

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING  
20-21 MARCH 2018  
WTO, GENEVA**

## **1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr Paolo Garzotti (EU). He informed members that IICA, UNIDO, CABI, ITC, EIF, UK DFID, GFSI, Denmark and Japan had been granted observer status for the meeting.
2. The agenda was adopted with one amendment: the European Commission (EC) indicated that it would like to make a presentation on the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) Initiative under agenda item 3 "Structured exchanges between WG members and observers".
3. The presentations made in the STDF Working Group can be viewed on the [STDF website](#). A list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

## **2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**

### **2.1 New Developing Country Experts**

4. Members were informed that the chairperson of the Working Group had selected three new developing country experts to participate in the STDF in 2018-19: (i) Dr Gbemenou Joselin Benoit Gnonlonfin (senior SPS standards advisor, ECOWAS); (ii) Ms Merriam Toalak (former Acting Director of Biosecurity Vanuatu, currently pursuing a PhD Degree in Plant Pathology/Plant Health at Lincoln University, New Zealand); (iii) and Ms Sanniel Wilson (Chief Plant Quarantine Officer, Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries, Jamaica). Three of STDF's current experts, Dr Isa Kamarudin (former Director General, Department of Veterinary Services, Malaysia), Mr Kenneth Msiska (Head, Plant Quarantine and Phytosanitary Service of Zambia) (unable to attend the meeting due to personal reasons) and Ms Michèle Paultre (Director, Haiti Bureau of Standards) would continue to serve the STDF in 2018.

### **2.2 STDF Policy Committee (23 FEBRUARY 2018)**

5. The Secretariat reported on the STDF Policy Committee meeting, kindly hosted by the OIE at its Headquarters in Paris on 23 February 2018. The meeting was chaired by Dr Matthew Stone, OIE Deputy Director General. A summary report of the meeting is available on the [STDF website](#). The Policy Committee agreed on the terms of reference (ToRs) for the upcoming external evaluation of the STDF (subject to minor modifications) and on an increase in the budget for the evaluation from US\$100,000 to US\$150,000.

6. The Policy Committee also discussed possible amendments to the STDF Operational Rules, including revisions to the PPG and PG approval process in the Working Group. At this stage, however, members agreed to await the results of the external evaluation before embarking on any further amendments. In addition, in the broader context of the evaluation, the Policy Committee considered the need to: (i) review the capacity of the STDF Secretariat, specifically in relation to monitoring and evaluation, communications and outreach; (ii) give more attention to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, alongside the Working Group's technical role; and (iii) further clarify how the STDF works with the private sector.

### **2.3 External Evaluation of the STDF**

7. The Secretariat briefly introduced the final ToRs for the external evaluation. Draft ToRs had been shared with the Working Group for comments in January 2018, prior to submission to the Policy Committee for endorsement. In line with further amendments agreed by the Policy Committee, the final ToRs leave open the possibility of country visits. In addition, the Policy Committee agreed to create an Evaluation Steering Group, which will be tasked primarily with reviewing the inception report of the evaluation. The Steering Group will comprise one

representative selected among STDF partners, one among donor members and one among developing country experts. In this context, the Secretariat invited partners, donors and developing country experts to nominate and inform the Secretariat, by 1 August 2018 who will be their representative in this Steering Group.

8. The Secretariat further informed that a call for tender was already published on the [United Nations Global Marketplace \(UNGM\)](#) and that the deadline will be 30 April 2018. The aim is for the WTO to contract the evaluation company by the end of July 2018 and to start the evaluation on 1 September 2018. The duration of the evaluation process will be six months. It is envisaged that the evaluation team will participate in the next Working Group meeting on 29-30 October 2018 *inter alia* to observe the meeting and conduct interviews.

9. The draft evaluation report will be circulated to the STDF Working Group by 14 December 2018 for comments, due by 18 January 2019. The final report will be submitted by 1 March 2019, following presentation and discussion in the next STDF Policy Committee meeting, to be hosted by the WTO in Geneva in February 2019. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation are expected to feed into a new STDF strategy for 2020 and beyond.

#### **2.4 Staffing and financial situation**

10. The Secretariat reminded members that Mr Pablo Jenkins was on special leave without pay until 1 May 2018, and was being replaced, on a temporary basis, by Ms Nazia Mohammed. The Secretariat also informed that the recruitment process to fill Ms Kenza Le Mentec's position (at grade 8) was completed. After an external competition, Mr Simon Padilla was selected for the post. In turn, Mr Padilla's position was being filled, on a temporary basis, by Ms Hanna Vitikkala. An internal vacancy notice for Mr Padilla's post (at grade 7) had been issued, in accordance with WTO procedures.

11. The Secretariat also reminded Members that Ms Ece Yalavaç was interning with the Secretariat until early April 2018. Also, as part of the WTO Young Professional Programme (YPP), Ms Onon Sukhbaatar (from Mongolia) is working in the STDF Secretariat from January to December 2018. The Secretariat further recognized the ongoing support provided by STDF's communications consultant, Ms Elena Immambocus, and STDF's M&E consultant, Mr Jens Andersson.

