

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING
8-9 JUNE 2006
WTO Headquarters, Geneva**

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The Chairman of the Working Group, Mr Ezzeddine Boutrif, welcomed the participants and adopted the agenda. A list of participants is provided in **ANNEX I**.

REPORT BY THE STDF SECRETARY ON MATTERS GERMANE TO THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

2. The STDF Secretary introduced document STDF 138, an overview of the strategic and operational issues for consideration by the Policy Committee and the Working Group. The Secretary explained that the Business Plan had served its purpose in establishing the foundations of the STDF but that it neither gave clear guidance to applicants nor did it clearly set out operational rules for the STDF. It was therefore recommended to establish two separate documents based on the Business Plan. In this context, the Secretary introduced STDF document 139, which set out the operational rules for the Facility based on the existing Business Plan. It was noted, however, that STDF 139 could need further revision dependent on the recommendations emerging from an eventual Task Force. The Secretary noted that an additional guidance document for applicants should be developed in due time.

PREPARATION OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE – DISCUSSION OF ON OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3. Discussion of operational issues followed the order of these issues in the table on page 4 of STDF 138.¹

- **Clarification of whether or not projects promoting compliance with private/commercial standards are eligible for funding.**

4. A lively debate took place in the Working Group on the issue of funding compliance with commercial standards. Some participants were of the view that one cannot easily distinguish official standards from commercial requirements given that compliance with commercial standards was often predicated on achieving official requirements for market access. Other participants stressed that compliance with SPS standards – as established by Codex, OIE and IPPC - should remain the priority focus for STDF projects. The Working Group agreed on a formula which would allow commercial standards to be covered, but only as part of a broader market access strategy which also fulfils official SPS requirements. The Working Group agreed to insert language to this effect in footnote 7 in paragraph 57 and add the first two sentences of the footnote to paragraph 68.

- **Clearer statement as to the relative weight to be given to objectives of trade creation and improving the domestic SPS situation.**

5. In discussing textual amendments proposed by the Secretary, agreement emerged that projects whose sole focus was trade or whose sole focus was on improving the domestic SPS situation would not be funded. It was agreed that the STDF should fund projects which had a combination of both goals. It was noted that the regional SPS situation was also a relevant consideration. References to

¹ Textual revisions to the Operational Rules reflecting decisions taken at the Working Group are contained in a revision to document STDF 139. Please note that references to paragraph numbers in the summary report relate to where they can be consulted in the revision, not in the document tabled at the meeting on 8 June.

the domestic and, where applicable, the regional SPS situation were approved for paragraph 57 (third bullet point), 74 (iv), 76 and the second bullet point of paragraph 84 of the operational rules.

- **Start of implementation time limits: 1 year between Working Group approval and implementation for projects and 6 months for project preparation grants (PPGs).**

6. Textual amendments to paragraph 59 to codify time limits agreed upon in previous Working Group meetings were agreed.

- **Greater guidance on eligible and non-eligible items of project expenditure, in particular laboratory equipment and funding of workshops.**

7. The Secretary explained that greater guidance was needed on eligible and non-eligible items of project expenditure, in particular on laboratory equipment and the funding of workshops. During the discussion it was also decided to exclude from funding those projects whose main objective was to address organic standards. However, no textual revision was deemed necessary since it was the component of organic standards dealing with environmental standards that was deemed of concern. As such the present phrasing which precluded compliance with environmental standards was considered sufficient. Textual revisions to paragraph 68 were also agreed which dealt with criteria for the funding of workshops. The Working Group also agreed to specify the language with respect to the eligibility of laboratory equipment as a budgetary item. Textual amendments relating to the funding of micro-projects were not accepted.

- **Guidelines for the ex post evaluation of projects and development of standard reporting formats.**

8. It was considered vital that lessons arising from STDF projects should not be lost. It was therefore agreed that all future projects should include provision for an independent end of project evaluation, in addition to the usual project monitoring requirements. With respect to projects already under implementation, the Secretary's proposal to limit the review of Theme 2 projects to those projects over US\$ 300,000 in size was not accepted. Instead, it was agreed that the Working Group should decide at its following meeting which projects should be evaluated. It was also stressed that evaluations could not be left too long after a project had finished. It was decided that the Secretary would report and make recommendations on the evaluation of completed and ongoing projects at the next meeting of the Working Group and that the text of the operating rules would remain unchanged.

