

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING¹

26 June (afternoon) and 27 June 2008

WTO Headquarters, Geneva

Adoption of Agenda

1. The agenda was adopted without amendment. A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

Overview of Operation of the Facility (STDF 249 and G/SPS/GEN/847)

Implementation of Operating Plan 2008-09: Status report by Secretariat

Development of DVD (STDF 228)

2. The Secretariat provided an update on plans to develop a film to raise awareness on the importance of SPS measures. National authorities in Belize, Benin and Viet Nam had agreed for filming to take place in their countries. Only one proposal, which was over-budget, had been received by the deadline in the Call for Proposals. A second proposal arrived late and could not be considered.

3. The Working Group accepted the Secretariat's proposal to: (i) contact companies who did not respond to the tender to learn why they did not bid; (ii) push back the start and delivery date for this work; (iii) re-tender to receive additional proposals; (iv) produce a draft script during July-August for distribution to partners for comment prior to finalization; and (v) commence filming in the last quarter of 2008 as soon as a company was in place and there was agreement on the script.

West African fruit fly (STDF 225)

4. Following the approval of STDF 225 in April 2008, the Secretariat had been working with partners to advance planning for a coordination meeting on efforts to control fruit fly in West Africa. Panos Antonakakis attended a regional meeting of Integrated Framework contact points in Benin on 6-7 May, which discussed the economic impact of fruit fly on production and exports and various approaches for control. On the basis of the STDF involvement, participants at this meeting had agreed that any regional work should be co-ordinated with an impending EC analysis of the fruit fly problem. The STDF would attend an EC meeting on this subject in Brussels on 1 July. The STDF had also held discussions with the World Bank on this topic.

5. IPPC expressed interest to collaborate on STDF 225 and noted the importance of a regional approach for effective management of fruit fly. IPPC further recommended that work under STDF 225 should be guided by the experiences and outcomes of activities to develop a broad management strategy in East Africa and involve key stakeholders from this region. Other participants (USDA, World Bank, IICA, EC) expressed support for the proposed work. The USDA representative noted that their East African APHIS representative (based in Kenya) would be interested to collaborate. The World Bank reiterated the importance of ensuring clarity on the desired outcome (eradication or management) and taking a systems approach to mitigation which would include market access considerations based on commercial feasibility – a point echoed by the WTO. IICA commented that International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had substantial experience in combating fruit fly in South America and should be involved together with other relevant partners (e.g. International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology - ICIPE). The Working Group agreed on the importance of local ownership for this work.

¹ Summary revised to incorporate comments received from members of the Working Group.

Capacity evaluation tools

6. The Secretariat briefed the meeting on follow-up activities to the STDF workshop on capacity evaluation tools on 31 March 2008. Comments had been received from FAO and OIE on the draft briefing note on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools, and other partners were encouraged to respond. The Secretariat proposed holding a half-day meeting to discuss ways to improve information exchange on planned and completed capacity evaluations, and opportunities to harmonize approaches. To keep costs to a minimum, such a meeting could be organized back-to-back with an already planned event. The forthcoming meeting of the Trade Standards Practitioners Network (TSPN) was proposed. There was agreement that it would be essential to ensure that agencies involved in developing and applying the tools in question were present. It was also noted that STDF 246, if approved, would be a first joint effort at capacity evaluation between various partner agencies.

7. FAO informed the Working Group of ongoing activities to develop laboratory assessment guidelines and noted that FAO was open to suggestions to simplify and improve its existing capacity assessment tools. The meeting heard that delays had occurred in the finalization of the UNIDO/World Bank laboratory investment guide, which was now expected by September 2008. The World Bank and FAO were considering options to link the planned World Bank/UNIDO laboratory tool with the FAO Biosecurity Toolkit. The Group heard that the TSPN was seeking to expand its membership and the IPPC, OIE, Codex and the STDF were invited to participate. GTZ was providing support for establishment of a Secretariat for the TSPN and other donors were being sought.

