

**STDF WORKING GROUP
7 APRIL 2020
VIRTUAL MEETING**

1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The STDF Working Group met virtually on 7 April from 14.00 to 17.00 (Geneva time), using Zoom. The Chairperson of the Working Group, Ms Julie Emond, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the WTO, welcomed participants to the first ever virtual STDF Working Group meeting.
2. The Chairperson explained the modalities of the meeting, including how participants could request the floor through Zoom. She urged participants to intervene only if they had comments different from those shared in writing beforehand and clarified that in order to be time-effective, the meeting would rely on "non-objection" decision-making.
3. The Chairperson presented the agenda and suggested that under agenda item 4 (Other Business), STDF partners and other Members provide an update on SPS-related activities or initiatives related to COVID-19. The agenda item "Selection of projects for independent ex-post evaluation" was reintroduced in the annotated agenda as it had been accidentally deleted. Members adopted the agenda with these changes.
4. A list of participants is provided in Annex 1 and an overview of relevant COVID-19 activities and initiatives from STDF Members is now available on the STDF [website](#).

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

2.1 Selection of vice-Chairperson (2020) of STDF Working Group

5. At the October 2019 meeting, the Codex Secretariat expressed interest in chairing the Working Group in 2021. No members raised objections to this proposal. Mr Tom Heilandt (Codex Secretary) was therefore selected as the new vice-Chairperson of the Working Group in 2020 (and hence Chairperson in 2021).

2.2 Selection of new developing country experts (2019-2020)

6. Based on the list of candidates proposed by STDF members, and in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules, the Chairperson of the Working Group had selected the following three developing country experts for the period 2020-2021: (i) Ms Mirian Bueno (Honduras), (ii) Ms Lucy Namu (Kenya), and (iii) Mr Visoni Timote (Fiji). Ms Bueno and Ms Namu briefly introduced themselves. Mr Timote was unable to attend the meeting due to Cyclone Harold and the large time difference. STDF's current experts, Mr Sanjay Dave, Mr Rogério Pereira Da Silva and Dr Ameha Sebsibe Woldemariam will continue to serve the STDF in 2020. Short bios of STDF's new developing country experts are available on the STDF [website](#).

2.3 Selection of donor representatives (2020-2021) – STDF Policy Committee

7. The Chairperson reminded donors to consult and select three new representatives to serve on the Policy Committee for the 2020-2021 period. Donors should inform the STDF Secretariat of their decision. For the period 2018-2019, donors were represented in the Policy Committee by Sweden, The Netherlands and the United States. At least one meeting of the Policy Committee is envisaged in 2020 or 2021.

2.4 Staffing and financial situation

8. The Secretariat welcomed Ms Catalina Pulido to the STDF team who filled the external vacancy (at grade 6) and started in November 2019. The Secretariat also informed members that the WTO had started the recruitment process for a full-time Communications Officer, as recommended in the 2019 external evaluation and endorsed by the Policy Committee. It was noted that the recruitment process for the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) function is expected to begin shortly.

9. The Secretariat briefly summarized the financial situation of the STDF. Taking into account un-contracted commitments and including on-going staffing commitments until the end of the year, the STDF trust fund showed a negative balance of US\$1,316,166. In 2020, contributions under multi-annual agreements are expected from Australia, Denmark, EC, France, the Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and the United States. Canada and Ireland informed members about their upcoming contributions of US\$450,000 and €150,000, respectively. USDA, the European Commission and UK reminded members of their multi-year contribution agreements and the fact that funds would be transferred in 2020. The Secretariat thanked all donors for their generous contributions.

2.5 New STDF Work Plan (2020-2021)

10. The Secretariat invited members to consider STDF's draft Work Plan for 2020-2021. Based on the STDF Strategy for 2020-2024, the Secretariat explained that the Work Plan provides information on STDF's planned activities, inputs and outputs in 2020 and 2021. The Secretariat noted that an informal working group would be established to guide and support the development and launch of STDF's new MEL framework. The deadline to express interest in participating in the informal working group was 24 April 2020.

11. The Secretariat reacted to written comments received by members on the 2020-2021 draft Work Plan. In response to Ireland, the Secretariat confirmed that the 40% target was also part of the STDF Operational Rules and Strategy and could be inserted in the Work Plan in paragraph 3.2.

12. In response to the European Commission, the Secretariat agreed to the proposed suggestion of integrating footnote 16 into the text in the Work Plan. Footnote 16 addresses priority-setting in case the STDF receives insufficient contributions from donors in any given year, as further explained in the STDF Operational Rules.