12. With reference to the financial information in the annotated agenda, the Secretariat outlined STDF's financial situation as at February 2018. Contributions in 2017 totalled US\$4.8 million, i.e. nearly reaching the STDF's annual target level of funding of US\$5 million. In 2018, contributions amounting to US\$787,110 were received from Canada and Finland. Additional contributions in 2018 are expected from Australia, France, the European Commission, Sweden and the United States (both USFDA and USDA) under existing multi-annual contribution agreements. The Secretariat further informed members that it is actively engaging with other development partners with a potential interest in the STDF, including Denmark, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom, amongst others.

13. France further clarified that it is raising its annual contribution to the STDF from €50,000 to €200,000 in 2018-2020 (due to additional annual contributions of €150,000 from DG Trésor, in addition to contributions from the Ministry of Agriculture). Ireland expressed its satisfaction with the work of the STDF and announced that it intends to continue contributing to the Facility in 2018, as in previous years (i.e. €150,000). Moreover, during the STDF Policy Committee meeting in February, the Netherlands and Norway both announced new multi-annual contributions to the STDF.

14. As at 28 February 2018, the STDF trust fund showed a negative balance of CHF -1,236,850. However, as additional and new contributions were expected, the Secretariat advised members that up to two PPGs and two PGs could be approved at this meeting, within the STDF's current financial capacity, and in accordance with its Work Plan for 2018.

#### **2.5 STDF Survey – Presentation by Jens Andersson (STDF M&E Consultant)**

15. Ms Jens Andersson presented the findings of the second STDF Working Group survey, which was distributed to Working Group participants in December 2017. The survey aimed to help

monitor the Facility's progress at the outcome level and identify cases of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative approaches to SPS capacity building facilitated by the STDF, in accordance with STDF's logical framework. The survey was sent to 105 current and former members/observers who participated in a Working Group meeting in 2016 and/or 2017. Twenty-nine responses were received. A small decline in responses from in particular partners and donors was observed.

16. Overall, the survey showed high satisfaction rates with the work of the STDF Working Group and Secretariat, similar to responses received on the previous survey held in December 2015. Responses also supported the view that the STDF is contributing to its main outcome "enhanced effectiveness of SPS capacity building in developing countries". However, it was noted that identifying concrete evidence of the wider effects of the STDF beyond its own activities continues to be challenging.

17. The Working Group discussed questions emerging from the survey, including how the STDF should relate to the SDGs, and how the PPG/PG review and decision-making process could be streamlined. It was also suggested that the STDF's target level of annual funding (US\$5 million) could be revisited in the future. The Working Group agreed to pursue discussions on these topics and noted that the results of STDF's upcoming external evaluation will also provide further guidance on these issues.

## **2.6 STDF 2017 Annual Report**

18. The Secretariat updated the Working Group on the STDF 2017 Annual Report. Work on the report was ongoing, and the final report will be circulated to the Working Group for its endorsement in May 2018. The Secretariat invited members to make specific suggestions, if any, for the report, given that there was still time and an opportunity to do so. The Secretariat also invited members to share more practical examples showcasing the wider effects of the STDF beyond its immediate activities, for inclusion in the Annual Report.

## **2.7 Implementation of STDF Communications Plan**

- **STDF Results Booklet**

19. The Secretariat informed that a new STDF Results Booklet with 25 results stories, showing how STDF projects are supporting small-scale farmers, processors, traders and governments to implement international standards and access global markets, was launched at the STDF Policy Committee meeting. The booklet provided concrete examples of impact on local communities in developing countries, showcasing the contribution that STDF work (since the inception of the facility) had made to the achievement of various SDGs. The results booklet is available on the [STDF website](#).

- **STDF Website, briefing notes, e-news, project results stories, etc.**

20. The Secretariat reported on recent and planned communication activities. Following the October 2017 Working Group meeting, five new e-news items were sent to the STDF mailing list, which now comprised more than 4,000 subscribers. In addition, a standard STDF presentation with new infographics is being prepared and will be made available on the STDF website in the first half of 2018. A number of new STDF briefing notes, including on leveraging and mobilising resources for SPS capacity building, on the environmental spill-over effects of STDF projects, and on the SDGs, are under preparation. The STDF was requested to provide input into a joint WTO-UNEP publication on Trade and the Environment, to be issued in the second half of 2018.

21. The Secretariat also informed members that interviews with selected and interested partners, donors and developing country experts may be scheduled on the margins of the October 2018 Working Group meeting, for inclusion on the website.

- **STDF YouTube Channel**

22. The Secretariat briefed members on the inclusion of two new films on the newly created STDF YouTube channel. These included videos highlighting the results and experiences of the following STDF projects: Knowledge solutions on how safe wood packaging supports trade (STDF/PG/460); and Building capacity of small-scale shrimp and prawn farmers in Bangladesh (STDF/PG/321).