Compendium on technical assistance and database on SPS-related technical assistance

8. In response to comments from partners on the planned compendium of SPS-related technical assistance, particularly on its sustainability, the Secretariat proposed pilot-testing the compendium as a follow-up activity to the three STDF regional consultations in Central America, East Africa and the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. This would have the additional benefit of utilizing the significant amount of information generated through regional research and would be a useful follow-up to the regional consultations. The Working Group agreed to the Secretariat's proposal.

9. In parallel, the Secretariat noted that discussions were on-going on the use of the WTO/OECD Trade Capacity Building Database to track SPS-related technical assistance, including commitments arising from the regional consultation work. The Secretariat confirmed that long-term funding for this work had been committed by WTO.

Evaluation of the STDF (STDF 248)

10. The Secretariat introduced draft terms of reference (STDF 248) for an evaluation of the STDF. The Working Group discussed the objectives of the evaluation and some participants noted that it would be essential to assess the impact of the STDF, including the results of projects, coordinating activities and regional consultation work. It was noted that projects could be assessed, in part, through a review of completed evaluations. There was agreement that assessing impact would be challenging, particularly for recent activities whose results would be seen more clearly after 12 to 18 months. The Working Group agreed to provide written feedback on the revised draft terms of reference, as well as the names and CVs of possible evaluators, by 4 July. There was further agreement that the evaluation should be completed by mid-October for presentation to the STDF Policy Committee meeting in December 2008.

Discussion of items for STDF Policy Committee

11. Following an offer by FAO to host the next meeting of the Policy Committee, it was agreed that this meeting would take place in Rome in the week of 15 December 2008. The Secretariat noted that the USDA, Sweden and Germany were the current donor members of the Policy Committee. There was agreement that a draft agenda for the Policy Committee would be circulated at the next Working Group on 10 October.

12. The Secretariat circulated a letter from the OIE on the wording of paragraph 47 of the Operational Rules. It was agreed that the letter would be formally tabled at the next Working Group meeting. Comments received from other members of the Working Group on this paragraph could also be discussed at this time.

Funding situation

13. The Secretariat provided an overview of contributions to the STDF in 2007 and 2008 and the status of discussions with donors on the renewal of contributions. A provisional statement of accounts as of 9 June 2008 was circulated. It was noted that contributions received to date in 2008 (from the UK, EC and Switzerland) amounted to CHF 1,028,475. Assuming that existing donors renewed contributions at 2007 levels, the Secretariat predicted that total funding available for 2008 would amount to approximately CHF 4 million.

14. The Secretariat provided an update on the STDF's current financial balance, which stood at CHF 3,656,374, and noted that disbursement of funds had become faster during the past year. Taking into account expenditures for approved, but uncontracted, projects and PPGs, other outstanding project commitments and Secretariat running costs, the revised balance was expected to amount to CHF 850,813. The outstanding balance constituted primarily co-ordination activities.

STDF Aid for Trade activities

15. The Secretariat provided a detailed report on the STDF Aid for Trade activities (STDF 175) focusing on the three regional consultations in Phnom Penh, Kampala and Guatemala City.² Total expenditure to date for these activities has amounted to CHF 678,157. Various commitments had still to be processed but the project was expected to be delivered according to budget.

16. Various donors attending these events had indicated that they would use the results of the STDF research work to influence future programming of cooperation in the SPS area. Ongoing follow-up was important to mobilize funds, track how outstanding needs were being addressed and measure the impact of the activities. The Secretariat noted that participants in each region had proposed holding a follow-up meeting in 12 months time to track progress.

17. Donors expressed their desire to see an evaluation of impact and some comment was made that certain of the country needs resembled "shopping lists". In reply, the Secretary stated that the lists reflected the tenor of the needs, systemic underinvestment in this area and the clear need for additional assistance. Some donors also indicated their desire to see greater local ownership and accountability. One donor expressed concern that a number of action plans had already been developed in Cambodia but the main problem with follow-up was a political one. The representative from Cambodia replied that there was a need to synthesize existing plans and involve all the various ministries concerned. The STDF work would be useful in this context.