13. In response to IPPC, the Secretariat noted that it did not consider it useful to include a list of all past thematic topics in this two-year Work Plan, as a list is already available on the STDF website. The Working Group agreed in October 2019 to annually review all thematic topics and such review was foreseen in October 2020. The MEL section of the Work Plan proposes that the Secretariat prepare an overview and preliminary analysis of all STDF knowledge work, taking stock of what has been done to date. The Secretariat noted that it would have a preliminary overview ready for the October Working Group meeting.

14. In response to members' questions on the impact of COVID-19 on STDF's operations across its three work streams, the Secretariat noted that the Working Group meeting was held virtually and in a reduced format. Topics that were not included in the agenda would be discussed at the October meeting, which would be longer to compensate. Most of the knowledge work foreseen in 2020 will focus on identification of good practice through desk research, preparation of guidance material and tools, with the support of practitioner groups, which would also meet virtually. Only in 2021, seminars would be foreseen on GRP and PPPs, involving large physical meetings. The Secretariat foresees an impact for at least some of the projects and PPGs. It is currently assessing the risks and possible mitigation measures with all implementing agencies and consultants, both in terms of delivery of the project and the results to be achieved. The Secretariat will provide an update to the Working Group on the situation in the second half of April. For projects and PPGs still to be contracted, including those to be approved at this meeting, the Secretariat would continue to assess the situation and undertake preparatory work for projects to start in June at the earliest.

15. The Secretariat reminded members that the Work Plan could always be revisited by the Working Group at its October meeting, depending on how the COVID-19 situation evolves. The Working Group approved the STDF's 2020-2021 Work Plan, on a non-objection basis, taking into account: (i) the inclusion of STDF's 40% target for LDCs and OLIcs in para. 3.2; (ii) integrating footnote 16 into the text in para. 5.9; and (iii) adding the following sentence to risk mitigation and assumptions

(para. 5.6): "The Secretariat will assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its operations and provide regular reports to the STDF Working Group". The final Work Plan is available on the STDF [website](#).

3 PPGS AND PROJECTS

16. The Chairperson presented the methodology for the consideration of PPGs and projects as follows: (i) identification of conflict of interest, if any; (ii) Secretariat's response to the comments received from members; (iii) objections from members, if any; and (iv) final decision by the Working Group.

3.1 Consideration of PPG applications

STDF/PPG/622: Plant Health Products Regulatory Collaboration and Harmonisation in West Africa and the Sahel region

17. The Working Group did not approve this PPG application. Members welcomed the application and considered it relevant and eligible. However, members considered that several clarifications were needed to better understand the regional efforts made so far and how this PPG would build on work already done. The PPG should also provide more detail on the PPG activities, roles, responsibilities and budget, as well as on the expected outcomes. Some Working Group members offered to actively engage and work with the applicant and the countries in order to improve the proposal which could be considered by the STDF Working Group during its meeting in October 2020.

STDF/PPG/720: Assessing the Establishment of a HPAI Free Compartment in Egypt

18. The Working Group approved this PPG application. The Secretariat answered questions raised by members in their written comments. It was noted that the applicant was willing to include further information in the PPG document on the public health benefits, namely its contribution towards safer chicken for the Egyptian population. As indicated in the application, the Secretariat highlighted how exports could help reduce the current volatility of prices of the domestic poultry market and thus, compartmentalization could be expected to have a positive impact on small-scale producers. The applicant was fully aware that this PPG would not immediately embark on the establishment of a HPAI-free compartment without having adequate evidence on the economic and social benefits of its establishment and maintenance. The Secretariat noted that this condition would be specified in the PPG's terms of reference.

STDF/PPG/733: Piloting the use of P-IMA in the CARICOM region

19. The Working Group approved this PPG application. The Chairperson noted that Members had shown strong support in the written comments. No objections were raised during its approval.

STDF/PPG/734: Strengthening Capacity for border inspection and control of plants, animals and their products for biosecurity and food safety in Bhutan

20. The Working Group approved this PPG application. In general, members were supportive, with some members providing comprehensive comments suggesting to clarify the scope of the application as well as the work that is expected to be carried out in Bhutan in the context of border inspection control. The Secretariat informed that comments received would be taken into account when drafting the PPG's terms of reference. During the discussion, the UK mentioned having expertise in the topic and offered to help during implementation. ITC mentioned there is an EU-funded horticulture value chain project in the country and suggested to identify linkages and synergies with this PPG.

