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REPORT (2024) ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

1.1. The present report is being circulated by the Chairperson of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee) on her own responsibility. This report provides a summary of the activities of the SPS Committee in 2024.

1.2. The SPS Committee held its formal meetings (in hybrid mode) on 20-22 March, 26-28 June, and 13-15 November 2024. [eAgenda](#) was increasingly used in 2024, reaching over 500 SPS users, to submit agenda items, raise and support specific trade concerns (STCs), and upload statements.

1.3. Mr Tayutic Mena (Costa Rica) had been elected in July 2023 as Chairperson for 2023-2024. Ms Cecilia Risolo (Argentina) was elected as Chairperson for 2024-2025.

Report on the MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme

1.4. In 2023, Members had concluded the work programme foreseen in the SPS Declaration for the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference on Responding to Modern SPS Challenges ([MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme](#)¹) and a factual summary of that work had been adopted.²

1.5. In June 2024, the SPS Committee adopted the Report on the MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme, that had been prepared by the former SPS Committee Chairperson acting as facilitator, Mr Tang-Kai Wang of Chinese Taipei.³ Key findings in the report reaffirm the continued importance of the SPS Agreement for ensuring safe international trade in food, animal and plant products as well as the crucial role of scientific evidence as a basis for SPS measures. The report calls for the use of international standards and highlights the relevance of science, research, and innovation as means to address SPS issues and sustainably increase production. Other key findings relate to the need to adapt SPS measures to regional conditions and the importance of providing technical assistance, capacity building, and fostering South-South cooperation to help developing and least developed country (LDC) Members comply with SPS requirements and expand their export opportunities, acknowledging the key role played by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in providing and coordinating assistance. With the report, the SPS Committee recommends continuing targeted discussions and reflections on the implementation of the SPS Agreement in light of emerging challenges and opportunities, including through the [Sixth Review of the Operation and Implementation of the SPS Agreement](#) (Sixth Review) and specific thematic sessions and events.

Follow-up to the MC13 S&DT Declaration

1.6. The SPS Committee considered the Declaration on the precise, effective and operational implementation of special and differential treatment provisions of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (MC13 S&DT Declaration).⁴ In November 2024, the Chairperson informed that she was preparing,

¹ In five thematic groups, Members had discussed different topics to identify challenges in the implementation of the SPS Agreement and mechanisms to address them, as well as impacts of emerging challenges on the SPS Agreement. See [WT/MIN/\(22\)/27](#), paras. 7-8.

² [G/SPS/70](#).

³ [G/SPS/72](#). The report had been initially prepared for endorsement at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13), but one Member had objected to its adoption at the time. Upon Members' request, the then Chairperson of the SPS Committee, Mr Tayutic Mena, had prepared a factual report of the MC12 SPS Work Programme under his own responsibility ([G/SPS/71](#)), of which Ministers took note at MC13.

⁴ [WT/MIN/\(24\)/36](#).

under her responsibility as Chairperson, a draft report to the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development on relevant SPS-related developments on special and differential treatment (S&DT) and technical assistance and Members would be provided an opportunity to comment on this draft report.

Sixth Review

1.7. Much of the SPS Committee's attention in 2024 was dedicated to the Sixth Review.⁵ Through written submissions and several informal meetings throughout the year, the SPS Committee considered proposals submitted by Members. These proposals were on: (i) addressing modern challenges and emerging risks as a follow-up to the MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme; (ii) cooperation with the International Standard Setting Bodies; (iii) regionalization; (iv) technical assistance and S&DT; (v) technology and IT tools; (vi) transparency and notification procedures; and (vii) other topics: maximum residue limits (MRLs), facility registration, and systems approaches. Members' submissions included several proposals for thematic sessions and, in 2024, the SPS Committee organised three of these thematic sessions, namely, on digital tools, emerging risks and new agricultural technologies, and the Codex Guidelines on Voluntary Third-Party Assurance programmes (see paragraphs 1.16. - 1.18. below).

1.8. Making way on Sixth Review discussions, Members considered: (i) a background document summarizing key areas of work of the SPS Committee in 2020-2024⁶; (ii) a draft report containing information on the proposals submitted by Members and the discussions in the informal meetings and thematic sessions held during the Sixth Review⁷; and (iii) draft recommendations for further work ahead.⁸ Recommendations tabled for discussion included a working group on transparency, a mentoring system, and proposals for thematic sessions and further exchanges on topics, such as emerging challenges, innovative regulatory approaches, systems approaches, facility registration, and MRLs. Intersessional consultations are planned for January 2025 with a view of concluding the Sixth Review in March 2025.⁹ All documents related to the Sixth Review are available through the [dedicated webpage](#).

