

**STDF WORKING GROUP
19 - 21 OCTOBER 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING****1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The STDF Working Group met virtually from 19 to 21 October 2021 from 14:00 to 17:00 (CET). The meeting was chaired by Mr Tom Heilandt, Secretary, Codex Alimentarius Commission.
2. The chairperson welcomed participants, explained the modalities of the meeting, and encouraged to intervene and interact as much as possible to recreate the spirit of a presential Working Group meeting. He also informed members that AU-IBAR, COLEACP, ITC, UNECE, UNIDO were attending the meeting as observers.
3. The Secretariat suggested discussing a proposal from STDF's developing country experts on a transition mechanism for countries that have graduated from LDC status under item 5 (Other Business). Members adopted the agenda with this additional item.
4. All presentations are available on the STDF [website](#). The list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**2.1 STDF Policy Committee**

5. The Secretariat provided a brief report on the STDF Policy Committee meeting on 14 October 2021. The Policy Committee agreed to editorial changes proposed by the Secretariat and adopted a new version of the STDF Operational Rules (rev.5)¹. The Policy Committee also discussed recommendation (1(iii)) from the external evaluation, noting that the STDF Secretariat should continue to focus on its "helpdesk" role and that the possibility for STDF partners to apply for projects and PPGs should be maintained. Consideration will be given to the organization of a donor roundtable to generate additional resources for the STDF Trust Fund. During the discussions, climate change and the environment emerged as topics for future STDF thematic work.

2.2 Continuation of SPS experts from developing countries

7. The chairperson introduced STDF's [developing country experts](#): Mirian Bueno (Honduras), Lucy Namu (Kenya), Visoni Timote (Fiji), Sithar Dorjee (Bhutan), Juliet Goldsmith (Jamaica) and Unesu Ushewokunze-Obatolu (Zimbabwe). He noted that the terms of Visoni, Mirian and Lucy conclude at the end of 2021, while those of Sithar, Juliet and Unesu will conclude at the end of 2022. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Working Group agreed to extend the term of all experts with one additional year.

2.3 Selection of vice-chairperson (2022) of STDF Working Group

6. The chairperson recalled that Ms Kelly McCormick (United States), vice-chairperson in 2021, will become chairperson of the Working Group in 2022. Members selected Gillian Mylrea (OIE) as the new vice-chairperson of the Working Group in 2022 (and hence chairperson in 2023).

2.4 Staffing and financial situation

7. The Secretariat briefed members on STDF's staffing situation. Marlyne Hopper was selected for the Deputy Head/MEL position and Susanna Pak, who will join the Secretariat in December 2021, was selected for the COMMS position. Ezinne Anyanwu joined the STDF Secretariat in July 2021 on a temporary contact to support the work on MEL, and Xiaoyi Wang joined the Secretariat as an intern

¹ See: https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_139rev.5_EN.pdf

in August 2021. Angelica Grisuk will continue to replace Roshan Khan during her leave of absence until January 2022. A candidate from WTO's Young Professional Programme (YPP) will join the Secretariat in January 2022.

8. The Secretariat summarized the financial situation of the STDF trust fund, highlighting a negative balance of US\$594,566. In 2021, contributions under multi-annual agreements are still expected from the European Commission, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States, totalling US\$2,880,000. The Secretariat noted that in view of current funds and pledges the Working Group would be able to approve all applications under agenda item 3.

2.5 2020 Annual report

9. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the [STDF 2020 Annual Report](#) which illustrates how, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, the STDF adapted quickly across all its workstreams and kept delivering strong results in 2020. Lessons learned focused on: (i) how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we work; (ii) the pandemic reaffirming the need for SPS investments as a global public good; (iii) greater adoption of technology and innovative solutions; and (iv) increased value of international cooperation within the partnership. The Annual Report was published in a fully digital format for the first time. Members expressed appreciation for the interactive format and suggested continuing the digital version.

10. Members approved STDF's 2020 Annual Report, in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules.

2.6 STDF 2022 Work Plan

11. The Secretariat guided members through STDF's proposed 2022 Work Plan, which provides information on STDF's planned activities, expected outputs and the inputs required to achieve STDF's outcomes and goal. Given the ongoing uncertainty related to the pandemic, the Work Plan was prepared for only one year (i.e., 2022). Depending on the situation, a bi-annual Work Plan for 2023 and 2024 might be developed towards the end of next year. The Working Group also reflected on the proposed Working Group meeting schedule in 2022, i.e., 7-9 June and 29 November to 1 December. These dates would give the Secretariat more time to get proposals ready for consideration by the Working Group, given the large number of applications received. It would also allow the Secretariat to explore the possibility of having an in-person meeting in June.