Members were invited to suggest additional films for inclusion to the Secretariat, given that work to populate the YouTube channel is ongoing.

- **Secretariat participation in external events**

23. The Secretariat provided an update on its participation in external events and meetings since the previous Working Group meeting in October 2017. Information on these events, including the reasons for participation and the number and type of stakeholders reached, was provided in Annex 2 of the annotated agenda. The Secretariat participated in several events in Geneva or through Skype or other audio/video platforms, hence reducing travel costs. In addition, external funding was received for the Secretariat's participation in a number of meetings, which further reduced costs.

- **Activities by STDF members**

24. Members commended the Secretariat for its communications and outreach material, reconfirming the positive evaluation on this subject expressed in the STDF Working Group survey. Members continue to disseminate STDF communication materials to a wide range of diverse audiences, including government departments, development partners, project beneficiaries in the field, etc., and considered that the Secretariat had produced a comprehensive toolbox of different communications products (videos, briefing notes etc.). Several members included a link to the STDF website and/or results booklet in their own websites.

25. The WTO queried whether the STDF could consider developing future communication materials related to work in the WTO SPS Committee. This could include, for instance, a checklist and/or briefing note on public consultation processes as part of Good Regulatory Practices, discussed at the SPS Committee's transparency workshop in October 2017.

26. Members recalled that all communication materials should be duly shaped by their target audience and purpose. Members also highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of communication plans and materials, and noted the need to demonstrate the impact of SPS capacity building when communicating results.

### **3 INFORMATION EXCHANGE AMONG PROVIDERS OF SPS CAPACITY BUILDING AND DIALOGUE AMONG RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS (OUTPUT 1)**

#### **3.1 Session on Good Practice in Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), with specific reference to Single Windows and the role of SPS agencies**

27. Ms Sheri Rosenow from the WTO's [Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility](#) (TFAF) gave an overview of the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), highlighting its provisions on Single Windows, as well as TFAF's role and functions. The TFA, she informed, does not diminish the right to implement SPS controls at the border; rather, it builds on existing provisions of the SPS Agreement, resulting in so-called "SPS+" provisions. She also referred to Article 10.4 of the TFA on Single Windows and informed that 13 WTO Members had notified the operation of Single Windows<sup>1</sup>. Ms Rosenow further explained that TFAF's structure was inspired and drew on that of the STDF. TFAF was created in 2014 at the request of developing and least-developed country (LDC) Members to support the implementation of the TFA. She informed that in 2018, TFAF intends to offer project preparation grants up to US\$30,000, and project implementation grants of up to US\$200,000.

28. Mr Bill Gain from the World Bank Group (WBG) outlined the WBG's activities on trade facilitation. The WBG is implementing a [Trade Facilitation Support Programme](#) (TFSP), which assists 41 countries to implement the TFA. He highlighted the economic gains – especially to small and medium-sized enterprises – by reducing transaction time and costs. Mr Gain recalled the importance of sequencing in trade facilitation project activities, and stressed the leadership and coordination role of National Trade Facilitation Committees. Collaboration between border agencies was crucial to achieve effective implementation. He also outlined the necessary steps for implementing a national single window, reminding members that this was a long term and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tfadatabase.org/>

complex endeavour that required proper planning, stakeholder coordination, effective management of complexities and creating an enabling institutional framework.

29. Mr John Keyser from the WBG presented practical challenges that developing countries and LDCs are facing in trade facilitation. He explained that while considerable progress has been made in Single Windows and modern safe trade solutions, many traditional challenges (such as limited access to information or repetitive procedures) remain. He referred to SPS challenges in regional small-scale trade (high costs pushing traders into informal routes, large numbers of small consignments, etc.) and suggested emerging ICT tools and applications, tailored to the needs of small traders, as possible solutions. Examples include smartphone/tablet-supported rapid diagnostic tests and pest recognition and surveillance applications (also used in STDF project STDF/PG/432, "Strengthening information systems for pest surveillance and reporting in Asia-Pacific").

30. Mr Keyser then described experiences from WBG programmes in the East African Community (EAC) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). He explained problems encountered in trade in the region, including confusion between food safety/quality standards, overregulation, treating regulations and standards as copyrighted material and charging for them, and applying regulations unevenly to different trading partners, among others. Possible solutions to these challenges include rationalisation and publication of SPS measures as a necessary first step before moving toward an automated environment (including Single Windows), creation of SPS information portals (as part of broader trade portals) and performance-based border management (with ICT-based reporting systems).

31. The Secretariat informed members that the STDF is facilitating a discussion on the organization of a regional workshop on border agency cooperation, with possible funding from TFAF, involving a wide range of partners including FAO, OIE, the Codex and IPPC Secretariats, the WBG and the World Customs Organization (WCO), amongst others. The Secretariat is also working on a concept note on SPS capacity building and new technologies. The Secretariat welcomed the WBG's ideas in this regard and invited other members to share ideas and suggestions for this document, which may be circulated for further discussion in the October 2018 Working Group meeting. The Secretariat also invited members to reflect on previous STDF work on SPS indicators on the performance of national SPS systems, recalling that work on this subject had been paused at members' request, and querying whether members would want to reactivate this work.

