



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
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Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

SECOND SESSION

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Work Programme for Harmonization Technical Assistance

Agenda Item 7.3

A. SECRETARIAT'S REPORT

1. Technical assistance requests reflect a strong desire by countries to improve their phytosanitary systems to better fulfil their international obligations, recognizing that the SPS Agreement comes into force for least developed countries at the end of 1999 and the New Revised Text of the IPPC is expected to come into force soon afterward.

2. Technical assistance involving direct participation of the Secretariat over the past year is summarized as follows:

a) Participation in seminars and workshops -

- Regional Seminar on the SPS Agreement in Windhoek, Namibia, including a workshop on Risk Analysis (organized by the WTO);
- Regional harmonization workshop in New Delhi, India (FAO/UNDP project);
- Regional workshop on Biotechnology and PRA in Warsaw, Poland (organized by USDA);
- Sub-regional workshop on fruit flies and fruit production in Nairobi, Kenya (organized by ICIPE);
- Seminar on quarantine and SPS Procedures in Chaing Mai, Thailand (organized by ASEM/TFAP);
- Regional workshop on Biosafety in Nairobi, Kenya (organized by UNEP/GEF).

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- b) Assistance with trade problems –
 - the design and implementation of an FAO project for the export of coconuts from the Dominican Republic to Brazil;
 - the facilitation of information for technical dialogue regarding exports of milled rice from Thailand to Mexico;
 - c) the initiation of modular phytosanitary training references.
3. Technical oversight provided by the Secretariat to FAO Technical Cooperation Programmes for:
 - a) completion of national projects for strengthening phytosanitary capacities in the Gambia, Tunisia, and Algeria;
 - b) continuing projects for strengthening phytosanitary capacities in the Bahamas, countries of Eastern Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda), the Dominican Republic, India, Iran, and the Andean region;
 - c) initiation of regional and subregional projects for the Caribbean, Near East, North Africa (3 subregional projects), and national projects for Tanzania and Zanzibar, Belize, Costa Rica and Panama.
4. Specific technical assistance needs identified by the Secretariat include:
 - a) systems approaches to capacity building, taking into account more complex factors such as trade facilitation and environmental protection;
 - b) enhanced regional cooperation to support regional economic alliances, promote harmonization and take advantage of shared resources and information;
 - c) increased interdisciplinary collaboration, especially across the SPS disciplines of plant, animal and human health;
 - d) updating and harmonizing legislation at the national and regional level.
5. Issues for the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM): Many countries have difficulty evaluating and articulating their phytosanitary requirements, or a low priority is given by governments to building adequate phytosanitary systems due to a lack of political awareness. Requests by Member countries to have FAO evaluate their phytosanitary systems with a view to upgrading those systems frequently end with the completion of the evaluation and for various reasons cannot be followed by an FAO Technical Cooperation Project for the necessary capacity building. The Secretariat is therefore in a position to identify certain opportunities where technical assistance is needed and may be provided by organizations other than FAO, including Member-to-Member assistance by governments. In other instances, the Secretariat may be aware of technical assistance that is available from FAO or others but is not always fully aware of the countries where the need for such assistance is greatest.

6. Taking into account Article XX (Technical Assistance) of the New Revised Text of the IPPC and point 1g in the Terms of Reference of the ICPM, the Secretariat notes the role of the ICPM in promoting the implementation of the Convention and seeks the guidance of the ICPM and the assistance of individual Members to:

- a) cooperate with the Secretariat in the provision of information regarding the availability of technical assistance;
- b) assist the Secretariat in the collection of up-to-date information regarding national phytosanitary systems, or programmes within national systems where technical assistance is needed;
- c) establish criteria for prioritizing technical assistance needs;
- d) establish a Subsidiary Body of the ICPM to provide leadership to technical assistance initiatives of the ICPM; and,
- e) consider the establishment of financial mechanisms such as a trust fund that can be used by the ICPM to facilitate the coordination and provision of technical assistance.

B. PROPOSAL FOR THE COORDINATION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY THE ICPM

I. Background

7. At the first session of the ICPM, Members emphasized the importance of establishing the national capacities and appropriate regulatory frameworks to adequately implement the provisions of the New Revised Text of the IPPC, especially in relation to international trade. In particular, Members noted the need for technical assistance regarding the establishment of infrastructures, documentation and access to electronic information. Members emphasized the need for the coordination of technical assistance to ensure that the limited assistance available is well-conceived and directed to areas of greatest need. The possible role of FAO and Regional Plant Protection Organizations in such coordination was also noted.

II. Proposal

8. In view of the strong concerns expressed by Members, the Chair, in collaboration with the Secretariat, has undertaken an initiative with the aim of developing a coordinating role for the ICPM in the area of technical assistance. Recognizing that the ICPM is not an aid provider, the Chair suggests that the ICPM may substantially improve the provision of technical assistance for phytosanitary capacity building through the provision of coordination. It is also suggested that the ICPM consider, in the long-term, the establishment of an ad hoc committee to assist the Secretariat in this function.

9. It is envisioned that such a committee could examine the spectrum of technical assistance that is available and requested for phytosanitary development with the aim of:

- a) supporting requests to aid donors or even suggesting possible aid donors;
- b) proposing alternative options for development projects seen by the committee as more effective or suitable;

- c) assisting a developing country with the production of a strategic plan for development;
- d) serving as a global focal point for both donors and requestors to receive information and guidance concerning technical assistance for phytosanitary capacity building;
- e) providing guidance and support to technical assistance activities of the Secretariat;
- f) reporting to the ICPM on technical assistance activities.

10. It is suggested that the committee restrict the range of its considerations within the phytosanitary area, concentrating on technical training programmes.

11. To assess proposals for aid projects concerning phytosanitary issues, it would be essential to have relevant information. For this purpose, it is proposed that two data sets be created. These would be:

- a) a data set listing and tracking technical assistance projects provided, requested, or available for phytosanitary development; and,
- b) a data set describing the phytosanitary capabilities of developing country members of the ICPM.

12. It is proposed that the first data set involving the listing and tracking of projects be accomplished by the Secretariat. The second data set requires inputs from countries concerning their needs and capabilities. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has undertaken to assist in this effort by supporting a pilot study of the phytosanitary capabilities of six countries. This data will, if possible, be presented to the second meeting of the ICPM for its consideration.

13. At this stage the proposal of the Chair is to extend the initiative only to the establishment of a data source listing aid projects concerning phytosanitary development and the undertaking of a survey on the phytosanitary capabilities of developing countries beginning with a pilot study involving six countries.

III. Recommendations

14. The ICPM is requested to:

- a) Endorse the concept of a coordination function for the ICPM in the area of technical assistance.
- b) Establish an informal Working Group with the charge to review the results of the pilot project and determine future steps for the ICPM to implement continuation of this function.