12. In response to questions raised, the Secretariat confirmed its active engagement with the WTO Aid for Trade Global Review in July 2022 and noted that it regularly updates the Committee on Trade and Development. It noted that in-person meetings could be more convenient for members in different time zones. However, hybrid format meetings could still be a possibility. It also highlighted that - as stipulated in the Work Plan - the STDF may accept to "peer-review" SPS-related projects and programmes initiated by other organizations and initiatives, in consultation with relevant STDF partners, and only if the necessary resources are available in the Secretariat.

13. Members approved the STDF's 2022 Work Plan and budget, and the schedule for the Working Group meetings in 2022.²

2.7 Implementation of accepted recommendations of the external evaluation

14. The Secretariat briefed members on the implementation of accepted recommendations. Several outstanding recommendations can only be fully implemented with new COMMS and MEL resources. In relation to Recommendation 4(v) on increasing participation of developing countries in the STDF through regional organizations and networks, the Secretariat provided an overview of current RECs, their SPS programmes, contact points, and their collaboration with STDF.

15. Sweden posed questions regarding the next steps for utilizing this information and whether additional information from other partners and organizations should be included. The IPPC noted that CAHFSA is considered both a REC and a Regional Plant Protection Organization (RPPO), and thus other RPPOs could potentially be included in the list as well. Juliet Goldsmith (developing country expert) pointed out the diverse mandates of RPPOs and believed their inclusion should be analysed on a case-by-case basis. The Secretariat clarified that a distinction was made between

² See: https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_Work_Plan_2022.pdf

RECs and other specialized regional organizations (such as CABI, COLEACP, IICA, etc. with which the STDF interacts already). The list of RECs may be useful for members and will serve as starting point for the Secretariat to begin liaising with RECs through STDF virtual meetings, webinars, and practitioner groups.

16. The Secretariat welcomed members to suggest changes to the document and noted that recommendation 4(v) will be further elaborated and reported on at the next meeting.

2.8 Communications (COMMS)

17. The Secretariat updated members on the implementation of STDF's [Communications Plan](#). The STDF held six webinars since the last meeting attended by more than 890 participants: (i) COLEACP's new rapid SPS assessment tool; (ii) How facilitating safe trade contributes to food system transformation; (iii) Systems Approaches in Food Safety and Plant Health; (iv) Promoting Sustainable Food Systems and the Role of International Standards; (v) Prioritizing Investments and Leveraging Resources to Boost Agri-Food Exports in the COMESA Region; and (vi) SPS e-Cert for the Asia-Pacific region. Six e-news items were distributed on these events as well as other SPS-related developments. An STDF article on lessons from STDF's projects addressing pesticide related issues in Africa was published on the EIF Trade for Development news platform. STDF 2020 Annual Report was launched in August accompanied by a short [video clip](#) from WTO's Director-General.

2.9 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

2.9.1 Implementation of new MEL Framework - progress

18. The Secretariat updated members on the implementation of the MEL Framework, including the completion of the WTO procurement process for the new MEL (software) Tool and the imminent contracting of the selected company. The sandbox version of the MEL Tool (in English, French and Spanish) will be set up and tested from November 2021 to March 2022, working closely with a small group of project implementing organizations. The plan is to include all ongoing STDF projects by the end of 2022, before scaling up to cover other STDF workstreams. Training will be delivered to project implementing organizations and the STDF Secretariat to ensure a smooth transition from the existing paper-based monitoring and reporting processes and support use of the Tool. Following inclusion of all ongoing projects, some core information on completed projects will also be included.

19. The Secretariat also reported on ongoing efforts to review and improve MEL processes in parallel with the MEL Tool, as well as a planned internal assessment of the STDF Practitioner Groups (which were introduced under the 2020-2024 Strategy). The assessment would enable members to take stock of and learn from the experiences with Practitioner Groups to date and identify opportunities for improvements. Practitioner Group members would be actively engaged in this assessment including through an online survey and focus group discussions. The findings, conclusions and recommendations will be shared with the Working Group for discussion in due course.

20. In response to a question on opportunities to use information from RECs to support MEL, the Secretariat noted that STDF's outreach efforts also target RECs, who are encouraged to use STDF knowledge products and good practices to support their work. Monitoring work under the results framework aims to capture information on the use of STDF knowledge products and good practices, including by RECs and other relevant stakeholders.

21. The Secretariat thanked USDA and France for their interest to participate in the MEL Group, which will provide guidance on MEL-related work. Other Working Group members (and/or M&E colleagues in their organizations) who would like to participate in the MEL Group were requested to contact the Secretariat. An initial MEL Group meeting is planned in November.

2.9.2 STDF COVID response

22. The Secretariat briefed members on ongoing risk management in the context of the global pandemic, including the third risk management report (issued in July) shared with Working Group members via email and on the [STDF website](#). It was highlighted that projects continue to take steps to address the impacts of the pandemic. For instance, according to the findings of a short survey of project implementing organizations, 83% of projects have put in place targeted risk mitigation plan since March 2020, and 78% have updated workplans.