### **3.2 UNIDO Approach on Food Safety Capacity Building**

32. Mr Ali Badarneh (UNIDO) made a brief presentation on UNIDO's new approach to food safety capacity building. He explained that UNIDO's food safety approach has three pillars: (i) to enable sustainable business through effective food safety capacity building; (ii) to enable favourable food safety environments; and (iii) to foster food safety advocacy and partnerships (private sector engagement facilitated in Global, Regional and National Food Safety Partnerships). He noted that UNIDO provides funding to the private sector in Africa, Asia and Latin America to allow them to deliver services and participate in discussions locally. UNIDO also collaborates with UN organizations on food safety capacity building, especially the FAO. The extent of that cooperation is adapted to country, region, etc.

### **3.3 Structured exchanges between WG members and observers**

- **Information about new/emerging SPS initiatives and issues - STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and observer organizations**

33. The EC presented its Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative. From 2006 to 2017, around 1,700 BTSF activities took place and 33% of these benefited non-EU countries. The aim is to help developing countries export to the EU; reduce the number of rejections; and help them develop SPS capacities for regional, sub-regional or local trade. From 2013 to 2017, the EU had funded 35 regional workshops and 127 training missions in developing countries. The training activities took a training-of-trainers approach. In Africa, BTSF funding was geared towards developing a framework to facilitate food trade in Africa. The EC noted that there is still insufficient knowledge in the area of risk analysis on the continent and that it is planning more workshops on this subject. In 2018-2019, there will be more activities in Asia aiming to explain the EU's SPS requirements on food safety, plant health, animal health and welfare.

34. The United States informed that eight distance-learning SPS modules are developed and posted on [www.spscourses.com](http://www.spscourses.com) (in English and French so far). It encouraged members to access the modules and disseminate them widely. Six additional modules are being developed on plant health, pest surveillance, plant pest ID systems, inspection, pest risk assessment, management and certification. Other modules will be developed for animal health and food safety.

35. The WBG updated the Working Group on the GFSP study on food safety capacity building in Africa entitled "Learning from Experience to Build the Future". For this study, data on 500 donor-funded projects was compiled and analysed, and over 200 stakeholders were consulted. Some key themes emerging include the need to consider more investment to reduce food-borne illness among African consumers (especially those dependent on informal markets) and the role of consumer markets and private sector initiatives as drivers of food safety. The final study is expected to be issued by the end of June 2018. The WBG further informed members that its "Enabling the Business of Agriculture" survey and report will from now on be conducted biennially and that the geographical coverage was expanded to 82 countries. The survey and report include a subset of indicators around SPS issues, which may be of interest to the STDF and its members. The WBG also informed that the IFC recently launched a new global trade supplier finance programme, which links to GFSP's Global Markets Programme.

36. On trade facilitation, the WBG informed that it is collaborating with the IPPC Secretariat to implement ePhyto pilots in Samoa, Vanuatu and Zambia under STDF project STDF/PG/504. The WBG is also helping The Philippines undertake an assessment of its phytosanitary system to implement phytosanitary certification. In addition, the WBG is partnering with Australia to pilot a blockchain process initiative to reduce border clearance processes. The WBG is also currently piloting an initiative in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia seeking to measure the impact of cross-border trade on women at the firm level. This initiative is expected to be replicated in over 40 countries. Finally, the WBG expressed interest in a meeting on the margins of the next Working Group meeting in October with STDF, FAO and the three sisters to look into the development of an SPS-TF toolkit. The aim would be to ensure that TFA gap analysis work takes into consideration the unique constraints that SPS agencies face in the trade facilitation and cross-border space.

37. Dr Benoit Gnonlonfin (Developing Country Expert) informed that ECOWAS implemented several activities over the past year, with support from USAID. For example, a regional framework was developed to better manage pests and diseases and a regional task force was created to look into priority activities for disease control. The United States also supported the development of an IPM guide for ECOWAS through its Feed the Future program. In addition, training sessions to develop sampling and testing skills for lab technicians and competent authorities were conducted in Senegal. The latter training led to the development of a concept note for a harmonized regional framework for maximum aflatoxin levels in groundnuts. Going forward, ECOWAS is building the capacity of NPPOs to participate in the upcoming CPM meeting in Rome, and continues to strengthen the capacity of national SPS committees to effectively participate in the WTO SPS committee and standard-setting bodies. In addition, a regional meeting is being planned to raise awareness on anti-microbial resistance (AMR). Dr Gnonlonfin thanked all donors for supporting SPS activities in West Africa.

