

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sixth meeting of the CEFTA Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS took place on 17 April in Sarajevo. The members discussed the annual Work Programme of the Subcommittee proposed by the Chair, reviewed their respective agricultural policies, exchanged information on trade of agricultural products in the period from the last meeting and key issues arising, and explored further cooperation amongst SPS agencies in the region.

MAIN POINTS OF THE SIXTH MEETING

With the view to support the implementation of SPS related activities from the Subcommittee Work Programme, the TAIEX assisted Workshop on the “Quarantine of Harmful Organisms in Forestry” was organised on 18 April in Sarajevo under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH and the CEFTA Secretariat. Another workshop on the “Intraregional cooperation amongst SPS inspections at the border” is planned for 9-10 September 2013, also with assistance from TAIEX.

During the sixth official Subcommittee meeting, several items were discussed and agreed.

The Chair presented the one year Work Programme of the Subcommittee, its objectives, priorities, technical assistance needs, and the main results and timetable of meetings envisaged for this year. The Parties adopted the Work Programme.

The Parties presented in brief their agricultural policies, trade of agricultural products, utilisation of quotas, subsidies and any safeguard measures in use. The majority of Parties reported a constant increase of trade volumes in agriculture products last year compared to 2011. The major partners remain the EU member states and the CEFTA economies. The Parties that had undertaken liberalisation of trade in 2011 reported increased trade volumes in agricultural products and positive effects on their economies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina informed Parties on their invitation for further liberalisation in agricultural products with Albania to which Albania positively responded. Following the confirmation of both Parties to remove all existing tariffs, the Secretariat prepared the draft text of the Additional Protocol 3 and sent it to them for further internal procedures. It is expected that the Additional Protocol will be signed and ratified prior to 1 January 2014. Moldova informed that they would be ready to consider removing one remaining quota with Macedonia.

The Chair presented in short the overview of the Market Access cases and its structure by problem category, sector and applying Parties. The database analysis shows that the percentage of newly emerging issues is 10%, while solved issues represent 64% of the total. Furthermore, almost one third is coming from the SPS area (26%), followed by issues connected to pre-shipment inspection (19%) and charges and taxes (15%). By sector, the most frequent barriers are presented in beverages and tobacco (28 cases), followed by live animals (18 cases) and vegetables (11 cases).

The SPS representatives reported on new regulations in three respective fields and on the process of harmonisation of legislation with the EU. The Parties reported on bilateral mutual agreements in place. The Chair noted that there was a firm trend of signing agreements between the same type of institutions, e.g. veterinary with veterinary, or phytosanitary with phytosanitary. He invited Parties to consider concluding agreements that would involve more agencies and recognition of certificates. The Parties were invited to consider having one multilateral agreement instead of having many bilateral ones.

Under the item on cooperation amongst CEFTA Structures, the Chair presented the Work Programme of the Subcommittee on NTBs and TBT and informed on planned activities on the elimination of distortive SPS measures. The OECD showed the assessment results of the second cycle of SPS as NTBs under the Multilateral Monitoring Framework as well as the preliminary regional recommendations. The Parties commented on the individual assessment results by providing rectifications and further explanations where needed.

The CEFTA Secretariat updated briefly on the progress of the project on the establishment of the CEFTA SPS Database. The Parties were invited to send missing information as soon as possible to the outsourced experts in order to complete the Database. The pilot database presentation for the deputy ministers meeting, which will be held on 18 June in Sarajevo and an operational database as of September 2013 will be accessible on the website of the Secretariat. The Chair proposed that the information on the agricultural policy support system of the CEFTA Parties, namely the subsidies distribution and its structure, could be added to the database and offered to prepare the proposal in this respect.

The representative from the Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH reported on the activities of the Chamber and related cooperation with the CEFTA Structures.

The Secretariat presented the objectives, structure and main activities and instruments of the SEE 2020 Strategy based on the first draft text of the Pillar I Integrated Growth.
