

**Beneficiary**

African governments and other SPS stakeholders

Led by

AUC, in collaboration with João Magalhaes

Time-frame

October 2009 – August 2010

STDF funding

US\$30,000

COORDINATING REGIONAL SPS STRATEGIES TO ACCELERATE TRADE IN AFRICA

The safe trade gap

Agriculture is of vital importance to Africa, playing a key role in intra-African trade and growth. For African farmers, processors and traders, meeting international standards by putting in place SPS measures gets food and agricultural products across borders and into markets. From 2007, Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) started to develop regional SPS frameworks and strategies to improve SPS management, accelerate regional integration and boost trade. At the same time concerns were raised about potential duplication and inconsistency with the WTO SPS Agreement. To avoid policy incoherence at a regional and continental level, and help close the continent's safe trade gap, coordinated action was needed.

Partnership approach

The African Union Commission (AUC) asked for support to map the regional SPS frameworks and strategies, to check coherence and how they measured up to the SPS Agreement. The STDF study took stock of existing and planned SPS frameworks and strategies. The AUC and its animal and plant health specialized bodies (Inter-African Phytosanitary Council, AU-IAPSC and Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources, AU-IBAR), as well as RECs continent-wide, were closely involved. They were joined by the WTO and international standard-setting bodies (Codex, IPPC and OIE), donors and development partners. In moving forward, the analysis built on a 2009 AUC high-level conference, "Institutionalizing SPS Capacity in Africa", under the EU's Better Training for Safer Food programme.

Results

- The scoping study generated an assessment of the SPS roles and responsibilities of the AUC and RECs. It set out key recommendations to improve SPS institutional capacity at continental and regional level.
- Awareness levels were increased among RECs on the importance of meeting the WTO SPS Agreement, what this meant in terms of WTO Members' rights and responsibilities, including harmonization with international standards.
- Based on the study's recommendations, the AUC and a number of RECs requested and obtained observer status in the SPS Committee.

Sustaining impact

- The AUC has increasingly taken on a leadership role in the SPS area, participating actively in the SPS Committee and building new partnerships with the private sector.
- The study's findings and recommendations are being picked up. The study highlighted the role of AU-IBAR and AU-IAPSC and an outstanding gap in the food safety area. As a result, the AUC is moving to set up an Africa-wide food safety mechanism, looking at options and funding with donors and development partners.
- The EC-funded PAN-SPSO programme supported Africa's national SPS committees linked to the study's recommendations to make SPS coordination work better at national level. AU-IBAR is continuing this work to drive national coordination on SPS issues, helping countries to share best practice, lessons and experiences, for African governments to voice their concerns in the SPS Committee.

"AUC values STDF's support to close Africa's safe trade gap. The study fed into work to promote agricultural trade competitiveness in Africa. Recommendations and lessons are informing development of an SPS policy framework for the continent, and have catalyzed plans to set up a new food safety structure".

Diana Ogwal Akullo, AUC

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