38. Canada highlighted that it has contributed over one million Canadian dollars each year, over the past two years, to Codex, IPPC and OIE. This funding is used for the provision of scientific advice, to sponsor an extraordinary session of the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR), to update the OIE terrestrial code for BSE and Avian Influenza, to develop an IPPC Manual and conduct training workshops on pest free areas and areas of low pest prevalence, etc. Funding was also provided to the Codex Trust Fund and to the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA). Canada, in collaboration with FAO, IICA and USDA held a training session for JMPR evaluators in Ottawa at the end of November 2017. Six new evaluators were selected and four alternates. Canada hopes that the next extraordinary session of JMPR and the training of new evaluators will contribute to new standards in the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues.

39. The WTO informed that the next thematic workshop of the SPS Committee will focus on Annex C of the SPS Agreement, dealing with Control, Inspection and Approval procedures. The workshop will take place on 9-10 July 2018 on the margins of the WTO SPS Committee meeting. It will also include a focus on export certification. In addition, the next advanced SPS course (in Spanish) will begin in October 2018. The WTO also indicated that the SPS Committee launched the 5th review of the implementation and operation of the SPS Agreement. The review is a two-year

process and WTO Members are invited to submit proposals in the coming months on subjects to be covered.

40. The WHO informed that Cape Verde, Guinea, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Mali, Honduras, Macedonia, and a group project including India, Bhutan and Nepal had been successful in the second round of applications to the Codex Trust Fund. It thanked donors for their support to the Codex Trust Fund and welcomed more support.

41. The EC informed that national indicative programmes for ACP countries had been agreed between the EC and ACP governments. Over 60 ACP countries indicated that agriculture is one of their main focus sectors and in this context the EU will place emphasis on SPS compliance issues in these countries. In addition, the EC highlighted the "Fit for Market" program, implemented by COLEACP, which provides targeted assistance to the private sector for exports.

42. IICA informed that within the framework of project STDF/PG/345, two trainings were developed on Good Manufacturing Practices and HACCP for animal feed. Both trainings are available on the IICA virtual platform in Spanish and Portuguese. IICA noted that it continues to collaborate with USDA and Canada on capacity building on Codex standards in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

- **Case stories of collaborative/cross-cutting/innovative/regional approaches facilitated by STDF activities (indicator)**

43. The United States recognized the STDF's role in promoting collaboration among Working Group members. As a result of the WBG presentation at the October 2017 meeting, the United States and the WBG were able to connect project teams working in Ukraine to discuss complementary initiatives. These discussions helped to inform ongoing USDA programs. The United States also recognized the role that the STDF developing country experts play in SPS capacity building work. For instance, USDA had partnered with Ravi Khetarpal (former expert) in applying the PCE tool, with the assistance of IPPC, and looks forward to follow-up discussions with Dr Khetarpal and IPPC on upcoming USDA programmes.

44. OIE acknowledged the STDF's role in supporting the development of the OIE PVS tool. The PVS pathway is now 10 years old and a Think Tank forum was held last year. A [publication](#) is available online, which includes some case studies on the use of the PVS pathway tool. With support from the EU, ITC facilitated the development of a national export strategy in Afghanistan, which includes an SPS chapter. Through this project, ITC synergized with the OIE, which assisted in conducting a PVS needs assessment. Inputs from the PVS report were included in the national export strategy. ITC informed that the STDF had facilitated this collaboration with the OIE.

45. The EC informed that it had committed two million euros to ITC for work on market information tools. This included a focus on MRLs, linked to monitoring changes in EU regulations regarding pesticide residues and the impact on a total of five developing countries. The aim is to build capacity for relevant authorities to meet MRLs applied in the EU for specific crops. The project will also monitor interceptions in the EU to customize technical assistance along the value chain.

#### **4 IDENTIFICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF GOOD PRACTICE TO SUPPORT SPS (OUTPUT 2)**

##### **Discussion on ongoing/future work:**

##### **4.1 Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (PIMA)**

46. The Secretariat informed that two P-IMA focused PPGs are ongoing in Tajikistan (STDF/PPG/561) and Madagascar (STDF/PPG/575). In addition, a project was approved in October 2017 to mainstream SPS investments into agriculture, trade and environment planning and financing frameworks in selected COMESA countries (STDF/PG/606).

## 4.2 STDF work on Good Regulatory Practice

47. The Secretariat reminded members of the STDF GRP survey, which was conducted in 2017 and discussed at the October 2017 Working Group meeting. Following the Working Group's suggestions, a further analysis was conducted of the results for discussion at this meeting. The Secretariat also introduced a revised concept note, highlighting concrete follow-up activities in this area. They included: (i) development of a practical "checklist" on the use of GRP to improve the development and implementation of SPS measures; (ii) an STDF briefing note on the use of GRP; and (iii) an STDF workshop or seminar. The Secretariat suggested that such an event could be held on the margins of an SPS Committee meeting in 2019. The Secretariat also reminded Members that a budget line of US\$100,000 is still available for work on GRP.

48. The Working Group agreed that all proposed activities would be very useful and approved further work on them. Several participants, including WTO, WBG, OIE and ITC indicated their willingness to provide information to the Secretariat to support this work.