² An overview of the Aid for Trade activities has been subsequently issued in document G/SPS/GEN/864.

18. The OIE expressed a desire to be more closely involved in planning any future events and to incorporate the results of the OIE PVS as appropriate, by encouraging respective countries to present the results and their experiences on the PVS during regional workshops. It noted that the timing of the Kampala workshop had been unfortunate. The Secretariat indicated that efforts had been made to integrate the findings of capacity evaluations carried out by OIE, IPPC and FAO.

19. The Secretariat stated that holding these events in the framework of Aid for Trade had helped to improve the participation of national and donor officials and to raise the profile of both SPS issues and the STDF.

20. Due to the late submission of good practice projects by donors and the (resulting) limited availability of consultants, the planned good practice research component of STDF 175 had been delayed. The results of this work will be presented at a workshop on 6 October 2008. The Secretariat was planning to work further with the consultant who had drafted the paper on "Identification of parameters of good practice and benchmarks for judging the impact of SPS-related technical assistance". This paper would be revised and issued as a background document at the October workshop.

21. The Working Group agreed for the Secretariat to concentrate on follow-up to these three activities before tabling a proposal for further regional/national consultations. In the discussion on possible future STDF Aid for Trade activities, UEMOA, Bangladesh and Peru were mentioned. The option of focusing future STDF activities on specific issues (e.g. mycotoxins or trans-boundary animal diseases) was also suggested.

Overview of progress on good practice and planning of October 2008 session (G/SPS/GEN/816.add.1)

22. A total of 24 "good practice" projects had been submitted in response to G/SPS/GEN/816. The Secretariat informed the meeting that in-country research was underway to seek the views of beneficiaries and partners of the nominated projects on elements of good practice in project design, implementation, outputs and the achievement of "higher order objectives" (such as poverty alleviation). The consultants leading this work were expected to submit draft regional reports by the end of July, which would be synthesized by the Secretariat for presentation to the good practice workshop on 6 October 2008.

23. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate a draft programme to the Working Group after the Working Group meeting prior to its finalization.

STDF Information session on private standards

24. The Secretary provided an overview of the STDF information session on 26 June, which had been attended by over 200 participants, mostly delegates from the SPS Committee. The session helped the SPS Committee (and the Secretariat) to enhance its understanding in this area. The four presentations delivered, a podcast of the session and a final report had been posted on the WTO SPS gateway.

25. WTO informed the meeting of developments in the SPS Committee and further planned work on this issue. The OECD reported on a survey of compliance with private standards in 10 countries in Africa. It was agreed that a bibliography including abstracts of, and links to, existing research on private standards would be compiled.³ The Secretariat would distribute a request to Working Group members for relevant information after the meeting.

³ Circulated after the meeting as G/SPS/GEN/865

SPS-related technical assistance activities: forthcoming initiatives of partners and observers

Options for the phasing out of methyl bromide (IPPC)

26. The IPPC provided an overview of the trade implications of the recently adopted recommendation on the phasing out of methyl bromide as a quarantine treatment. (Methyl bromide is an ozone depleting chemical generally prohibited by the Montreal Protocol). However, the Protocol contains an exemption for its use as a quarantine treatment for plant pests. The IPPC had established a technical working group to look at alternative treatments and was recommending actions that could be taken. However, it was noted that the IPPC and CPM would need to provide more guidance to implement these recommendations at the national level, and that the IPPC would be seeking partners and support in this regard.

27. The IPPC noted that the essential issue was one of cost; methyl bromide was inexpensive and widely available. Considerable technical assistance and resources would be needed to enable developing countries to implement alternatives. In the absence of such assistance and with a progressive phasing out of methyl bromide as a quarantine treatment, there could be serious negative trade effects on developing countries. These could include trade bans as well as significant increases in the cost of fumigation. The USDA representative informed the meeting that the US was investing in the search for viable alternatives.

