Looking beyond the Single Window for ICT solutions to SPS management

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Improvements being made through single windows and other modern approaches

- **Single Window and Safe Trade Solutions**
  - Time and cost savings
  - Information exchange
  - Streamlined processing
  - Online applications and payments
  - Electronic permits (e-phyto)
  - Risk based inspections
  - Joint inspections
Many other “traditional” challenges remain

• Even with Single Window, several bottlenecks remain:
  • Limited access to detailed SPS information.
  • Mixing of SPS with non-essential product standards.
  • Capacity limitations (and misuse of limited capacities).
  • Cumbersome and repetitive procedures.
  • Little trust in each other’s SPS systems.
  • Political economy factors, weak institutions.
To support a single window approach...

• **Review and streamlining of SPS measures.**
  • Many shared pests and diseases, especially in regional trade.
  • Unnecessary, unproductive, and/or duplicate procedures.

• **Back end procedures may need improving.**
  • Permits that can only be approved by PS or committee?
  • Use of risk based inspections?

• **Detailed SPS information also required, possibly through dedicated “SPS Portal”.**
  • Commodity specific declaration requirements.
  • Detailed pest and disease lists.
  • List of approved mitigations.
  • Registry of approved fumigators.
  • Scientific data and bibliographies.
SPS issues in regional trade

• Cross border trade of food staples vastly important to poor farmers and poor consumers.
  • Small traders, most of whom are women, typically dominate regional food trade.
  • Large number of small consignments make SPS inspections difficult if not impossible.
  • Formal procedures and high costs push traders into informal routes where there are no controls at all, and various types of abuse and corruption easily happen.

• Simplified Trade Regime (STR) for customs purposes, but what solutions exist for SPS measures?
  • Monitoring of production areas, warehouse certification, regional pest lists.
  • Single windows and other electronic platforms tailored to the needs of small traders.
Emerging ICT tools and applications

Examples include:

• Mobil Assay mReader
• AccuScan Gold Reader
• P-tracker
• Various pest recognition apps and services.

Potential uses (...if ISO compliant?):

• Warehouse certification
• Risk based field and border inspections
• Cloud based data tracking and sharing
• Farmer extension
Opportunities for improved SPS management in the EAC
Current situation

• Over 200 regional standards in food and agriculture including more than 40 standards for food staples and livestock products of direct importance to smallholders.

• Unfortunately...
  • EAC standards cover legitimate food safety matters and non-essential quality specifications (e.g. maize and rice).
  • All standards made into mandatory regulations on food safety grounds (...and “to prevent dumping”).
  • All standards treated as copywritten material.
  • No guidance on how to implement the regulations.
  • Several specifications go beyond CODEX with little or no scientific justification or notification of WTO members.

• Repetitive and possibly needless certification of every individual consignment (except for small traders who avoid inspection).
SPS measures as a trade barrier

• Difficult and expensive for EAC to import from other African countries or even to trade 100% legally within the community.
  • Standards mainly applied to extra-regional imports, including imports from other African countries.
  • High cost to source and test compliant products.
  • Smallholder maize often grown with OPVs and/or sundried.
  • Small traders not able to afford costs of compliance.
  • Grain goes across in small (informal) loads that add to the total costs of trade and without any SPS protection.
What can be done about this?

• Dialogue focused on separating SPS from non-essential standards.
  • Support (and influence) ongoing review by national authorities, private sector, East Africa Grain Council and others.
  • Possible role for CODEX in clarifying food safety and quality matters?

• Develop (and promote!) implementing guidelines.

• Certification of warehouses, flour mills, and dairy chains backed by new ICT systems (...if compatible with ISO methods?).
  • Cloud based reporting of mycotoxin and other test results linked to SPS certification (possible “blanket” permits for extended periods?)
  • Quality certificates used to speed border transactions.
  • Risk-based spot inspection of warehouses and consignments.

• Free access to mandatory regulations.

• Regional pest lists and investment priorities (regional P-IMA?)
Opening new markets through APEI
Untapped potential for regional trade

• **Current situation**
  • Global imports that could be supplied by neighbors in mainland Africa.
  • Pest and disease risks from mainland Africa justifiably a big worry for island nations.
    • Local authorities unresponsive to information requests.
    • Alleged under reporting of pests and disease.
    • Potential exporters unsure of what is required for market entry.
    • Outdated pest and disease lists.

• **Potential solutions**
  • Peer-2-Peer learning and information exchange.
    • Joint risk assessments for strategic commodities (PRAs with Madagascar in early 2000s led to > $15m annual trade today).
    • Regional “SPS Portal” – online pest lists and data sharing.
  • ICT applications to improve traceability and help track pest and disease outbreaks.
Fundamental SPS management constraints in CEMAC
Fundamental challenges in CEMAC

• **Current situation**
  - Unrecorded agriculture trade nearly equal to all recorded intra-regional trade, mainly by medium size operators.
  - Virtually all trade is unidirectional – from Cameroon out.
  - Only Cameroon has formal SPS declaration conditions.
  - Nevertheless, all exports are “certified” after visual inspection.
  - Formal fees just a small part of total cost to exporter.
  - For imports, Cameroon charges XAF 200,000 (US$ 375) for consignment based import permit valid for six months.

• **Potential solutions**
  - Rationalization of SPS procedures.
  - Publication of approved fees (electronic and other platforms).
  - Performance based border management (with ICT-based reporting systems).
To summarize
Single windows and other ICT tools are a promising new direction in SPS management

• Nevertheless, fundamental SPS constraints remain.
  • Distinction between technical regulations and voluntary standards still mixed up and not clear to many.
  • Systems geared to serve large, formal traders necessary yet small, informal trade often more relevant to poverty.
  • Back end procedures and political economy factors determine how well any new technology (or SPS measure) will work.

• Regional cooperation should be a strategic priority.
  • Practical approaches include: Regional pest lists, regional investment priorities (regional P-IMA).
  • Plus... ICT systems and capacity improvements that simplify inspections, support risk-based approaches, and serve small/regional traders.
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