## 4.3 Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

49. At the October 2017 Working Group meeting, members showed strong support for considering further STDF work on PPPs. As agreed in October 2017, the Secretariat had revised its previous concept note on PPPs (dated 6 October 2016) and made it available to members for discussion at this meeting. The Secretariat proposed three follow up activities: (i) an informal survey/consultation with WTO Members on how they are making use of voluntary assurance schemes; (ii) an STDF event, as part of the Working Group meeting, or a broader event; and (iii) updating the 2012 STDF/IDB publication on PPPs with additional examples/case stories.

50. The Working Group approved further work on the above-mentioned activities. Several participants, including IPPC, OIE, GFSI, ITC and UNIDO expressed their support and willingness to cooperate with the STDF Secretariat on these activities.

## 4.4 SPS Investments: making the business case

51. In the October 2017 Working Group meeting, some members had proposed to undertake more work in this area. Given the ongoing work, however, members decided not to undertake any specific work on this topic at this stage. Some of STDF's ongoing work, such as P-IMA, is also geared towards making the business case for SPS investments.

# 5 NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND PROJECT PROPOSALS (OUTPUT 3)

## 5.1 Overview of ongoing and completed PPGs

52. The Secretariat referred to document [STDF/WG/Mar18/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing PPGs. The Working Group approved a one-month extension to contract STDF/PPG/619 (Southeast Asian Spices) and a six-month no-cost extension to complete STDF/PPG/535 (Measuring the spill-over effects of trade-related food safety projects).

## 5.2 Overview Presentation of new PPG applications not accepted for consideration

53. The Secretariat introduced the PPG applications not tabled for consideration by the Working Group and referred to document [STDF/WG/Mar18/Review](#). Members interested in any of these PPG applications were invited to contact the Secretariat for further information.

## 5.3 Consideration of PPG applications

### ***STDF/PPG/611: Support to the control of SPS risks in the Cashew and Shea value chains in Mali***

54. The Working Group approved this PPG application, subject to the following conditions: (i) that letters of support from the private sector have to be provided, prior to contracting; and (ii) development of ToRs by the Secretariat, in cooperation with the applicant, which should address all the comments received from members.

55. In addition to other outstanding issues identified by the Secretariat in the review of this PPG, members highlighted the following issues: (i) unclear scope of the PPG, as it also mentions "fruits and vegetables"; (ii) minor consideration of international standards - in addition to European standards; and (iii) lack of information on the specific SPS issues in both value chains. Members agreed on the development of ToRs by the Secretariat. The outstanding issues need to be clarified throughout the elaboration of the ToRs, and with the help of the international consultant to be contracted. The consultant will facilitate discussions around those issues and would ensure the connection between public and private stakeholders.

56. The Working Group acknowledged the relevance of both value chains and the trade opportunities. Members identified complementarities between this PPG and other on-going or planned projects in Mali. It was recommended to establish linkages with the newly approved project in Mali by the Codex Trust Fund, which will also be implemented by the applicant (ANSSA). Members also highlighted the results of another STDF project, "Total Diet Study for Sub-Saharan Africa" (STDF/PG/303), implemented by FAO, in Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Nigeria. The result of the studies and analysis conducted under this project should be used during the implementation of the PPG in Mali.

***STDF/PPG/657: Strengthening the National Food Control System in Kiribati, with particular attention to the fish processing sector***

57. The Working Group approved this PPG, subject to the following conditions: (i) submission of strong support letters from private and public stakeholders prior to contracting; and (ii) development of ToRs by the Secretariat, in cooperation with the applicant, which should address all the comments received from members, including the need to clarify the scope of deliverables and revision of the budget.

58. Members made other suggestions to improve the PPG, including to: (i) coordinate closely with relevant government agencies in Australia and New Zealand given their potential support for SPS capacity building in Kiribati, and synergies to the Pacer Plus Agreement; (ii) consult other relevant donors (including the EC, EIF, etc.) about their ongoing and upcoming programmes and explore funding opportunities for the resulting project, (iii) during the feasibility study, consider both regional and national options to resolve the issues related to laboratory capacity and access; (iv) ensure synergies with the ongoing STDF PPG on development of an SPS Centre of Excellence in the Pacific region (STDF/PPG/461); and (v) consider relevance and linkages to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the development of Codex standards on methyl mercury in predatory fish.

## **6 SPS CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS IN SPECIFIC AREAS (OUTPUT 4)**

### **6.1 Results and lessons from STDF projects: A meta Evaluation**

#### **Presentation by Mr Jens Andersson (STDF M&E consultant)**

59. Mr Andersson explained that the objective of the meta-evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of STDF projects and improve the quality and performance of future projects. The meta-analysis was based on evaluation reports of 22 externally evaluated STDF projects since 2004, and therefore builds on the opinions and reports of the evaluators. He pointed out that the standardized and systematic approach towards STDF project evaluations greatly facilitated the meta-analysis (e.g. using log frames and the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria).