3.2 Consideration of PG applications

STDF/PG/611: Promotion of Codex standards and codes of practice in the smoked fish sector and consequences on food safety in other sectors in Mali

21. The Working Group approved this project application and recognized its relevance for international trade but also for domestic health. Some members highlighted strong support. A few members made suggestions to further describe the first set of activities (particularly those around the need for risk assessment and pesticide use), to ensure contacts with buyers and export markets from the outset of the project in order to ensure sustainability, and to further strengthen the logframe and its indicators. The Secretariat noted that comments will be taken into account in the revised project document (prior to contracting) or at the project's inception stage.

STDF/PG/665: Piloting the use of voluntary Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programme in Africa (Mali and Senegal) to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade
AND STDF/PG//682: Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programme in Central America (Belize and Honduras) to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade

22. Due to their similarity and scope, the Working Group considered both applications together. In general, members indicated support for both projects and provided valuable comments and suggestions. The Working Group approved both applications on condition that the following issues are taken into account in the revised project documents (prior to contracting) or during the projects' inception stage: (i) ensure alignment with the ongoing work in Codex on vTPA Guidelines; (ii) include during the inception phase of the projects, a deeper analysis of the value chains selected, the use of vTPA programmes in these value chains, and the experiences of small-scale Food Business Operators (FBOs), farmers, and small-scale enterprises; (iii) decrease the number of value chains (2 maximum per country) so that the pilots are realistic and manageable; (iv) include some specific indicators to measure the spillover effects of these projects, for instance on FBOs serving the domestic market; (v) include gender disaggregated indicators; and (vi) ensure sustainability of activities as a key element. The Secretariat thanked members for their feedback.

23. Dr Ameha Sebsibe inquired about the amount budgeted for consultants in the Central America project and suggested to minimize these costs. The Secretariat and the UK explained that because of the nature of the projects, there was a need for external expertise to guide the regulators in the pilot countries. Efforts are planned to ensure a cost-effective approach (including virtual meetings, a train-the-trainer approach and a mentoring programme engaging food safety regulators from other countries using a vTPA approach) and other efforts would be made in this regard wherever possible.

24. In response to Germany, the UK provided clarification on vTPA by referring to the definition provided by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCIFCS): "a non-governmental or autonomous scheme compromising of the ownership of a standard that utilizes national/international requirements; a governance structure for certification and enforcement, and in which food-business operators (FBO) participation is voluntary" (CX/FICS 18/24/6).

3.3 Selection of external evaluations

25. The Secretariat reminded participants that the Working Group should select at least two projects for an independent ex-post impact evaluation, in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules. In 2019, four projects were scheduled to be completed, but two of them received a no-cost extension. Therefore, no selection process was necessary since only two projects were completed in 2019: PG 486 "Improving compliance with SPS measures to boost oilseed exports in Myanmar" and PG 502 "Rolling out phytosanitary measures to expand market access for COSAVE region". The Working Group agreed to carry out the ex post evaluation for these two projects.

3.4 Other information

26. The Chairperson informed that there were a number of other items on the agenda for the original two-day Working Group meeting planned to take place at FAO Headquarters. With reference to the Annotated Agenda, the Secretariat proposed that the following items be deferred to the Working Group meeting in October 2020: (i) implementation of accepted recommendations (Action Plan) of the External Evaluation of STDF; (ii) the new STDF Strategy (2020-2024); (iii) updating the STDF Communications Plan; (iv) development of new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework; (v) Overview of ongoing and completed PPGs and projects; (vi) information exchange (new/emerging SPS initiatives and issues); (vii) special topic: border risk management.

27. On the STDF knowledge work, the following topics will be discussed at the October Working Group meeting: (i) STDF's evidence-based approach on Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA); (ii) Spill-over effects of trade-related food safety capacity building on domestic health; (iii) STDF/UNIDO/IICA survey on voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) programmes; (iv) STDF work on Public-Private Partnerships; (v) SPS eCert, follow-up of the first Advisory Committee meeting held on 18 March 2020; and (vi) Good Regulatory Practice progress report. Brief updates on these topics were provided in the annotated agenda.

28. The Secretariat noted that the 2019 Annual Report would be released in early June and it was agreed that the Secretariat would organize a virtual presentation of the report in June. Members requested the Secretariat to identify a date as soon as possible.¹

4 OTHER BUSINESS

29. Sweden raised the issue of donor representation in the Policy Committee and inquired whether the Chairperson could convene a meeting of the donors to have a discussion on this. The Chairperson noted that she would work with her Canadian colleagues to look into this possibility.

