

WTO SPS Agreement



The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures specifies the basic rules for food safety and animal and plant health standards.

It aims at:

- Protecting human and animal life from risks arising from additives, contaminants, toxins or disease-causing organisms in their food
- Protecting human life from plant- or animal-carried diseases
- Protecting animal or plant life from pests, diseases or disease-causing organisms
- Preventing or limiting damage to a country from the entry, establishment or spread of pests

Applying standards

Signatories to the agreement are encouraged to use international standards, guidelines and recommendations where they exist. They may apply higher standards justified by science or appropriate risk assessments provided that the approach is consistent and not arbitrary.

Changing standards

Consultations about the impact on trade or about implementation issues are conducted in the SPS Committee which is open to all WTO member states.

New standards and guidelines are developed by three international organizations, recognized in the SPS agreement as standard-setting organizations. Standards are laid out in international codes such as the Code OIE, Codex Alimentarius and International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures. International standards are permanently redefined and improved by countries that are member to those organisations.

About AU/IBAR

IBAR provides integrated advisory services to AU Member States to sustainably improve their animal resources, enhance the nutrition and income of their people and alleviate rural poverty

IBAR's objectives

- Improve animal health and indirectly public health
- Increase animal production and trade and marketing of animals and animal products
- Harmonize livestock resource development policies
- Collate and disseminate information

About AU/IAPSC

The Inter-African Phytosanitary Council of the African Union deals with plant and plant product health — a resource and information centre for phytosanitary and plant protection to improve food and feed security

IAPSC's objectives

- Prevent crop pests and diseases from entering Africa
- Controlling or eradicating endemic pests and diseases
- Discouraging uncontrolled marketing of agrochemicals
- Providing guidance to Member States, including compliance with the WTO SPS agreement

Contact

For additional information on PAN-SPSO or other projects of IBAR and IASPC visit our websites or contact the communications unit

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African Union
Interafrican Bureau
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PARTICIPATION OF AFRICAN NATIONS IN SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY STANDARD-SETTING ORGANISATIONS

PAN-SPSO



IMPROVING HUMAN WELLBEING
THROUGH ENHANCED ANIMAL HEALTH, PRODUCTION,
TRADE AND MARKETING

PAN-SPSO at a Glance

PAN-SPSO stands for *Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard-setting Organisations*

Background

Standard-setting organisations

The World Trade Organization mandated the World Organisation for Animal Health OIE, the International Plant Protection Convention and the Codex Alimentarius Commission to establish sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

Low African involvement and its effects

The involvement of African institutions in the activities of standard-setting organisations has been low. The majority cannot avail qualified personnel and lacks other capacities to contribute in a gainful way, exacerbated by an ineffectiveness to reach common positions on SPS issues.



Meat and flower inspections
— a critical element to reach greater access to overseas markets

These circumstances have caused Africa to be on the mere receiving end with hardly any influence over the formulation processes of emerging standards which impact immensely on Africa's economy.

Goal

Reducing poverty and enhancing food security in Africa by promoting greater access for African agricultural products to international markets, including livestock and fisheries

Specific objective

The programme aims to facilitate effective involvement of African delegates in committees that conceive international standards for food safety, animal and plant health regulations

Main partners

PAN-SPSO is a partnership programme of AU/IBAR, AU/IAPSC, European Commission and the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC carry out the activities receiving guidance from AU/IBAR who is in charge of the overall implementation

“AU/IBAR and AU/IAPSC are specialised technical offices of the AU Commission dealing with all aspects of livestock and plant development in Africa”

Geographic coverage

PAN-SPSO targets the 47 African ACP countries, which includes all sub-Saharan nations with the exception of South Africa

Funding

- European Commission €3.35m
- AU/IBAR and AU/IAPSC €0.505m

Implementation period

May 2008 – November 2010

Expected results

- African SPS entities for effective participation in SPS standard setting activities empowered
- Common positions on SPS standards at continental and regional levels reached by African nations
- Scientific capacity of African institutions to provide adequate input into standard-setting activity established
- SPS-related data and information acquired and disseminated to African institutions via a newly established, publicly accessible information sharing platform

Main activity areas

Preliminary assessment

A preliminary assessment of SPS-related needs and capacities at national level and with the regional economic communities will be carried out during the first months of the project

Institutional support

Assisting states with the enhancement of the organisational set-up for more effective representation in International Standard-setting Organisations

Regional and continental harmonisation

The programme facilitates communication among African institutions through workshops and electronic channels with the aim to identify common interests and policies

Technical capacity building

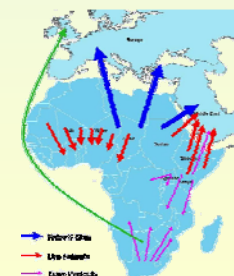
National institutions receive training and technical assistance to strengthen their technical capacity and ability to effectively contribute to the process of standard setting

Information collection and sharing

Latest SPS data and information on existing and emerging standards, research results and relevant scientific information are collected and disseminated

Globalisation and the need for SPS

Globalisation incessantly expands the volume of international trade. It is the force behind the endless opening of new transport routes, including those for agricultural products. With it comes an increased risk of spreading diseases and pests.



Intercontinental commerce of hides/skins, live animals and dairy products — brings wealth but also an increased risk of disease transmission

The pressing need for harmonisation of sanitary standards is demonstrated by the dramatic consequences of insufficient protection. An example, in 2001 an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the UK brought economic losses of more than €10m.