

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4th Meeting of the CEFTA Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS

24 May 2011
Brussels, Belgium

The fourth CEFTA Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS took place on 24 May 2011 in Brussels and was attended by the representatives of all CEFTA Parties except Moldova. The members highlighted the key achievements in trade of agricultural products and the sanitary and phytosanitary area and discussed their implications on the economies of the region since the last meeting. A significant part of the meeting was dedicated to the cooperation among the SPS administrations and the other relevant CEFTA structures.

The annual Work Programme of the Subcommittee proposed by the Chair of the Subcommittee was adopted with minor amendments.

MAIN POINTS OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Review of agricultural policies, exchange of information on trade agricultural products and quotas: All the Parties reported steady progress in the EU integration processes. Once again it showed that the CEFTA region presents a very important import as well as export market for almost all of the Parties, with the share starting from 10% to 70% of imports of agricultural products and from 13% to 85% of exports of agricultural products to the region in comparison to world imports/exports. Speaking in totals, all Parties reported increased intra-regional trade in 2010 on both the import and export side in comparison to 2009. The quotas still remain, but only in a couple of Parties, while there were no safeguards measures imposed in the reporting period.

Liberalisation of agricultural trade and update on ratification of the Additional Protocol and Annex 10; Albania and Croatia reported that the procedure is almost completed. In Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia and Moldova the ratification process is underway. In the meantime, Croatia and Montenegro agreed to provisionally apply the agreed concessions starting from 1 July 2011.

Exchange of experiences and best practices concerning the harmonisation of SPS legislation with the EU requirements; The CEFTA Parties reported on many activities and actions that are currently underway and the process of approximation and harmonisation of the national legislation to the *Acquis* is progressing at a dynamic pace. Inter alia, **UNMIK/Kosovo** reported on the progress in the transposition of the Food Hygiene Package and the regulation regarding the microbiological criteria and registration of food business operators and cold stores. **Albania** advised on their work to fulfil commitments undertaken in the SAA and briefly presented several case studies which can serve as best practices for other countries (concerning namely potato, vineyards, monitoring control and health protection). **Croatia** is now adopting only newly published *Acquis* from 2010 (45 pieces of legislation). As for Chapter 12, 560 pieces of legislation have been transposed already. In the veterinary area, Croatia has many programmes that can be used as the best practice for other countries such as: the national residue monitoring programme, programmes in the area of animal health protection as well as the Assessment, categorisation and upgrading of establishments dealing with food of animal origin. **Macedonia** informed the meeting that the Food and Veterinary Agency was established and has been operational from 1 January, 2011, and that they have signed a MoU with Kosovo covering the area of agriculture and SPS. **Serbia** reported on new legislation adopted in the

phyto and food safety area as well as on amendments on law on veterinary matters. Moreover, Serbia recently reduced the number of samples on imported goods and thus contributed to the simplification of the procedure at the border.

Exchange of experiences and best practices. The chair of the meeting recommended that the Parties work more intensively on finding the most appropriate solutions for the conclusion of mutual recognition agreements on SPS. If applicable bilateral solutions could serve as a model for multilateral agreements. Moreover, he advised them to use the experiences and best practices of developed countries outside the region in order to reach this goal.

Update on NTBs in agricultural trade: Matrix of Raised Issues. Parties used the opportunity to present the most important cases that might be considered as potential non-tariff barriers to trade in agricultural products. As the matrix on issues raised shows, more than 50% of the reported NTBs in agricultural trade have their origin in the SPS area. In conclusion, the chair of the meeting invited Parties to refrain from imposing any new measure that could unnecessarily hamper intra regional trade.

Multilateral Monitoring Framework on Elimination of NTBs – Action Plan for 2011. Under the item on coordination of activities of the CEFTA Structures, the Secretariat presented the action plan for the implementation of the Multilateral Monitoring Framework elaborated in cooperation with the OECD and explained that the contribution from the SPS experts was expected in the phase of self assessment of the indicators scheduled during summer and early autumn.

CEFTA Trade Portal. The Secretariat also reported on the activities of the GIZ project that supported the maintenance and upgrading of the CEFTA Trade Portal. In addition, it was announced that an ad hoc task force is to be established to support the smooth transfer from the currently GIZ managed project to the CEFTA Parties. This is expected to be done in 2012. The SPS experts were invited to review the content of the current pages on SPS and suggest improvements for the next phase of the implementation.

Cooperation among the CEFTA administrations in SPS: Transfer of knowledge – identification of needs and potential partners. The Croatian representative thanked the Parties for recognising the expertise of the Croatian administration in the area of SPS and expressed its willingness to share knowledge and best practice with interested parties. The IFC briefly presented the major activities of the Project on Trade Facilitation in the region and explained the action plan in the area of the elimination of NTBs in the agricultural sector. The training which is envisaged by this Project would bring together not only the customs administrations, but also representatives from ministries of agriculture and the private sector who work in the area of SPS.

Any Other Business

The Croatian representative advised on the abolition of autonomous trade measures by the European Union applied until 31 December 2010 and granted to all the Parties (except to Moldova). The expiry of Council Regulation 1215/2009 means that more favorable trade concessions no longer apply. Croatia invited other Parties who have also been affected by this measure to approach the EU through their regular channels in order to re-obtain more favorable access.