30. Members provided updates on SPS-related activities or initiatives with regards to COVID-19. The WTO noted that the SPS Committee hadn't taken place in March as planned and that no WTO meetings would take place until at least the end of April. The WTO has established a COVID-19 Trade Monitoring Group and has set up a dedicated webpage. The WTO is attempting to keep track of measures impacting trade that are being put in place by WTO members. On the dedicated webpage, there is also a list of notifications that have been received in relation to COVID-19. SPS notifications fall loosely into two broad categories: (i) restrictions on import of live animals and (ii) facilitation of certain import procedures.²

31. The IPPC noted that it had posted COVID-related information on its website and encouraged IPPC members to be flexible in order to facilitate safe trade. It is important for NPPOs to work with their national Human Health authorities following guidance of WHO on how to set up inspection practices. The IPPC noted that e-Phyto was also an important trade facilitation tool that its members can adopt. All IPPC meetings have been cancelled until the end of June.

32. The World Bank noted that it had shared a link linked to Trade and COVID-19 and the advice that they are providing. The advice revolves around implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement and also provides general guidance on how border inspectors taking general precautions in contracting the virus, based on information from WHO and the US CDC. The note also covers best practices such as using the National Trade Facilitation Committees to engage the public and private sector and to manage the changes to border clearance processes. The World Bank has also put together an emergency financing package for policy development financing for reforms.

33. Codex noted its upcoming meetings would be cancelled or postponed, and it is working closely with FAO and WHO to provide messaging to members.

34. GFSI noted that the outbreak continues to cause audit restrictions which could have an impact on the certification status of certain sites. GFSI has issued a position paper on temporary audit measures during the Covid-19 pandemic, which can be found on the GFSI website.

35. FAO is involved in several scientific advice meetings. FAO has been working with WHO on COVID messaging which can be found on the FAO website. The FAO Statistics and Economics Division has produced a series of policy papers regarding the protection and stability of food supply chains.

36. The WHO is doing work on the role of pets and other animals in the transmission chain, and distributing proper messages based on scientific evidence. For example, there is a fake WHO story advising the avoidance of bakery products that is circulating under a WHO logo. INFOSAN is very active at the moment and facilitates communication of food safety incidents. The WHO has established a new nutrition and food safety COVID-19 working group. The WHO is also organizing webinars for food industry and have provided new guidance on hygiene and sanitation measures that need to be introduced to protect workers in the food supply chain. Formal guidance will be published soon on the WHO website. The WHO noted that it would look into the possibility of providing guidance for SPS-related inspection officers.

37. The Secretariat shared information that was provided by the OIE in advance since it was unable to participate in the meeting. The OIE has established an ad-hoc group to monitor current scientific knowledge and relevant risk assessments developed by stakeholders on COVID-related risks to

¹ The Secretariat subsequently announced that the date for this presentation will be Thursday 11 June from 15:00-16:00 (CET).

² https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/notifications_e.htm

human and animal health associated with international trade in animals and animal products. It was also noted that the OIE meeting has been cancelled until further notice.

5 CLOSURE

38. The Chairperson and the Secretariat shared final remarks and reminders to participants. The deadline to express interest in participating in the informal working group to develop STDF's new Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework is 24 April 2020. In the second half of April the Secretariat will provide a further update on its COVID-19 response. The next Working Group meeting will be held on 13, 14 and 15 October 2020 (2.5 or 3 days) at the WTO in Geneva. Sweden noted that the Secretariat should consider the possibility of some participants joining the next Working Group meeting via a virtual platform. Finally, the Secretariat thanked both Ms. Julie Emond for her role as Chairperson as well as participants for their engagement.

39. The meeting was closed at 16:22.

ANNEX 1
STDF WORKING GROUP
7 APRIL 2020

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Country/Organization	Email address:
Kara AINSWORTH	Australia	Kara.Ainsworth@dfat.gov.au
Diana AKULLO	African Union	AkulloD@africa-union.org
Rolando ALCALA	World Trade Organization (WTO)	Rolando.Alcala@wto.org
Lystra N. ANTOINE	World Bank Group (WBG)	alystra@worldbank.org
Kaviraj APPADU	Sweden	Kaviraj.Appadu@sida.se
Ali BADARNEH	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	A.BADARNEH@unido.org
Mary BARRETT	Ireland	Mary.Barrett@dfa.ie
Knut BERDAL	Norway	Knut.Berdal@lmd.dep.no
Christophe BLANC	France	christophe.blanc@dgtresor.gouv.fr
Nicola BONNEFOY	Food Industry Asia (FIA)	nicola.bonnefoy@foodindustry.asia
Monique BOUMAN	The Netherlands	Monique.Bouman@minbuza.nl
Gracia BRISCO	Codex Alimentarius	Gracia.Brisco@fao.org
Sarah BRUNEL	International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)	Sarah.Brunel@fao.org
James BUCHANAN	United States (USDA)	James.Buchanan@usda.gov
Mirian BUENO	STDF Developing Country Expert	mbueno@senasa.gob.hn
Verna CAROLISSEN	Codex Alimentarius	Verna.Carolissen@fao.org
Catherine CONSTANT	France	catherine.constant@agriculture.gouv.fr
Ana Marisa CORDERO	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)	ana.cordero@iica.int
Sanjay DAVE	STDF Developing Country Expert	sdave.codex@gmail.com
Oliver DORAISAMY	Australia	Oliver.Doraisamy@dfat.gov.au