2.9.3 Gender assessment

23. The Secretariat provided an update on the planned gender assessment, budgeted (US\$50,000) in the 2021 Work Plan. The purpose of the assessment is to assess how gender is addressed and mainstreamed across STDF's work and SPS capacity development work more broadly, and draw key findings, conclusions and practical recommendations to improve gender mainstreaming. The Secretariat requested members to share comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the assessment, which were distributed before the meeting, as well as contacts of gender experts who could be considered for this assignment, by 4 November 2021. The plan is to contract this assessment in 2021 for delivery in the first half of 2022. The Secretariat noted that the team had benefitted from an online gender training (supported by Sweden) in September 2021, which provided an opportunity to reflect on gender mainstreaming in STDF to date, and which informed the TORs.

24. Some members emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming and recognized the potential value of this assessment. In response to a question about the definition of gender, it was noted that the consultant would be expected to develop an inception report addressing definitions, methods, data sources, etc. Based on candidates proposed by Working Group members, the Secretariat will compile a short-list of qualified experts. The Secretariat will consult the incoming chairperson of the Working Group on the final selection.

3 PPGS AND PROJECTS

3.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects and PPGs

25. The chairperson referred to document STDF/WG/Oct21/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of ongoing projects and PPGs. Members approved three no-cost extensions to complete activities (STDF/PG/481, STDF/PG/543 and STDF/PPG/716) and two extensions to complete the contracting of outstanding PPGs (STDF/PPG/765 and STDF/PPG/770), due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

26. The Secretariat briefly introduced document STDF/WG/Oct21/Review, which includes the applications not tabled for consideration and the reasons for not tabling them. The Secretariat explained the adoption of a new approach, which organizes applications into three categories. Table 1 lists applications tabled for consideration by the Working Group, Table 2 lists eligible projects and PPG applications (but not yet recommended for consideration), while Table 3 lists projects and PPGs that are not eligible.

27. In response to questions from the WBG and FAO regarding the high number of applications in Table 2 and 3, the Secretariat noted that the time between receipt of a first-time submission of an application and the Working Group meeting is often not sufficient to help applicants get their documents up to standard. Assistance provided by partner organizations to the applicants could be very helpful in improving these applications. Lastly, the Secretariat underscored that PPGs are seed funding opportunities for good ideas with fewer requirements to fulfil, while project applications are expected to be higher-standard documents.

28. The US appreciated the new document format and the Secretariat's efforts to ensure the quality of proposals. It was pointed out that a relatively high number of applications can be expected given that some applicants may send the same proposal to different funding mechanisms. Mirian Bueno (developing country expert) informed members that some applicants are not fully equipped with the knowledge and resources to clearly articulate the SPS issue. Given that some SPS issues are regional she advocated that more organizations could take the lead and offer help to countries in need.

29. In response to suggestions from members, the Secretariat agreed to carry out an analysis of the potential trends in relation to the number of applications received and schedule a more targeted discussion at the next meeting.

3.3 Consideration of new PPG applications

STDF/PPG/773 - SPS needs assessment for private and public actors in the Burundian horticultural sector

30. The Working Group **approved** this PPG on condition that the focus be on the implementation of international standards rather than specific EU phytosanitary standards. Members also suggested that a donor roundtable be held at the end of the PPG to discuss potential funding of the summary sheets. The Secretariat noted that this application was first considered for funding in October 2020. Although at the time several members supported the initiative the Working Group found that the application lacked the necessary support from relevant public sector stakeholders. For this new application, the applicant secured a letter of support from the Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock.

31. The IPPC supported the proposal and suggested that the COLEACP RSAT tool make use of the PCE results from 2011. The WBG noted that it would be useful to document what had been achieved following the 2011 PCE application. Canada supported the proposal given that the issues raised in October 2020 had been addressed and noted that the idea of summary sheets was a novel approach. Lucy Namu (developing country expert) noted that Burundi appears to be committed to improving its SPS systems. Burundi recently requested support from the Kenyan NPPO, which can provide support in the form of training of plant health inspectors.

STDF/PPG/789 - Capacity building on phytosanitary measures to improve compliance of cross border traders in Zambia

32. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application. Members noted its potential to generate lessons to improve the phytosanitary capacity of cross border traders in the region. Members made several recommendations to improve the PPG delivery, notably in terms of: (i) taking on board several ongoing initiatives in the resulting project proposal; (ii) considering food safety issues that might affect cross-border trade; and (iii) ensuring coordination with relevant government institutions and consultations at the regional level with COMESA and neighbouring countries.