28. The Working Group agreed that the STDF and IPPC would work together to look at this issue more closely. There was agreement that the STDF could play a valuable role in raising the profile of a very technical subject, bringing it to a wider audience and securing funding for follow-up actions.

Climate change and food safety and animal health

29. Representatives from FAO and OIE gave presentations on their respective work on climate change. Work on this topic was still in its infancy but the implications of global warming for plant pests and animal diseases (and the knock-on impact on trade) were likely to be significant. It was agreed that work on this issue would be the subject of a second information session to be held in 2009 (the other topic being the use of cost-benefit analysis in the SPS area).

Presentation of DFID work on commodity based trade

30. The representative from DFID underlined that there was currently significant political interest (including from COMESA) and economic potential to expand African livestock exports on a regional and global level. DFID was working with partners to increase the value of the livestock sector and stimulate internal and external investment, and had developed a DVD to raise awareness about this topic. DFID was working with the OIE on product-based standards for livestock and was interested in mobilizing additional donor support. The STDF agreed to circulate a concept note prepared by DFID on this subject after the meeting.

31. The Secretary requested members of the Working Group to propose issues that could be shared at future Working Group meetings.

Overview of implementation of on-going projects and PPGs (STDF 249)

32. The Secretariat reported on progress made in the implementation of projects and project preparation grants and noted that G/SPS/GEN/847 provided a detailed overview of the status of implementation of STDF projects and PPGs.

Evaluation of projects and PPGs received (STDF 247 and 247 add.1)

Requests for project grants

STDF 126 rev.1: Creation of a Horticulture Development Council of Tanzania

33. The Working Group approved the request for STDF funding. The EC expressed its strong support for this project, which was beneficial for the 10th Trade and Agriculture Programme, and requested that all the project outputs and information produced would be communicated to all concerned stakeholders in the sector. While the project could not be picked up through existing EC programme cycles, the EC could be interested in funding a second phase. A suggestion was made that HODECT should be encouraged to have consultative forums with NGO groups.

STDF 246: Development of SPS Action Plan for Cambodia

34. The Working Group approved STDF 246 for STDF funding. This project originated from the STDF workshop on "Mobilizing Aid for Trade for SPS related Technical Assistance in the GMS Sub-Region" held in May 2008. FAO expressed its support for the project and offered to play an advisory role. The OIE recommended that the findings of the OIE PVS should be considered as part of this project. It was further noted that it would be important to receive letters of support and information on the capabilities of managers to be involved. The Secretariat proposed the use of Kees van der Meer, who led the regional STDF research work in the Greater Mekong Basin and had developed the World Bank's SPS Action Plan in Lao PDR and Viet Nam.

STDF 220 rev.1: Improved Capacity, Dialogue and Policy Formulation among the Public and Private Sectors Creating and Implementing Standards and Certification in Latin America (FAO)

35. After an extensive discussion, the Working Group decided not to approve STDF 220, rev.1. The meeting noted the support for the project among countries in Latin America as evidenced by letters of support for the project. There was recognition by the Working Group of the need for such assistance as expressed by the countries and given their interest in the area of public and private standards. However, questions raised during the previous analysis and discussion of the project were raised again in respect of the ambitious scope and objectives of the project, the adequacy of the resources budgeted and the added value and sustainability of the database proposed.

36. The Working Group decided not to approve the project for funding. The Working Group decided that in view of the limited resources available to the STDF and the lack of consensus in the Working Group, other projects should be given funding preference. FAO was invited to consider the comments made during the discussion of the project application as appropriate.

Requests for project preparation grants

STDF 231: Support for Ghanaian smallholders to meet horticulture standards

37. The Working Group decided not to approve STDF 231. It was noted that the current proposal did not identify specific SPS constraints to be addressed and how the project built on other on-going/planned assistance.