- **Choice of PPG consultants and elaboration of rules on project execution by PPG consultants.**

9. The Working Group agreed to the textual revision proposed by the Secretary in paragraph 48 and added that consultants contracted to prepare projects would not normally be eligible to implement the resultant project.

- **Clarity as to which organizations may act as an executing agency and charge administrative overheads.**

10. The Secretary explained that further clarity was needed on which organizations could act as an executing agency and charge administrative overheads. The item was discussed by the Working Group but it was decided that this issue would need to be further elaborated by the STDF Task Force.

- **Clarification on letters of support required from collaborating project partners and responsible government officials.**

11. The Working Group approved textual amendments proposed by the Secretary in paragraph 65 of the operational rules.

- **Guidance on how to meet the requirement of a contribution to project cost on the part of the beneficiary (e.g. in-kind contributions).**

12. In addition to the text proposed by the Secretariat on in-kind contributions in paragraph 50, the Working Group agreed that such contributions should be subject to audit.

- **Use of consistent formats for presentation of project proposals.**

13. It was decided that the use of consistent formats for the presentation of project proposals would be one element to consider in the drafting of guidelines for applicants.

- **Greater use of capacity evaluation tools as a preliminary step in the elaboration of PPGs.**

14. The Working Group discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the use of capacity evaluation tools in the elaboration of project preparation grants and decided to add a footnote to paragraph 47.

- **Chart on implementation of STDF projects and documenting of successful projects.**

15. The Secretary reported that STDF document 143 provided an overview of the implementation status of approved projects and project preparation grants. The chart would soon appear on the STDF website and would be circulated to the SPS Committee in the next update on the STDF.

16. With respect to the documenting of successful projects, the Secretary reported that STDF project 5 (STDF database) and STDF project 14 (veterinary capacity evaluation tool) had been completed and that the results of the projects would be made available on the STDF website and through updates to the SPS Committee. The Secretary noted more generally that efforts to improve the website in order to disseminate information about projects and project results were underway.

[The afternoon of Thursday 8 June was dedicated to the Policy Committee meeting]

REPORT BY THE STDF SECRETARY ON ON-GOING PROJECTS AND PROJECT PREPARATION GRANTS

STDF 48 rev.1: Improvement in quality control of agri-food products in Benin, West Africa

17. The Secretary recalled that this project had been approved at the February 2006 meeting but reservations had been expressed with respect to funding laboratory equipment for IITA. The Group discussed the feasibility of upgrading the laboratory facilities of the "Laboratoire du Centre de Recherches Agricoles d'Agonkanmey" in Benin, against the option of using existing laboratory facilities in Ghana to fulfil the project's testing requirements. The Group agreed to invite the project applicants to use the regional laboratory facilities in Ghana. The Group also agreed to follow up with the European Commission representative on the possibility of providing aflatoxin training to officials from Benin.

STDF 64: Facilitating livestock trade in Djibouti and STDF 13: Development of a Veterinary Strategy and Action Plan for Selected African regions

18. The Group agreed that the same resource persons should be used for the implementation of projects STDF 64 and STDF 13 so as to exploit synergies between the two activities. Implementation of project STDF 64, until now delayed due to the strain on human resources within FAO as a result of the avian influenza crisis, would now commence. The Secretary urged FAO and OIE to move ahead with the implementation of this project and to have commenced implementation prior to September 2006. On STDF 13, the Group exchanged information on similar projects from the AU-IBAR, the EU

and DFID running in parallel. DFID expressed some concern over potential duplication in effort and also that delays in implementation could undermine project results given changing realities on the ground. The representative of OIE assured the Group that STDF 13 would exploit synergies and avoid duplication with these projects. He added that project implementation would start forthwith.

STDF 113: Project Preparation Grant for Burundi

19. The Secretary informed the Group that the consultant selected to undertake the project preparation grant by the authorities in Burundi had declined the assignment due to concerns about the security situation in that country. The Group agreed to place the project preparation grant activities on hold until the next meeting of the STDF Working Group.

STDF 105: Project preparation grant on compartmentalization

20. The OIE reported that the establishment of guidelines on the use of compartmentalization had been discussed at the International Committee of the OIE in May 2006. The OIE would consult with Thailand and other interested parties to examine the possible application of compartmentalization as foreseen by the project preparation grant. The Working Group was informed that a project would be submitted in the first quarter of 2007.