33. The IPPC highlighted that consideration should be given to address non-SPS issues evolving around the informal cross border trade and underlined that the NPPO should serve as the main contact point in PPG implementation. The WBG noted that it was undertaking a trade facilitation project in Zambia as well as supporting the implementation of ePhyto. The proposed PPG has a number of synergies with the current work and therefore it would make sense for the STDF and WBG to work together on implementing the PPG. Given the minimal cost and the potential to expand the analysis to include assessment of the impacts of the work being done by the WBG in Zambia, the WBG offered to finance and implement the PPG, in collaboration with the STDF Secretariat. To this end, the WBG would hire the international consultant identified in the application to lead on the proposed analysis and project development with input from the Cross Border Trader's Association of Zambia (CBTA).

STDF/PPG/809 - Regional approach towards addressing invasive quarantine pests of potato in East and Southern Africa

34. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application. Members noted the relevance of potatoes for food security and income generation for smallholder farmers in the region and also the seriousness of the SPS problem that is currently affecting this crop. The IPPC suggested to make specific reference to relevant ISPMs and consider relevant IPPC Guides and Training Material and e-Learning courses in developing the proposal. It also suggested to take into account the results of the PCE and consult with the International Potato Centre for relevant material. Members tasked the Secretariat to develop detailed Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the implementation of the PPG, which should include a more detailed budget with defined roles and responsibilities in terms of deliverables for the implementing agency, national consultants and other technical experts.

STDF/PPG/817 - Preparation of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) and project proposal to improve plant health systems for food safety for public health and trade in Nigeria

35. The Working Group **approved** this PPG application. Members noted its potential to support Nigeria to objectively identify gaps in the present phytosanitary system which would enable the government to factor national phytosanitary planning into the country's development plans. Members made the following recommendations to improve PPG delivery: (i) the virtual involvement of an accredited PCE facilitator to conduct the PCE, under the guidance and with support on the ground from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA); (ii) support from the IPPC contact point/national PCE coordinator; and (iii) a further clarification of roles and responsibilities of those involved in conducting the PCE. The Working Group decided to increase the STDF contribution to US\$50,000 to accommodate the involvement of the abovementioned facilitator.

3.4 Ex-post evaluations of STDF projects

36. The Secretariat noted that two ex-post evaluations had been completed and that the reports were available on the STDF website: "Regional feed and food safety programme in Latin America" project ([STDF/PG/345](#)) and "Strengthening the SPS system in Comoros" project ([STDF/PG/242](#)). The Secretariat is planning a webinar to share the evaluation's key findings, lessons and recommendations with STDF members and other interested stakeholders. Key findings from the project evaluation will be shared via an upcoming WTO donor roundtable event as part of Comoros' accession process to the WTO.

37. The Secretariat noted that work is underway to contract the ex-post evaluations of the following projects: (i) "Improving compliance with SPS measures to boost oilseed exports in Myanmar" ([STDF/PG/486](#)); (ii) "Rolling out phytosanitary measures to expand market access for COSAVE region" ([STDF/PG/502](#)); and (iii) ePhyto ([STDF/PG/504](#)) and eVet ([STDF/PG/609](#)) as a joint evaluation. In view of ongoing challenges due to the political situation in Myanmar, members agreed to cancel this evaluation and decide on new projects for evaluation at the next meeting.

38. The external evaluator of project STDF/PG/345, José Ignacio Gómez, presented the key findings, lessons learned, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report. The project contributed, through public-private cooperation, to regulatory harmonization, regional integration, and animal feed safety. His presentation is available on the [STDF website](#). In response to questions, the evaluator clarified that weaknesses in the implementation model were the result of changing priorities within the private sector association. He also emphasized the enormous positive impact for SMEs of harmonized key trade regulations for animal feed and simplified procedures in the region.

3.5 Consideration of PG applications

STDF/PG/751 – Fortalecimiento del sistema fitosanitario e inocuidad en las cadenas de valor del tomate, berenjena y ají de Republica Dominicana y Haití

39. The Working Group **approved** this project. Members considered the relevance of improving the phytosanitary and food safety control systems, decreasing interceptions in the selected value chains and increasing the demand for products from both countries. They also highlighted the need for bilateral collaboration between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Applicants were recommended to strengthen the application, with special attention to: (i) creation of a framework collaboration agreement between the two countries; (ii) clear identification of the contact point in Haiti; (iii) thorough examination of the current SPS system and surveillance program in Haiti; and (iv) including ISPM 6, 7, 12 and 23 in project implementation and taking into account IPPC guides and other available training materials.

40. The IPPC highlighted the importance of improving export certification and inspection to determine compliance with SPS regulations and prevent interceptions. The WBG expressed its concern over the political situation in Haiti. The Secretariat explained that it had discussed the risks with the applicant and that the implementation agencies will monitor the risks and take countermeasures if needed.

