

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3RD Third Meeting of the Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS

31 May - 1 June 2010, Belgrade

The third Sub-committee meeting on Agriculture and SPS under the Chairmanship of Serbia was held in Belgrade on 31 May – 1 June 2010. The meeting was attended by representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Serbia. The representatives of the Republic of Albania and UNMIK/Kosovo were not present. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Republic of Serbia.

The one year Work Programme of the Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS was adopted.

The meeting was conducted in two parallel sessions.

SESSION 1: AGRICULTURAL TRADE

The delegations reviewed agricultural trade policies and exchanged information on trade agricultural products and quotas.

Regarding trade in the region, the majority of Parties reported a decrease in imports and an increase in exports. Due to the global economic crisis there has been a general decrease in trade also within CEFTA, but the area remains an important market in particular for exports of agricultural products where almost all CEFTA Parties recorded a very high share of their agricultural exports to the CEFTA market (40-70%).

The utilization of quotas remains low and the majority of Parties again called for reconsidering full liberalization. While quotas still exist, a unified system of first come first served should be applied.

Croatia expressed their firm commitment to concluding a new agreement with Macedonia on the liberalization of agricultural trade as soon as possible. Croatia reminded the meeting that negotiations with Macedonia were concluded in September 2009 and that current concessions would not be changed. The position of the Macedonian government is still that the best outcome of the negotiations is full liberalization on both sides.

All Parties endorsed the Chair's commitment to ensure the initialing of the Additional Protocol and Annex 3 by 1 July 2010.

SESSION 2: SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ISSUES

During this session there was an exchange of experiences and best practices concerning the harmonization of SPS legislation with EU requirements.

Bosnia and Herzegovina proposed a meeting among CEFTA Parties on the list of pest and plants, plant products and regulation objectives and kindly offered to host it in September 2010. The Parties supported the BiH proposal and recognize it as a potential model for consultations in other areas where and when appropriate.

All Parties welcomed the Croatian experience in transposing the EU legislation into national legislation and the Parties requested Croatia to share its experience through additional consultations.

In line with the commitments stipulated in Article 12. Para 3 of CEFTA, the Parties were invited to consider options to conclude Mutual Recognition Agreements on SPS. The Chair's main proposal was to supply a list of approved establishments for the CEFTA area to veterinary operators and to formalise in the CEFTA area the audit system already used and known by the CEFTA Parties from the EU experience. The Parties reiterated the need, where appropriate, to initiate consultations among sanitary and phytosanitary services in order to identify feasible solutions for concluding bilateral mutual recognition agreements.

The Chair invited the Parties to advise in writing on the proposed options for mutual recognition of certificates and laboratory tests and the approval of establishments by the end of June 2010

Referring to the key issues in trade of agricultural products it was noted that the cooperation in general among the Parties on systematically eliminating unnecessary barriers to trade has been satisfactory.

The meeting stressed the need for a higher level of coordination with all CEFTA Structures and in particular among all three subcommittees on NTBs and TBT issues.

In the light of the relationship between EFTA countries and the EU, an EFTA representative made a presentation on the experiences of EFTA in implementing EU related SPS legislation into their legislation system.

The Serbian Chamber of Commerce reported on the second meeting of the Working Group on Agriculture held on 17 and 18 May in Belgrade and Novi Sad under the framework of the CEFTA Forum. The main conclusions from the meeting were presented and the CEFTA Parties praised the cooperation and communication with the Chambers of the region especially in the exchange of relevant information on NTBs.