STDF 38: Agricultural health and food safety laboratory needs assessment for Caricom countries

21. The Secretary reported that the project preparation grant beneficiaries had not been in contact with the STDF Secretariat. It was agreed that the Secretary would write to Caricom Secretariat to request further information.

STDF 52: Project preparation grant on aflatoxin contamination in Malawi and Zambia

22. On the basis of information provided by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, the Secretary informed the Working Group that the Copperbelt University of Zambia had developed a project proposal for EU funding aiming at reducing mycotoxins in maize and groundnuts in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Botswana. To avoid duplication, the Working Group agreed to postpone the start of project preparation activities in Malawi and Zambia on similar issues in the groundnut and paprika sector pending a decision on the funding of the EU project. In the meantime, the Secretary would examine possible synergies, especially with regard to the possibility of including paprika within the scope of the EU project activities.

STDF 68: Project preparation grant on South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)

23. The Secretary reported that project preparation activities were currently on hold due to the discovery of a parallel EU project in the standards area and pending the improvement of the security situation in Nepal. The Working Group agreed to postpone project preparation activities until such time as both issues were clarified. Working

24. The Working Group also exchanged views on how it could improve its coordination with donors. The Working Group concluded that a notice of 45 days was sufficient to share information among Members of the Working Group and suggested that these issues, including the need to strengthen the STDF Secretariat, be looked into more detail by the Task Force.

STDF 89: International plant health risk analysis workshop

25. The IPPC requested additional time to revise and finalize reports from the workshop. The Working Group agreed to give the IPPC an extension until 31 May 2007 to finalize the project.

EVALUATION OF PROJECTS RECEIVED

PROJECTS RESUBMITTED FROM PREVIOUS STDF WORKING GROUPS

STDF 110 rev.1: Trade related food safety capacity building in developing countries: lessons learned and good practices in external assistance

26. The Secretary recalled that this application had been originally tabled by the World Bank and FAO at the February 2006 Working Group meeting. The reformulated application was submitted by the University of Guelph with the World Bank, FAO and UNIDO listed as collaborating agencies. The Working Group discussed the merit of the application and welcomed the increased contribution of collaborating agencies in the proposal – although the absence of WHO was critically noted. In this context, the Working Group was cautioned against approving a project which solely contained a trade aspect to capacity building without examining spill-overs into the health sector. The Working Group also discussed the validity of the proposed methodology and questioned the possible independence of evaluations of past projects. The Working Group suggested that the proposal should not only look at food safety projects to identify best practices but also focus on animal and plant health projects. The budget should be revised to take these elements into account. The Working Group agreed to include the WHO as a collaborating agency to ensure the presence of a health aspect in the proposal and that the projects should be evaluated by an independent consultant prior to reconsideration by the Working Group. The Working Group also advised the project applicants to include provision for an independent evaluation after the project's completion in the existing budget.

STDF 66 rev.1: Strategy to increase capacity to comply with SPS and retailers' agri-food protocols to facilitate exports in Mozambique

27. The Secretary recalled that the original project proposal had been first submitted for consideration at the September 2005 meeting. At that time, the Working Group had considered that more focus should be placed on meeting SPS requirements in the South African market instead of solely focusing on the EU market. The revised proposal maintained a primary focus on EU private standard requirements but also looked at South African market requirements. The Working Group exchanged views on the extensive focus on private and organic standards. There were diverging views on whether a proposal whose main focus was on private standards should be funded by the STDF. It was agreed that the applicant should reformulate the proposal to ensure a primary focus on official SPS requirements with a secondary focus on private standards. The Working Group agreed that the STDF would not fund the organic standard component of the proposal. It was also agreed that the EU and Sweden would verify any potential overlaps with parallel projects focusing on standards in Mozambique. The Working Group also recommended that the applicant review the project management structure as the role of UNCTAD, that of the Ministry of Commerce and that of other actors was still unclear and complex. The Working Group also advised the project applicants to include provision for an independent evaluation after the project's completion in the existing budget. The Working Group agreed to accept the proposal for funding on condition that the applicant took these comments into account. The Chairman and Secretary were tasked with ensuring that these comments had been duly addressed.