STDF/PG/798 – Improving pig biosecurity and African Swine Fever (ASF) control in 4 ASEAN countries: Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines

41. The Working Group **approved** this project on condition that the written suggestions provided by the US and FAO be included in the project document. The Secretariat noted that the main suggestions include that APHIS/Vietnam be invited as an observer to the project, that the new ASF vaccine be taken into consideration when designing project activities, and that a formal coordination

mechanism is agreed before implementation begins to ensure that there is no overlap or duplication with ongoing or planned activities in the region.

42. The FAO noted that the proposal is timely given the global threat of this disease and emphasized the importance of coordinating efforts to avoid duplication. It shared how ASF has recently been detected in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The OIE supported the comprehensive application and considered that biosecurity is the foundation for the control of ASF. As such, the project would also have positive spillover effects on the control and prevention of other diseases. The WBG shared information on an IFC project in Vietnam in support of pork producers and was willing to put IFC project staff in touch with the STDF project partners.

3.6 Decision on prioritization and funding of new project applications

43. The chairperson clarified that the STDF trust fund has sufficient resources to fund the two projects endorsed, and that no prioritization was needed.

4 KNOWLEDGE WORK

44. The Secretariat provided an overview of STDF's knowledge work, recalling its role to identify and promote good practices and influence SPS capacity development more broadly. The Secretariat thanked members for contributing to the knowledge work.

4.2 P-IMA Framework

45. The Secretariat updated members on STDF's ongoing work on Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA), including on supporting the fully remote application of P-IMA and linkages to PPGs in Latin America and Armenia. The first P-IMA virtual training took place in the [Caribbean region](#), under an STDF PPG, which started in May 2021. A webinar entitled "SPS in a Changing World - Building Resilience in the Caribbean" took place in the Caribbean region in October 2021, featuring interventions by Spencer Henson (consultant who helped develop the P-IMA tool) and Juliet Goldsmith (CAHNSA and development country expert).

46. The Secretariat also informed members that a joint STDF/EIF/COMESA/AGRA webinar was organized on 24 August to share the results of P-IMA's application in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, under an STDF/EIF supported project. The event's recording can be found on the [STDF website](#). The next P-IMA practitioner group meeting will be held on 15 December 2021.

47. Juliet Goldsmith shared information on the Caribbean webinar as part of the Caribbean Week of Agriculture (CWA), which is a biannual forum at the forefront of the regional integration process addressing agriculture and rural development issues. She pointed out that presenting the P-IMA framework at this year's CWA generated quite a lot of interest, and more webinars will be dedicated to further explore other tools such as the PCE or COLEACP's RSAT.

4.3 Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

48. The Secretariat informed members on developments linked to STDF's call for PPP case stories. The Secretariat has designed a template for the case stories and created a dedicated [webpage](#) to document these examples. The call for PPP cases remains open, and additional examples of SPS-related PPPs are welcome to be shared.

49. The Secretariat noted that five virtual meetings of the [PPP Practitioner Group](#) have been held to date. Attention was drawn to recent meetings, which included presentations by: (i) FAO on its private sector engagement strategy (September 2021) and (ii) the GATF/WEF on its work with the private sector to support trade facilitation (April 2021). Meeting summaries, presentations and additional PPP resources are available on the dedicated [webpage](#).

50. The Secretariat also briefly reported on ongoing work on the UNIDO-led Voluntary third-party assurance programmes (vTPA) partnership platform for the STDF regional projects in West Africa and Central America. The Secretariat expressed appreciation for how this mechanism is helping to leverage support and in-kind contribution to the regulators involved in the regional projects.

4.4 Good Regulatory Practice

51. The Secretariat informed members on the new guide on [Good Regulatory Practices \(GRP\)](#), thanking members of the STDF peer review group, as well as selected government officials working in the SPS area for their inputs. The [GRP Guide](#) was launched on 3 November 2021 in the margins of the WTO SPS Committee. This guide contributes to consolidate information on GRPs in the SPS context and provides practical guidance to developing countries to ensure that SPS measures are "fit for purpose". The next step is to support wider dissemination of the guide and encourage its use among SPS regulators.

52. In response to questions raised by developing country experts, the Secretariat noted that the guide is currently only available in English, but that it is going to be translated into French and Spanish. The Secretariat also explained that the objective to have a practical guide, making it easy to digest for different types of people, especially those just getting started with GRPs.