STDF 232: Development of a phytosanitary capacity building strategy for Africa

38. The Working Group approved STDF 232 subject to minor revisions. Several members of the Working Group expressed their support for the proposed activity. The Secretariat requested expressions of interest from possible donors for the implementation of follow-up activities.

STDF 234: Development of Good Agricultural Practice Scheme for Laos

39. The Working Group approved STDF 234. The Working Group noted that the priority needs for SPS-related technical assistance submitted by Lao PDR at the STDF Workshop in Cambodia on 21-22 May 2008 had suggested pilot testing the Lao GAP scheme on a few crop value chains and recommended that this be considered during project formulation under this PPG. The Working Group further encouraged all those involved in this grant to contact potential donors, including the Trade Development Facility (TDF) for Lao PDR (which included a component to strengthen the SPS institutional, legal and regulatory framework in Lao PDR), as early as possible in the project development process to discuss and identify opportunities to fund the resultant project.

STDF 235: Implementing standards in the Rwandan dairy sector

40. The Working Group decided not to fund the PPG at this meeting and requested further information from the applicant, the Rwanda Bureau of Standards. While the application clearly set out the rationale for a project in the dairy sector, there were a number of on-going initiatives in the sector (not least a Norwegian-funded UNIDO project) and the PPG request had to clearly describe why it could not be addressed through the on-going initiatives.

41. Furthermore, the proposal was predicated on giving the Rwanda Bureau of Standards a lead role in increasing the competitiveness of Rwandan milk and dairy products. However, no letters of support had been received from two other organizations involved in the SPS control of the dairy value chain (RADA and the Ministry of Health). The Working Group requested more information from the applicant.

STDF 236: Enhancing capacity of Kenyan dairy industry to meet standards

42. The Working Group decided not to support STDF 235 given previous and ongoing assistance to the Kenyan dairy sector and the limited resources available within the STDF Trust Fund. The Working Group was unable to identify a case for additional support over and above what was already being provided, and questioned why the objectives of the project could not be met through existing technical assistance.

STDF 242: Application of SPS standards in the Comoros

43. The Working Group approved STDF 242 for funding.

Projects from LDCs or OLIEs

STDF 172: Expanding Nigerian exports of sesame and shea nuts

44. The Working Group decided not to fund the project at the meeting. The applicant was requested to address the issues raised in the Secretariat review of the project. Particular concerns that were raised included further information on existing laboratory capacity for testing of mycotoxins and more input with respect to USAID's willingness to co-finance the project. It was noted that STDF rules on laboratory equipment should be closely followed. Input was requested from partner organizations before an decision was taken on a revised proposal, in particular to ensure that laboratory capacity was not duplicated.

STDF 230: Establishing areas free of Lethal Yellowing Disease of coconuts in Mozambique

45. The Working Group approved STDF 230 for STDF funding subject to some clarifications. There was strong support for this project, which responded to an urgent need and had the commitment of national authorities. The USDA cautioned that the project activities should be

complementary to those funded by an MCC project in Mozambique. It was recommended that the project and MCC collaborate on the methodology for surveying and mapping activities. The IPPC representative expressed his willingness to discuss necessary revisions with project stakeholders in Maputo to expedite implementation and there was agreement that this meeting should be arranged as soon as possible.

Projects from other developing countries

STDF 237: Public-private co-operation to control aflatoxin in peanuts in Indonesia

46. The Working Group decided not to support STDF 237. The Secretariat's review raised a number of questions and concerns about this project, which were endorsed by the Working Group. Some participants also questioned whether a university would be the best placed organization to carry out the proposed activities.

STDF 238: Development of accredited Good Practices and HACCP certification scheme in Guatemala

47. The Working Group approved STDF 238 subject to clarification of the linkages between the proposed activities and relevant completed, ongoing and/or planned technical assistance activities in Guatemala, notably those funded by the US and assurance that there was no duplication. The Working Group agreed that the Secretariat would ask the applicant for clarification on this and would discuss the response received with authorities in the US. If both parties were satisfied that there was no duplication, the Working Group agreed to support the project.