60. The meta-evaluation showed how STDF's focus, rules and procedures evolved over time. For example, there is more focus on gender and the environment in STDF projects since 2015. Mr Andersson noted that the performance of the projects was generally very good in terms of achieving outputs. The analysis from output to higher level outcomes was however more difficult to evaluate. When examining the performance of STDF projects, "very good" ratings tend to decrease as analysis moved from relevance to impact and sustainability. One key observation was that it was more challenging to evaluate the impact that technical assistance and institution building projects have on poverty reduction. The impact on poverty reduction, he noted, was much clearer in the context of value chain projects involving all relevant actors.

61. Mr Andersson considered that STDF projects could be strengthened with a better understanding of local contexts and needs, market conditions and private sector strategies. In addition, securing local ownership and participation at all stages of the project and better planning for sustainability of results are important. He highlighted that potential memory loss can become an issue if project evaluations take place three years (or more) after completion. He also noted that disseminating project results and lessons and preparing clear phase-out and follow-up strategies are important. Furthermore, consideration of gender and the environment within the context of the SDGs could be more systematic and focused. He also suggested using more theory-based approaches in evaluations and carefully selecting the evaluators.

62. Members highly appreciated the meta-analysis. It was suggested that external evaluators should analyse the impact of projects using a broader timeframe and not just over the last three years, to better understand sustainability and impact. Questions arose on trade flows in STDF projects. It was recalled that STDF projects are expected to have an impact on trade flows and market access, which should be relatively easy to measure. Members acknowledged the difficulties in finding suitable indicators for projects focused on technical assistance and institution building and suggested using intermediate outcomes. Greater attention could also be given to the theory of change which places emphasis on outcomes in particular contexts.

63. The Secretariat highlighted the significant improvements in the quality of STDF projects approved by the Working Group over the years. It also noted that the STDF is a relatively small provider of SPS assistance and suggested that it may be interesting to conduct additional meta-evaluations of SPS projects implemented over a certain time-period by other organizations or bilateral donors.

## 6.2 Overview of ongoing and completed projects

64. The Secretariat referred to document [STDF/WG/Mar18/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all ongoing projects. The Working Group approved a three-month extension to contract STDF/PG/477 (Ethiopia livestock) and STDF/PG/503 (Beyond Compliance Global). The Working Group also approved six-month, no-cost extensions for STDF/PG/502 (Phytosanitary measures for market access in COSAVE member countries) and STDF/PG/486 (Improving compliance with SPS measures in Myanmar to increase oilseed exports).

## 6.3 Presentations of project applications not accepted for consideration

65. The Secretariat briefly introduced the project applications not accepted for consideration by the Working Group at this meeting (see [STDF/WG/Mar18/Review](#)). Members seeking further information on any of these PG applications were invited to contact the Secretariat for further details.

## 6.4 Consideration of PG applications

### ***STDF/PG/435: Upgrading the Sudanese Sesame-seed Value Chain to Meet SPS Measures and Facilitate Access to International Markets***

66. The Working Group endorsed the application - but also strongly encouraged the applicant to continue exploring possible co-funding opportunities, before contracting the project. Specifically, the World Bank Africa-China Agriculture Collaboration Trust Fund was mentioned as a possible source of resources, due to its focus on value chain development as a priority for investment in the region.

### ***STDF/PG/375: Strategy for strengthening Togo's SPS system***

67. The Working Group endorsed this project application, subject to a further revision of the logical framework (in particular the indicators at the outcome and goal levels). Members acknowledged the relevance of the project and recommended ensuring synergies and complementarities with other ongoing and planned activities and programs in the country. Specifically the following WBG projects were mentioned and should be taken into account: (i) West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP); (ii) Agricultural Sector Support Project (PASA); and (iii) a Trade Facilitation project for the enhancement of the national Single Window in Togo (which includes implementation of a risk-based approach). In addition, the EU-funded Fit for

Market program should be considered, as well as the following programs funded by Germany: (i) Green Innovation Centre; and (ii) Sustainable Development of Agricultural Value Chains. Also, two US-funded projects should be taken into account, namely: (i) Border Inspection Training; and (ii) the ECOWAS Phytosanitary Task Force.

68. In addition, it was suggested to include a reference to the National Trade Facilitation Committee in the project (in order to ensure the engagement of national stakeholders and border agencies), as well as consider incorporating activities of the Strategic Plan resulting from a previous application of the IPPC PCE tool.

***STDF/PG/543: Enhancing the capacity of Uganda's fruit and vegetable sector to comply with EU Phytosanitary requirements***

69. The Working Group did not endorse this application. While it agreed with the scope and merit of the project proposal, some questions remained. Specifically, the Working Group recommended that the application is revised to address the following main points: (i) the proposal would need to ensure through its design and practical approach (prioritization of commodities and pests, mitigation measures, selection of activities etc.) that a focus on the EU market will also be conducive to enhancing regional trade; (ii) the proposed activities should be based on the use of international (IPPC) standards; and (iii) there should be more detail on the proposed measures to guarantee project sustainability (e.g. charging for phytosanitary inspections) and it should be ensured that such measures do not have inadvertent negative effects on regional trade. Members also queried about the large number of planned activities.