4.5 SPS electronic certification

53. The Secretariat reported on the [fourth meeting](#) of the Electronic Certification Advisory Committee (ECAC) which included a presentation by the OECD on "Digital opportunities for SPS systems and the trade facilitation effects of SPS electronic certification". A joint UNESCAP/ADB/ICC/STDF [webinar](#) was also organized on 8 September 2021 for countries across the Asia-Pacific region. The webinar provided an overview of SPS eCert in the relevant international standard-setting bodies and presented case studies on "ePhyto" as well as electronic veterinary and food safety certification. The next meeting of the ECAC will be held on 23 November 2021, and include a presentation by CODEX on its [draft guidance](#) document on Paperless Use of Electronic Certificates. The Secretariat urged members to continue to share information on initiatives, events and publications so they can be made available on the ECAC [webpage](#).

54. The WBG underscored the importance of the ECAC as a platform for organizations to have a dialogue around eCert and help them stay informed of recent activities of members. It also noted that more could be done around harmonization and implementation. UNIDO informed members on a recent event co-organized with AU-IBAR on electronic certification.

55. The IPPC explained how the ECAC has been useful in pushing forward a greater uptake of eCert, and in closing gaps in a thematic and technical area that is prone to divergence in approaches. In response to a question from Sweden, the Secretariat explained that the ECAC aims to achieve greater synergy and harmonization in the application SPS eCert, to share information and experiences, and identify best practices.

4.6 Topics for future STDF work

56. The Secretariat recalled the previous Working Group meeting, in which members had agreed to organize a webinar on the linkages between SPS capacity and climate change. This webinar will be organized in early 2022, as outlined in the approved 2022 Work Plan. This webinar will allow STDF partners to share key findings from recent or ongoing work and provide a basis for additional in-depth STDF work on SPS capacity and climate change in 2022, building on STDF's [previous work](#) on this topic.

57. The FAO explained that climate change and transformation of food systems are both under the topic of One Health, and the STDF could serve as an appropriate platform for harmonizing the scope of the One Health approach and building policy coherence.

58. The IFC thanked the Secretariat for organizing the practitioner groups to facilitate knowledge and information sharing and expressed gratitude to the PPP Practitioner Group for its contribution in helping IFC deliver its agenda in the African region. Regarding future thematic topics, the IFC proposed that the STDF could focus more on the implementation of different policy tools.

59. The OIE suggested seeking feedback and comments from members before proceeding to decide on new topics. Following earlier discussions on climate change and One Health, it supported putting climate change on STDF's agenda. It also cautioned against repetition, with many events evolving around One Health. France agreed with the OIE that the subject of One Health is perhaps too broad for the STDF, and that climate change is a better choice as it has a relatively narrower focus.

Regarding a question from the OIE, the Secretariat suggested that the time schedules of existing practitioner groups could be further discussed in the internal practitioner group assessment.

60. CODEX supported the FAO with regard to considering One Health as a thematic topic, given its linkages with the transformation of food systems and climate change. The STDF could provide a platform for coordinating activities and analysing SPS measures. CODEX also shared concerns with the OIE about the vastness of the One Health topic and suggested that clear timeframes and mandates would have to be established.

61. The WBG highlighted the importance of encouraging more private sector investment, which is constantly being debated within WBG, and wondered whether the STDF should provide more guidance on this topic in the future.

Break-Out Group Discussion

62. The Secretariat set up break-out groups to discuss future STDF thematic work. One member from each group summed up the outputs.

63. **Group 1** pointed out that, in view of the limited resources in the Secretariat and the absence of international standards agreed upon, both environmental sustainability and One Health could be difficult to deal with. Given that climate change is changing SPS risks and trade flows, the STDF could probably take a narrow focus on how climate change affects SPS systems as well as contribute to operationalize some of the thematic areas under the topic of One Health.

64. **Group 2** acknowledged that One Health agenda is indeed important and emphasized that the STDF needs to define its value addition in this area, for example, by imparting knowledge on the impact of climate change. More could be done to engage with the private sector, by looking into the agro-service models for example, and leverage knowledge in this regard.

65. **Group 3** noted many linkages between climate change and other SPS-related topics, including pesticides, MRLs, biodiversity, One Health, and recognized that the STDF could provide a platform for discussing these cross-cutting issues.

66. **Group 4** indicated that both climate change and One Health are large thematic topics and difficult to drill down, but that the STDF could bring a large number of stakeholders at the table and be a catalyst to start the conversation.

67. **Group 5** underscored the importance of consolidating and implementing current work, for instance on GRPs at the national level. Members should also consider the needs of beneficiaries and not only STDF members.

68. **Group 6** considered One Health to be an approach rather than a topic. In a way, the SPS Agreement is an example of One Health in action. Regarding climate change, STDF's previous work on this topic could be the starting point, and a meeting of partners will contribute to scoping the value addition of the STDF in this area.

69. The Secretariat thanked members for the insightful brainstorming, noting that the previously scheduled climate change event will help think through the linkages of issues. The Secretariat will prepare a short paper after the event for members to consider options and have a more targeted discussion at the next Working Group meeting.

