



Final Report

1. Title of the Project

Application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Framework to inform SPS decision-making in Belize

2. Background

Belize is among a few countries in the world that has applied an integrated approach to agricultural health and food safety by establishing a single competent authority at the national level, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority. Recently, the Standard Trade and Development Facility developed a framework, based on the use of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), to provide a structured process for establishing priorities across multiple SPS capacity building options ("investments") in the context of resource constraints.

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) solicited assistance to apply this framework, in collaboration with all concerned public and private sector stakeholders in Belize, to identify and prioritize SPS capacity building options in Belize. The information generated and the SPS priorities identified through the application of this framework will be used to develop, in consultation with all stakeholders, a five year strategic plan for SPS implementation in Belize, and to inform the allocation of resources by the Government, as well as donors and development partners. This approach is critical to the Belize Agricultural Health Authority as resources are limited and the need exists to prioritize specific SPS issues for the efficient use of these resources.

3. Methodology

An International Consultant was hired to work with national stakeholders to apply the tool. At the request of Belize, funds were obtained from the Standards Trade and Development Facility through a Project Grant for the application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Framework in this country. The project was approved by the STDF Working Group in October 2011, and implemented from January to October 2012.

BAHA prepared the information dossier which was submitted electronically to the International consultant in preparation for the application of the framework. The information dossier included available SPS-related information, including the findings of the OIE PVS Tool and GAP

Analysis, and the IPPC's PCE Tool. The same information was also made available to all stakeholders at least one month before the first workshop.

A total of two workshops were conducted during the course of the Project. At the initial workshop there were thirty-five (35) participants with representatives from specific line Ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Investment and Trade along with producers, exporters, processors, academia, and representatives from two international organizations. The workshop was held on 03 May 2012 and served to define the choice set, decision criteria and weights for setting priorities of SPS capacity building options. At the end of the first workshop participants had identified twenty-one (21) SPS capacity building needs. Following subsequent discussions in the local team, thirteen (13) of these options were excluded because they were judged not to be substantive SPS issues.

Time in between the first and second workshop was designated to the construction of the information cards for each of remaining eight capacity building options identified. All the information was then submitted to the consultant who proceeded with the application of the framework. Subsequently a second workshop was held on 20 August 2012 for the validation of the results for which twenty-seven (27) participants were present. Participants requested for an entire month to review and comment on the findings. A detailed report on the application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Framework can be found in Annex 1.

After the last workshop, a session was convened with key BAHA personnel and stakeholders for a theoretical training on the application of the MCDA framework. This session was deemed extremely important as there has been an expressed interest on the part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture and the Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) to utilize this tool to prioritize programmes and activities within their respective institutions. BAHA would be using the tool to continue to apply it as new data is obtained either as a result of the allocation of resources or closure to projects and programmes that are currently being implemented.

4. Budget and Finances

As mentioned earlier, funds for the application of the MDCA framework were obtained from the Standards Trade and Development Facility as funding for Project Grant No. 365. The grant amounted to the sum total of \$30,000 USD and the expenses to \$27, 276.45 USD as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary with breakdown of budged funds and actual expenditure for STDF 365 Project

	Project Budget (\$USD)	Actual Expenses (\$USD)
Expertise		
International Consultant	15,000.00	14,248.00
Flight and per diem	6,000.00	6,000.00
National Consultant	1,000.00	0.00
Workshop	5,000.00	4,552.60
Travel (in country travel)	740.00	966.00
General Operating Expenses (including unforeseen bank charges)	1,000.00	1509.85
D-Sight Software¹	1260.00	0.00
TOTAL	30,000.00	27,276.45

A detailed summary of all expenses related to the funds provided under STDF 365 are summarized in Annex II.

5. Conclusion

The application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Framework in Belize resulted in the prioritization of eight (8) capacity building options which included: Animal health controls for live cattle exports, animal health and hygiene controls for beef exports; animal health and hygiene controls for chicken exports; plant health controls for pitahaya exports; food safety controls for papaya exports; laboratory testing for pesticide residues and veterinary drugs and veterinary pesticide residues; laboratory testing capacity for heavy metals and plant health controls for citrus pulp exports.