STDF 240: Follow-up to strengthening capability to assess the capacity building needs of food control systems among APEC developing economies

48. The Working Group requested the applicant to revise and resubmit the request for funding based on an ex-post evaluation of STDF 173. STDF 240 sought support to follow-up on an ongoing STDF project (STDF 173). Due to a conflict of interest, the Secretariat did not offer a recommendation on this funding request. The Working Group agreed that it would be premature to approve STDF 240 before STDF 173 had been evaluated. FAO reported very positive feedback from the training workshop organized under STDF 173. The Working Group agreed that the revised request should include a clear schedule for reporting and information on how the outputs of STDF 240 would be utilized and shared by the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Initiative.

Overview of completed and planned evaluations

49. The Secretariat gave an overview of recently completed project evaluations (STDF 15, 89, 120) and forthcoming evaluations (STDF 10, 13, 19, 20).

50. In the context of STDF 15, there was agreement that the importance of technical assistance was in preparing national officials to participate effectively in meetings, rather than simply funding them to attend. The EC reported on the PAN SPSO project with the African Union (3.8 million Euros) to promote the effective participation of African members in the three standard-setting bodies. The Secretariat was requested to share the list of participants and training content for STDF 15. The Commark Trust shared information on training workshops to prepare SAADC delegates to participate effectively in CPM 3, including the preparation of country position papers.

51. The Secretariat reported that the evaluations of STDF 10, 19 and 20 had not been undertaken due to a shortage of possible evaluators and time constraints. Some of the evaluators proposed for the STDF evaluation could be approached to carry out these project evaluations, which would be

organized without delay. The Working Group agreed to a joint evaluation of STDF 10 (completed) and STDF 79 (final stages of implementation) given the synergies between them.

Decisions on financing and prioritization

52. Total funds of approximately CHF 850,000 were available at this meeting. Total funding requested from the STDF is US\$ 3,119,458 (not including STDF 246). Document STDF 247 provides background information on the projects and PPGs which the Secretariat recommends for funding.

Upcoming initiatives of partners and donors

53. The USDA representative provided information on a series of events being organized jointly with FAO on pesticide residues for minor use crops (primarily horticultural production). A Global Minor Use Summit had taken place in Rome in December 2007 in cooperation with FAO. The US was interested in advancing this work further and was seeking to facilitate developing country participation in workshops in eight regions as follow-up.

54. UNIDO informed the Working Group about its planned conference in Cairo on 26-27 November 2008, which would focus on sustainable agri-business innovative solutions. UNIDO offered to share an information note on the event with the STDF and asked the Working Group for suggestions of traceability experts. The OIE reported on its planned international conference on traceability in Buenos Aires from 17-19 March 2009. The OIE further encouraged members of the Working Group to share information on their SPS-related events through the STDF early in the planning stages.

55. The ITC informed that it planned to organize a stakeholder conference to address concerns in the fisheries sector in Yemen in November 2008 under STDF 69, and the STDF Secretariat would be invited to participate. The ITC also reported that two new bulletins had published in its export quality series in April:

- Information Retrieval on SPS measures
(<http://www.intracen.org/tdc/Export%20Quality%20Bulletins/EQM81eng.pdf>);
- Exporting seafood to the EU
(www.intracen.org/tdc/Export%20Quality%20Bulletins/EQM84eng.pdf).

56. Germany informed the meeting that the World Bank intends to commission GTZ to operate the Trade Standards Practitioners Network (TSPN) from August 2008. At the annual meeting of TSPN in December 2008 in Berlin/Germany, a thematic session will be held on the subject of cost benefit analysis.

Other Business

57. The Secretariat informed the meeting that a request for observer status had been received from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). UNECE, which is a standard-setting organization, has received funding to expand its technical capacity building activities, focused mainly on quality issues. The Working Group decided to refer the request for consideration at the Policy Committee during its meeting in December 2008.

List of Participants at the STDF Working Group

26 – 27 June 2008

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