Name	Country/Organization	Email address:
Eleonora DUPOUY	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Eleonora.Dupouy@fao.org
Julie EMOND	Chairperson	julie.emond@international.gc.ca
Bill GAIN	World Bank Group	wgain@worldbank.org
Anne GERARDI	Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)	a.gerardi@theconsumergoodsforum.com
Ludovica GHIZZONI	International Trade Centre (ITC)	ghizzoni@intracen.org
Tom HEILANDT	Codex Alimentarius	Tom.Heilandt@fao.org
Marlynn HOPPER	STDF Secretariat	Marlynn.Hopper@wto.org
Elena IMMAMBOCUS	STDF Secretariat	Elena.Immambocus@wto.org
Pablo JENKINS	STDF Secretariat	Pablo.Jenkins@wto.org
Fred JOHNSTON	United States (USDA)	Fred.Johnston@usda.gov
Edwini KESSIE	World Trade Organization (WTO)	Edwini.Kessie@wto.org
Roshan KHAN	STDF Secretariat	Roshan.Khan@wto.org
Brent LARSON	International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)	Brent.Larson@fao.org
Elizabeth LEONARDI	United States (USDA)	LeonardiEV@state.gov
Markus LIPP	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Markus.Lipp@fao.org
Joakim LÖFVENDAHL	Sweden	joakim.lofvendahl@gov.se
Aloys LORKEERS	European Commission	Aloysius.LORKEERS@ec.europa.eu
Jill LUXENBERG	United States (USDA)	Jill.Luxenberg@usda.gov
Kelly McCORMICK	United States (US FDA)	kelly.mccormick@fda.hhs.gov
Paola MICHELUTTI	STDF Secretariat	Paola.Michelutti@wto.org
Gabor MOLNAR	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	G.MOLNAR@unido.org
Gillian MYLREA	World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)	g.mylrea@oie.int

Name	Country/Organization	Email address:
Lucy NAMU	STDF Developing Country Expert	lnamu@kephis.org
George ODUOR	Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI)	g.oduor@cabi.org
Elle O'FLAHERTY	United States (USDA)	elle.oflaherty@usda.gov
Mike O'NEILL	United Kingdom (UK)	Mike.Oneill@food.gov.uk
Katya ONUL	International Finance Corporation (IFC)	konul@ifc.org
Simon PADILLA	STDF Secretariat	Simon.Padilla@wto.org
Mary PARRISH	United States (USDA)	Mary.Parrish@usda.gov
Rogério PEREIRA DA SILVA	STDF Developing Country Expert	rogerio.silva@agricultura.gov.br
Markus PIKART	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	markus.pikart@un.org
Julio PINTO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Julio.Pinto@fao.org
Stefan PLETZIGER	Germany (GIZ)	stefan.pletziger@giz.de
Catalina PULIDO	STDF Secretariat	Catalina.Pulido@wto.org
Chelsea QU	Canada	Chelsea.qu@canada.ca
Isabelle ROLLIER	European Commission	Isabelle.Rollier@ec.europa.eu
Jean SAINT-GEOURS	International Finance Corporation (IFC)	jsaintgeours@ifc.org
Lisa SCHEUERMANN	World Health Organization (WHO)	scheuermannl@who.int
Ameha SEBSIBE	STDF Developing Country Expert	ameha.sebsibe@igad.int
Shane SELA	World Bank Group (WBG)	ssela@worldbank.org
Melvin SPREIJ	STDF Secretariat	Melvin.Spreij@wto.org
Visoni TIMOTE	STDF Developing Country Expert	visonit@spc.int
Mika VEHNÄMÄKI	Finland	Mika.Vehnamaki@formin.fi

Name	Country/Organization	Email address:
Morag WEBB	Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP)	morag.webb@coleacp.org
Brent WILSON	Canada	brent.wilson@canada.ca
Christiane WOLFF	World Trade Organization (WTO)	Christiane.Wolff@wto.org