4.7 Information exchange

70. Iride Boffardi (EU Delegation to the African Union) made a presentation on the EU's new Pan-African (PANAF) SPS programme. The programme aims to strengthen SPS Systems in Africa by providing support to operationalize Annex 7 of the AfCFTA Agreement's Protocol on Trade in Goods, with special attention to: (i) rolling out implementation of the AU SPS policy framework; (ii) supporting AU member states on food safety, plant health, and animal health capacity building and the AfCFTA Secretariat for the monitoring of Annex 7 implementation; (iii) supporting AU member states in SPS standards setting processes (OIE, IPPC and Codex); and (iv) convening AU member states to develop common position regarding various SPS priorities. The presentation is available on the [STDF website](#).

71. In response to questions raised, the EU clarified the budget of the programme, which amounts to an estimated €13 million, and noted that the programme is not limited to North-South cooperation requests. The EU also noted that further collaboration with the STDF, especially in terms of knowledge work, will be carried out in the future.

4.8 Other new/emerging SPS initiatives/issues

72. The WHO noted that the WHO and the FAO are developing two food safety strategies and a joint implementation framework for both strategies to harmonize the strategy efforts and achieve collective aims and goals.

73. The US FDA informed members on its initiative of "the New Era of Smarter Food Safety", through which it is taking a new approach to food safety, leveraging technology and other tools and approaches to create a safer and more digital, traceable food system. One component of this initiative, [Low/No Cost Traceability Challenge](#), was executed earlier this year in an effort to make digital solutions and tech-enabled traceability systems more accessible and less cost-prohibitive. It was also highlighted that, on 14 and 15 September, the USFDA, the USDA/FAS, and Texas A&M University executed Phase 2 of the APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum (FSCF) multiyear project, "Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS): Laboratory Capacity Building of Environmental Testing for Foodborne Pathogens". Recording and associated materials for the Phase 2 Workshop for Food Safety Experts and Policymakers, entitled "How Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) has revolutionized food safety—from environmental sampling to foodborne disease prevention, response, and mitigation" are available via [Agrilinks.org](#) as well as [SPSCourses.com](#).

74. The FAO briefed members on its newly approved [strategic framework](#), which seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agri-food systems.

75. The WTO provided a brief overview of SPS Committee activities and highlighted a proposed SPS declaration for WTO's Ministerial Conference (MC-12) that refers inter alia to climate change, technological innovation, sustainable agriculture and the emergence of new pests/diseases. The SPS Committee will organize three thematic events in 2022, namely on: (i) [trade facilitative approaches to pesticides and MRLs](#) in March; (ii) [the use of remote virtual audit and ramification in regulatory frameworks](#) in July; and (iii) [international standards and best practices in pest risk identification, assessment and management](#) in November. The SPS Committee will also hold a Transparency workshop in June 2022.

5 OTHER BUSINESS

76. The Working Group discussed a proposal for an STDF transition mechanism for countries that have graduated from LDC status. At the STDF Policy Committee meeting on 14 October 2021, developing country experts had proposed the adoption of this mechanism, according to which graduated countries would continue to benefit from favourable eligibility criteria for STDF projects (i.e., 10% financial and/or in-kind contribution) during a five-year period after graduation. This would assist these countries in ensuring a smooth graduation process, which is particularly important in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit the poorest countries hardest.

77. Ireland supported the proposal to give graduated countries additional time and recognized the importance of having coherence with the EIF. France suggested that the five-year period could be shortened, for example to three years. The Netherlands requested for a more detailed rationale of the five-year period in the EIF. Members considered that they needed more time to consult internally on this request and agreed on a deadline of 3 November 2021 for comments on the LDC transition mechanism proposal.

78. The Secretariat informed members that the next meeting will be held on **7-9 June 2022** and thanked Tom Heilandt, on behalf of all members, for effectively chairing all STDF meetings in 2021.