70. The Working Group welcomed possible co-funding by the Netherlands Embassy in Kampala, and noted that consultations with Trademark East Africa, USDA and USAID could also strengthen the application given these organizations' planned complementary activities. The Working Group invited the applicant to revise and resubmit the application for the October 2018 meeting.

***STDF/PG/517: Strengthening the spice value chain in India and improving market access***

71. The Working Group did not endorse this application. It agreed, overall, that the proposal addressed the correct SPS challenges in the national context. However, members requested revision of the application to include clarity and detailed information on the target geographical areas and crop selection in the project application, including the rationale and criteria used to select the areas and spices that will benefit from the project. Some members queried about selecting black pepper among the target crops alongside with cumin, fennel and coriander, and considered whether there are other spice industries that may be in need of more urgent SPS support.

72. Questions were raised regarding the relative importance of exports to India's black pepper production, given that the market for black pepper was predominantly domestic. The Working Group pondered whether SPS systems in India, especially as regards its black pepper industry, were already sufficiently strong to address the challenges at hand. Members requested more refinement on how the proposal relates to ongoing work in the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods, and the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs. Members also requested a formal letter of support from the Indian Ministry of Commerce.

73. Members noted that the budget lacked adequate detail and clarity. Specifically, the proportion of the budget earmarked for trainings appears to be very high and requires explanation. Similarly, project management costs related to the application are quite high. Furthermore, the exact nature of contribution by the private sector was not clear, including lack of information on what activities would be financed and/or undertaken as an investment by the private sector. Clarification or evidence of a thought process about the role of the private sector in terms of cost sharing or undertaking provision of certain activities is crucial. Lastly, the budget requires inclusion of a provision for an external evaluation at the end of the project.

74. Members noted that it is imperative to address the above questions, incorporate comments provided by the Secretariat in its review document, and accordingly revise and refine the project application.

### **STDF/PG/595: Creation and implementation of a traceability guide for the milk chain in Guatemala**

75. The Working Group did not endorse this application. Members recognized the importance of improving traceability in the milk sector for market access and sustainable development. However, they raised some issues which need further clarification. Firstly, concerns were expressed on the missing links with the national market access and SPS strategies. Sustainability, in terms of the costs of any services associated with the use of the envisaged guide was another area of concern. Further consultations with relevant regional organizations working on similar traceability programs could be useful. In addition, further clarification was needed on the criteria for selection of companies participating in the pilot. It was also noted that it would be preferred if the application is submitted by a competent government agency, in collaboration with GS1 Guatemala. Revision of the proposal would be contingent on the feedback received on these issues.

#### **6.5 Decisions on prioritization and funding**

76. The Working Group approved the two endorsed PGs (STDF/PG/375 Togo and STDF/PG/435 Sudan) for funding. In view of the target set for this meeting (i.e. two PGs approved), and taking into account the financial situation of the trust fund, no decision on prioritisation was required.

#### **6.6 Evaluation of STDF Projects – Overview and Selection**

77. The chairperson recalled that the Working Group had already decided to evaluate STDF/PG/359 (Strengthening capacity in Africa to meet pesticide export requirements) and that, in accordance with the Operational Rules, the Working Group needed to select either STDF/PG/401 (Developing a network of PCE facilitators) or STDF/PG/460 (Knowledge solutions to roll out ISPM 15), which were both completed in 2017, for an external evaluation.

78. The Working Group selected STDF/PG/401 (implemented by the IPPC) for an external evaluation, given the project's complementarities to STDF's recent work on SPS capacity evaluation tools (e.g. STDF [Briefing Note 14](#)). It recognised that an evaluation of STDF/PG/350 (also implemented by the IPPC) will shortly be contracted. To minimize the burden on the IPPC, the evaluation of STDF/PG/401 should only start after completing the evaluation of STDF/PG/350.

79. The chairperson invited members to suggest names of potential evaluators for both PG/STDF/350 and STDF/PG/401 by 6 April 2018. In line with the recommendation stemming from the meta-evaluation, in particular candidates with a background and experience in project monitoring and evaluation would be most welcome.

### **7 OTHER BUSINESS**

80. The Secretariat noted the following deadlines and dates:

- 16 April 2018: Deadline for submission of applications for WTO's Young Professional (YP) program in 2019;
- 1 August 2018: Deadline for nomination by partners, donors and experts of their representative in the Evaluation Steering Group (a separate message would be circulated to partners, donors and experts to commence discussions in this regard);
- 29-30 October 2018: Next Working Group meeting (WTO headquarters, Geneva);
- 19 February 2019: Next Policy Committee meeting (WTO headquarters, Geneva).

### **8 CLOSURE**

81. The meeting was closed at 15:00.

## ANNEX 1

**STDF WORKING GROUP  
20 – 21 MARCH 2018  
ROOM E**

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