

Summary Report

STDF Regional Workshop on the Use of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis to Inform Decisions on the Allocation of Resources aimed at Strengthening Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Capacity

Johannesburg, South Africa, 16-17 August 2011

Overview

1. Many developing countries face competing demands for capacity building in the area of food safety, animal and plant health (also known as sanitary and phytosanitary or SPS), while resources available from national budgets and donors are generally insufficient to meet all the identified needs. Multi Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) provides a structured process to help inform decisions on where to allocate resources for SPS capacity building. It aims to: (i) enhance the economic efficiency of SPS capacity building decisions such that scarce resources are allocated in a manner that best meets a country's economic development, poverty alleviation, public health and/or other objectives; (ii) promote more transparent and accountable choices between multiple SPS capacity building options; and (iii) facilitate dialogue and more inclusive decision-making processes involving multiple stakeholders.
2. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) organized a regional workshop on the use of MCDA to inform decision-making on priorities for SPS capacity building in Johannesburg, South Africa from 16-17 August 2011. The purpose was to: (i) present the MCDA approach; (ii) share practical experiences from Mozambique and Zambia where the framework was applied in April and July 2011, respectively; and (iii) equip SPS experts from other countries with knowledge to initiate application of this approach.
3. The workshop was attended by 41 participants representing governments departments responsible for food safety, animal health, plant health and/or trade in Africa, regional organizations (including the African Union Commission (AUC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), universities and selected international organizations and donors. Twenty seven participants from national governments and regional organizations in Africa were funded to participate by the STDF.
4. The workshop was facilitated by Spencer Henson (Professor, Department of Food, Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of Guelph, Canada and Professorial Fellow, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, UK) who developed the draft MCDA guidebook for the STDF.

Workshop programme

5. The STDF Secretariat delivered introductory presentations at the start of the workshop on the STDF's grant-making and coordination activities, with examples from Africa. The rest of the programme focused on the use of economic analysis methodologies to inform SPS decision making, with particular emphasis on MCDA. Participants from Mozambique and Zambia also made

presentations about the experiences in applying MCDA in their countries, with questions and comments in a plenary session.

6. The workshop format included a combination of presentations and work in small groups to enable participants to simulate application of initial steps in the draft MCDA Guidebook based on a case study for a fictitious country (Aflandia).

Conclusions and recommendations

7. Discussions in the plenary (and responses to the feedback survey) indicated substantial interest in the MCDA approach and its use to inform SPS decision-making, as well as satisfaction with the content of the workshop. There was agreement that this framework: (i) presents a useful and powerful tool to guide and support SPS decision-making; (ii) is likely to work best in countries where there is already an effective SPS coordination mechanism; and (iii) should be re-applied on a periodic basis to incorporate new data, address new SPS issues or options, etc. Some participants (including from South Africa, Tanzania and COMESA) expressed interest to apply the MCDA approach in their countries/regions to help set priorities for SPS capacity building.

8. A number of participants made valuable observations, which will be useful to guide future applications, and further improve the draft MCDA guidebook (to be finalized and published in 2012). Particular issues related to the importance of: (i) sufficient preparation to ensure participation of all the concerned stakeholders, as well as access to relevant data and information; (ii) sensitizing high-level decision-makers on the role and value of the MCDA framework to enhance political buy-in and support for implementation of the results generated; (iii) facilitating private sector involvement by identifying ways to engage producers, exporters and their associations, appropriate to the particular situation; and (iv) ongoing attention to improve the collection and management of data on agricultural production, trade, etc. To facilitate adoption and use of the MCDA approach, participants also recommended that the MCDA guidebook should be presented in a user-friendly and easy to understand format.

9. Participants recognized that one of the benefits of MCDA is its ability to prioritize capacity building options even when hard data is limited. However, some highlighted that the prioritization should be interpreted based on the reliability and confidence of the data used. Several participants recommended that future trainings on MCDA should include working sessions on the software (D-Sight) used for the analysis and prioritization.

10. Opportunities to apply the framework at a sub-sectoral level (i.e. within the food safety, animal and/or plant health area) were discussed. It was suggested that this framework could add value to future iterations of official capacity evaluation tools. However, in terms of prioritizing strategic SPS capacity building options, it was considered important to bring all key SPS stakeholders together to ensure attention to cross-cutting SPS options. While the initial applications focused on agri-food exports, some participants recommended expanding the analysis to also include imports, which would have implications on the types of stakeholders to be involved.

11. The STDF Secretariat highlighted that MCDA is a decision-support tool and encouraged participants to disseminate and make use of the MCDA approach in their own work after the event, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.