REQUESTS FOR PROJECT PREPARATION GRANTS

STDF 127: Capacity building in SPS management for export development for the Benin Chamber of Commerce

28. The Secretary recalled that this project preparation grant had been requested by the Benin Chamber of Commerce with the objective of establishing an information center to ensure that

economic operators were aware of SPS measures affecting their existing or planned exports. The Working Group agreed to fund the project preparation grant but requested that the project preparation activities should also examine the feasibility of a well targeted regional approach in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) versus a national approach in Benin. It was agreed that the Secretary would amend the terms of reference to reflect this concern.

STDF 129: Capacity building and information sharing on SPS standards for the public and private sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

29. The Secretary reported that while the project relied on the participation of STDF partner agencies, their involvement was not costed nor was their support documented. The Working Group also reported that the proposal was not specific as to the training provided and focused only on a small region of DRC. The Working Group agreed that this proposal was ineligible for funding and the applicant would be invited to apply for funding through local donor offices.

STDF 130: SPS capacity building in Liberia

30. The Working Group welcomed the proposal by Liberia but questioned the feasibility and the impact of a project preparation grant given the lack of existing trade structures in the country. The Working Group agreed that the FAO local office would provide input with regard to the application and the political situation in Liberia. The Working Group agreed that at this stage the proposal was ineligible for funding.

REQUESTS FROM OR BENEFITING ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS IN LDCs AND OLCs

STDF 133: Capacity building in the use of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation tool in the Pacific

31. The Secretary recalled that the aim of the project was to enhance capacity building in the Pacific through the use of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool. The Working Group questioned the need to apply the PCE tool if trade was limited to a few products. The Working Group also asked for clarification on the application of the PCE tool in six selected countries during the second phase of the project and on the way the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the IPPC would provide assistance to the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs). The IPPC clarified that the PCE tool had been applied in 70 countries around the globe, but not as yet in the Pacific. He added that ownership of the proposal by the SPC was encouraging and would facilitate the regional application of the tool. The Working Group requested the IPPC to provide guidance to the SPC to incorporate comments made and to resubmit the proposal for the next Working Group meeting. The Working Group also advised the project applicants to include provision for an independent evaluation after the project's completion.

STDF 135: Consumers International: " Safe food for consumer confidence and market access-Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Vietnam"

32. The Working Group discussed the eligibility of consumer organizations and expressed its concern over the vagueness of the proposed budget and activities. In particular the proposal was not clear as to how it would achieve its objectives. The Working Group also noted the limited prominence of a trade component in the proposal and the weak linkages between consumer groups and SPS standards. The Group agreed that this proposal was ineligible for funding.

STDF 145: Rwanda Horticulture Export Standards Initiative (RHESI)

33. The Secretary reported that the project aimed to establish a sound SPS management system that would ensure plant health management domestically and in turn would instil confidence in Rwanda's trading partners. The Working Group expressed some concern over the possible

duplication of activities with a parallel EU project currently under formulation and encouraged greater involvement of the private sector in the proposal. The Working Group also discussed the choice of executing agency. It was agreed that Michigan State University could be the executing agency but that the consultant who had prepared the proposal would not normally be eligible to implement the project. The Working Group suggested that the private sector be more involved in the proposal and that the applicants provide letters of support from relevant Government agencies. The Working Group agreed to ask the Government for an in-kind contribution as no such provision was made in the proposal. The Working Group also advised the project applicants to include a provision for an independent evaluation after the project's completion in the existing budget.

STDF 146: Strengthening phytosanitary controls in Mali with particular reference to mango exports

34. The Secretary recalled that the centerpiece of this project was the establishment of a phytosanitary control post in Mali. The Working Group agreed to fund the proposal subject to verifying possible overlaps with an on-going IF funded project on mangos as well as obtaining a letter of support from the Office Nationale de Protection des Végétaux. The Working Group agreed that the structure of the IF focal point located in the Ministry of Commerce would serve as executing agency but argued that in future cases, the consultant should make clear recommendations on the choice of executing agency. The Working Group also advised the project applicants to include a provision for an independent evaluation after the project's completion in the existing budget.