6 CLOSURE

79. The chairperson thanked participants for their engagement and closed the meeting at 17:00.

ANNEX 1

STDF WORKING GROUP
19 - 21 OCTOBER 2021

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Country/Organization	Email
Diana AKULLO	Africa Union (AU)	akullod@africa-union.org
Rolando ALCALA	WTO	rolando.alcala@wto.org
Ezinne ANYANWU	STDF Secretariat	ezinnem.anyanwu@wto.org
Kaviraj APPADU	Sweden	kaviraj.appadu@sida.se
Aichetou BA	WTO	aichetou.ba@wto.org
Carmina BAEZ	WTO	carmina.baez@wto.org
Mary BARRETT	Ireland	mary.barrett@dfa.ie
Amine BELKHADIR	Germany (GIZ)	amine.belkhadir@giz.de
Camilo BELTRAN MONTOYA	IPPC Secretariat	camilobelmont@gmail.com
Christophe BLANC	France	christophe.blanc@dgtresor.gouv.fr
Iride BOFFARDI	EU	iride.boffardi@eeas.europa.eu
Monique BOUMAN	The Netherlands	mm.bouman@minbuza.nl
Christopher BRETT	World Bank Group (WBG)	cbrett@worldbank.org
Gracia BRISCO	Codex Secretariat	gracia.brisco@fao.org
Sarah BRUNEL	IPPC Secretariat	sarah.brunel@fao.org
Mirian BUENO	Developing Country Expert	mbueno@senasa.gob.hn
Isabel CALDERON	WTO	isabel.calderon@wto.org
Catherine CONSTANT	France	catherine.constant@agriculture.gouv.fr
Kathrin CORDES	Germany (GIZ)	kathrin.cordes@giz.de
Sithar DORJEE	Developing Country Expert	s.dorjee@kgumsb.edu.bt
Eleonora DUPOUY	FAO	eleonora.dupouy@fao.org
Markus ERNST	Germany (BMEL)	markus.ernst@bmel.bund.de
Natalia FERNANDEZ	UNIDO	l.fernandez-credi@unido.org
Camille FLÉCHET	WTO	camille.flechet@wto.org
Juliet GOLDSMITH	Developing Country Expert	juliet.goldsmith@cahfsa.org
Angelica GRISUK	STDF Secretariat	angelica.grisuk@wto.org
Lee GROSS	United States (USDA)	lee.gross1@usda.gov
Ilona GURCHIANI-SHEVTSOVA	WTO	ilona.gurchiani-shevtsova@wto.org
Joseph GUROWSKY	United States (USDA)	joseph.gurowsky@usda.gov
Tom HEILANDT	Chairperson	tom.heilandt@fao.org
Simon HEISIG	ITC	sheisig@intracen.org
Marlynn HOPPER	STDF Secretariat	marlynn.hopper@wto.org
José IGNACIO GÓMEZ	Evaluator	jidechile@gmail.com
Pablo JENKINS	STDF Secretariat	jenkins.pablo@wto.org
Erica JOHNSTON	United States (USDA)	erica.johnston@usda.gov
Hyunjin KIM	WHO	kimhyu@who.int
John LABORDE	United States (USAID)	jlaborde@usaid.gov

Name	Country/Organization	Email
Brent LARSON	IPPC Secretariat	brent.larson@fao.org
Markus LIPP	FAO	markus.lipp@fao.org
Jill LUXENBERG	United States (USDA)	jill.luxenberg@usda.gov
Lourdes MARTINEZ	United States (USAID)	lmartinezromero@usaid.gov
Kelly MCCORMICK	United States (US FDA)	kelly.mccormick@fda.hhs.gov
Paola MICHELUTTI	STDF Secretariat	paola.michelutti@wto.org
Nazia MOHAMMED	WTO	nazia.mohammed@wto.org
Gabor MOLNAR	UNIDO	g.molnar@unido.org
Victoria MORÉN	Sweden (SIDA)	victoria.moren@sida.se
Gillian MYLREA	OIE	g.mylrea@oie.int
Lucy NAMU	Developing Country Expert	lnamu@kephis.org
Cassandre NONQUE	France	cassandre.nonque@dgtresor.gouv.fr
Kateryna ONUL	IFC	konul@ifc.org
John OPPONG-OTOO	AU-IBAR	john.opping-otoo@au-ibar.org
Simon PADILLA	STDF Secretariat	simon.padilla@wto.org
Markus PIKART	UNECE	markus.pikart@un.org
Julio PINTO	FAO	julio.pinto@fao.org
Catalina PULIDO	STDF Secretariat	catalina.pulido@wto.org
Juan RULL	IPPC Secretariat	pomonella@gmail.com
True SCHEDVIN	Sweden (SIDA)	true.schedvin@sida.se
Shane SELA	World Bank Group (WBG)	ssela@worldbank.org
Fazila SHAKIR	United States (US FDA)	fazila.shakir@fda.hhs.gov
Melvin SPREIJ	STDF Secretariat	melvin.spreij@wto.org
Visoni TIMOTE	Developing Country Expert	visonit@spc.int
Unesu USHEWOKUNZE-OBATOLU	Developing Country Expert	newazvo@hotmail.com
Mika VEHNÄMÄKI	Finland	mika.vehnamaki@formin.fi
Paz VELASCO-VELAZQUEZ	EU	paz.velasco-velazquez@ec.europa.eu
Xiaoyi WANG	STDF Secretariat	xiaoyi.wang@wto.org
Morag WEBB	COLEACP	morag.webb@coleacp.org
Fitzroy WHITE	FAO	fitzroy.white@fao.org
Brent WILSON	Canada	brent.wilson@agr.gc.ca
Natsumi YAMADA	IPPC Secretariat	natsumi.yamada@fao.org