aims to assist African countries in strengthening their national food safety systems by enhancing the capabilities of competent authorities, relevant institutions, and stakeholders, and by promoting good practices in agrifood businesses and food safety culture. The programme is planned for four years. It includes national assessments using the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, and will focus on country priorities identified in National Food Safety Strategies. The programme will also link to a trade competitiveness and market access programme funded by the European Union (implemented by UNIDO), and existing collaboration with IAEA. A concept note is formulated, and a fundraising campaign is expected to be launched shortly. Implementation is set to start in the first quarter of 2025.

60. France shared information about [REMESA](#), a network focused on strengthening collaboration on plant protection between Mediterranean countries. The first meeting was held in November in Tunis, organized by the Sub-Regional Office for North Africa.

61. The Netherlands informed members on a study being conducted to assess the impact of the Netherlands' food export on small farmers in fragile regions. The Netherlands is also working with scientific institutes to improve methodologies linked to informal trade and production, aiming to support a transition to a more formal economy and food production.

62. The United States shared information on two new initiatives. The first is the Food Safety for Food Security Initiative ([FS4FS](#)), a tri-agency partnership between USAID, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, and FDA. This initiative includes the development of a traceability sandbox, an open-source resource to enhance supply chain traceability. A webinar introducing these tools is planned for late September, with pilots in two Feed the Future countries to follow. The second initiative is the Assisting Specialty Crop Exports ([ACE](#)), supporting exports of horticultural products and addressing non-tariff barriers, many of which are SPS related.

63. The WHO shared [updates](#) on the WHO Alliance for Food Safety, launched to support the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy for Food Safety and foodborne disease surveillance. The WHO also shared information on World Food Safety Day 2024, coordinated jointly with the FAO, focusing on preparedness for food safety incidents and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the International Food Safety Authority's Network INFOSAN.

64. The WOAHA updated members on a digitization project for its standards, including the Aquatic Code, the Terrestrial Code, and the Diagnostic Manual for Terrestrial and Aquatic Animals. The new

digital platform will feature a sophisticated search tool and a commodity-based search tool, expected to go live by September, with a possible demonstration in November.

5 CLOSURE

65. The chairperson thanked all participants for their active engagement and closed the meeting on Friday 21 June at 13:20.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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