One of the prioritized options, animal health controls for live cattle exports, is already in the implementation phase however additional funding will be required to fully complete the programme. Plans are in effect to try to seek resources locally for at least three of the top four options which require minimal investment but have impact on product diversification and on small farmers. The other options will be included in the Aid for Trade Strategy particularly as the information generated by the application of the MCDA has pointed out clearly the upfront investment needed and the potential impact these would have once addressed.

The MCDA tool has the flexibility of being applied whenever the availability of new data calls for it. Additionally it can even be applied to any given section in the organization (plant health,

¹ D-Sight software (4 copies) provided directly by the STDF Secretariat.

animal health, quarantine, food safety) which may desire to prioritize activities even further, but at the departmental level. These properties are of significant importance to BAHA given the fact that as programmes are completed or new resources allocated, it will be necessary that the tool be applied and reapplied so that at any given point the results with prioritized options reflects the current situation as opposed to simply having a static report with outdated information. Plans are also in place to apply the tool with the objectives of using the information to assist in developing a strategic plan for the Belize Agricultural Health Authority.

Since the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture and BELTRAIDE are also keen in applying the MCDA, Belize will certainly benefit greatly from this framework. BELTRAIDE would be focusing on prioritized areas for intervention in their work with micro and small and medium size enterprises. The Agriculture Department on the other hand would be looking at programmes that should be prioritized under two major headings: Food and Nutrition Security and Foreign Exchange Earnings.

Several lessons were learnt in the application of the MCDA framework in Belize. From the onset, it became clear that good stakeholder representation is essential as the absence of some partners may result in key issues not being identified. The application of the previous assessment frameworks such as the World Organisation for Animal Health's Tool for the Evaluation of the Performance of Veterinary Services (OIE PVS Tool) and the OIE Gap Analysis, the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) and the Performance, Vision and Strategy Tools developed and applied by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) are very useful as these specialized tool are able to identify the important areas that need to be strengthened. The benefit of those tools is that they establish the benchmark by which Competent Authorities could measure their level of compliance. However for that to be translated very clearly into prioritizing specifically on those areas that would have the most impact on trade facilitation, the MCDA framework is extremely useful. Given the manner in which it is structured and applied, it provides quite readily, at a snapshot, the potential trade impact that would be established if resources are applied to enhancing the respective SPS capacity option identified. BAHA had readily available all the pertinent reports on previous tools applied and in addition had on hand the import requirements of the products with potential to access foreign markets. In a small and vulnerable economy setting, such as Belize's, weights need to be assigned carefully to ensure that the domestic issues are captured particularly as the MCDA framework's objective is more trade oriented. A team of SPS specialists as a support to the process is a great advantage since many issues may be identified which are not necessarily SPS related matters and these need to be clearly explained to stakeholders so the engagement process is not affected negatively.

The approach is also more conducive to stakeholder having ownership and rendering their support, because it actually initiates with their identification of what ought to be prioritized.

Additionally, it allows for stakeholders to have a greater appreciation for the work conducted by SPS Competent authorities, and the importance of the allocation of resources, to ensure those functions is carried out effectively. BAHA hopes that this results in greater support for its roles and functions.

The half-day session on steps for the application of the MCDA was also very important as key partners in development learnt to appreciate the efficiency of the tool and its broad scope of application once the choice sets are clearly defined and the decision criteria and weights are established. However one major setback was the inability of having the software available to trainees during the session. We believe that to learn to apply the tool, getting “hands on” experience is vital to the learning process and the sustainability aspect of the Project.

BAHA found the application of the MCDA a very useful exercise and as next steps intends to develop concept notes for each of prioritized options and seek sources of funding to further enhance sanitary and phytosanitary capacity in Belize.

ANNEX I