STDF 147: Strengthening the food safety and food control system in Eritrea with a particular reference to fisheries

35. The Secretary recalled that the objective of the project was to assist Eritrea in establishing a modern food safety and food control system. The Working Group expressed its concern with possible overlaps between this proposal and on-going or past technical assistance provided by other agencies/donors including the EU, FAO, UNIDO and France. The Working Group also found that not enough attention had been given to formulating a national food safety strategy and ensuring the long term viability of a new food safety and food control system - including the establishment of a national food safety body. The Working Group agreed not to fund this proposal.

PROJECTS FROM OR BENEFITING ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS IN COUNTRIES THAT ARE NOT LDCs OR OLICs

STDF 136: Safe food international partnership: Uniting Consumer organizations with Universities and Governmental Organizations to promote food safety systems

36. The Secretary recalled that the project involved a capacity building initiative to spur proactive regional collaboration between consumer and public health NGOs and universities in Latin America and Africa. The Working Group was concerned over the lack of a trade element in the proposal. It also found the project activities and their proposed implementation vague with no weight being given to the project's impacts on the ground. Finally, the budget lacked specificity and included several budget lines which would not be eligible under the STDF. The Working Group agreed not to fund this proposal.

STDF 137: Development and implementation of aflatoxin standards in Nigerian cassava products to enhance food safety in domestic and international trade

36. The Secretary reported that the project would develop the capacity of Nigerian regulatory officials to set and implement aflatoxin standards in cassava products. The Working Group expressed its concern over high overhead charges presented in the budget as well as the lack of a provision for in-kind contribution in the budget. More fundamentally, the project did not state why aflatoxin

contamination was a problem for cassava exports and focused solely on the development of aflatoxin standards for cassava products. The Working Group agreed not to fund this proposal.

DECISION ON PROJECT FINANCING AND PRIORITIZATION OF PROJECT FINANCING

37. Of 12 applications received, three projects and one project preparation grant were accepted for funding. Three applications were accepted conditional on a number of amendments to be made and the injection of new funds into the STDF. The Working Group agreed that the implementation of approved projects and the project preparation grant would proceed in the following priority order:

STDF 127: Project preparation grant to strengthen the capacity of the Benin Chamber of Commerce to track SPS related developments in export markets (\$20,000)

STDF 146: Strengthening phytosanitary controls in Mali – with particular reference to mango exports (\$508,800)

STDF 145: Rwanda Horticulture Export Standards Initiative (\$526,674)

STDF 66: Strategy to increase capacity to comply with commercial and official SPS requirements to facilitate agrifood exports from Mozambique (\$522,000)

INFORMATION ON PARTNER AND DONOR ACTIVITIES

38. Partners and donors agreed to exchange information on their respective activities by email. The Working Group requested partners to present relevant information on their activities at the next SPS Committee meeting.

ELECTION OF INCOMING CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

39. The Group thanked FAO for having assumed the chairmanship of the STDF Working Group and welcomed the new STDF Chair from WHO. The Working Group named the OIE as Vice-Chair of the STDF Working Group.

OTHER BUSINESS

40. The Working Group discussed the establishment of a Task Force and agreed on elements which would form the basis for its the terms of reference. These included:

- the establishment of a multi-annual work programme for the STDF - based on the medium-case scenario as outlined in section IV of the Business Plan - including concomitant multi-annual donor funding;
- the need to put in place the necessary management arrangements to implant the medium term strategic plan, including establishment and location of a Programme Management Unit (PMU) and definition of its tasks and responsibilities, in particular in relation to the tasks and responsibilities of the partner organizations and the Secretariat;
- the enhancement of the role of the STDF as a coordinating mechanism for SPS-related technical assistance; and
- the establishment of criteria for member and observer status in the STDF.

41. It was agreed that the Task Force would be chaired by one of the donor countries presently participating in the donor rotation mechanism (i.e. Canada, Denmark or the United Kingdom). It was also agreed that the Task Force would be open to all Members of the Policy Committee. Participation would be limited to one participant per STDF partner organization (FAO, OIE, World Bank, WHO and WTO) or donor country (Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States). The deadline for self-selection for the Task Force was established as close of business Friday 16 June 2006. The Working Group agreed that draft terms of reference of the Task Force would be circulated by the Secretariat in the week following the Working Group and Policy Committee meetings.

42. The next meeting of the Working Group was scheduled to take place immediately preceding or following the next SPS Committee. The Secretary would consult with the Chair of the Working Group and communicate dates in due course.

ANNEX I

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