Information from Members

1.9. Throughout the year, Members shared information on various SPS-related issues. Japan provided regular updates on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, including on the discharge of advanced liquid processing system (ALPS) treated water. Ukraine provided information on the functioning of its SPS infrastructure and other SPS aspects related to its food security situation. Ecuador and Ukraine informed Members about their use of phytosanitary e-certificates and China introduced its electronic information verification system for hygiene certificates of meat. Members also reported on SPS Committee side events. The European Union commented on an event jointly organised with COLEAD to introduce the EU-funded AGRINFO information programme on new EU policies and regulations and the United States reported on an event jointly organised with other Members on agricultural applications of precision biotechnology. New Zealand reported on events it had convened on environmental inhibitors in agrifood systems in the margins of 2024 Codex meetings and informed that Codex would for the first time consider an environmental inhibitor compound. Certain Members shared information on their pest or disease status, for example in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), and Belize reported on measures being implemented to maintain Belize free of the New World screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax* (Coquerel)). During 2024, some Members also reported on their technical assistance activities.

Specific Trade Concerns (STCs)

1.10. The SPS Committee considered a wide range of STCs. Members raised 23 new STCs in 2024. New STCs related to requirements pertaining to certificates of conformity for processed food products, delays in the publication of requirements to reopen market accesses, undue delays in authorization processes and listing of establishments, traceability requirements, animal diseases, melamine contamination, and maximum limits of or approval for certain residues in food products.

⁵ [G/SPS/W/346](#).

⁶ [G/SPS/GEN/2223](#) and [G/SPS/GEN/2223/Rev.1](#).

⁷ [G/SPS/W/370](#) and [G/SPS/W/370/Rev.1](#).

⁸ [G/SPS/W/371](#) and [G/SPS/W/371/Rev.1](#).

⁹ [G/SPS/W/346](#).

In addition, many previously raised STCs continued to be discussed. Members intervened on issues such as: the regulatory approach to pesticide MRLs, including the lowering of certain MRLs in food and feed to protect pollinators; legislation on endocrine disruptors; maximum levels for contaminants in food products; legislation on veterinary medicinal products; registration requirements for exporting establishments; and measures imposed in response to the release of ALPS treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station into the sea. In 2024, South Africa raised again a long-standing concern pertaining to EU import restrictions on citrus fruits. Linked to this concern, South Africa also requested the DSB to establish panels ([DS613](#) and [DS624](#)). A list of all STCs discussed is available through the [Trade Concerns Database](#).

1.11. In July 2024, the Secretariat sought information from Members regarding the status of STCs. As of November 2024, about 65% of all STCs ever raised in the SPS Committee were reported as resolved or partially resolved.¹⁰

Annual reports

1.12. During 2024, the SPS Committee considered annual reports prepared by the Secretariat on:

- a. Implementation of SPS Transparency Provisions and Specific Trade Concerns¹¹;
- b. Implementation of Article 6 (concerning the principle of regionalization)¹²;
- c. the Procedure to Monitor the Process of International Harmonization.¹³ In connection with this, Members continued to discuss three long-standing issues related to Members' implementation of standards developed by WOAH on African swine fever (ASF), HPAI, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE); and
- d. the Use of the Procedure to Encourage and Facilitate the Resolution of Specific Sanitary or Phytosanitary Issues among Members in accordance with Article 12.2 ([G/SPS/61](#))¹⁴, which provided information on one request for the Good Offices of the Chairperson.¹⁵

Technical assistance, thematic sessions, and side events

1.13. At each of its meetings, the SPS Committee was kept informed of the work of the STDF.¹⁶ In addition, the Secretariat kept the SPS Committee apprised of SPS-related technical assistance activities in 2024¹⁷, including a new iteration of the SPS Transparency Champions Course in English and a Regional SPS Workshop for French-speaking Africa.

1.14. The SPS Committee also continued to organize dedicated activities to exchange experiences and hear from experts in the margins of its meetings (for an overview of these activities, see Table 1 – 2024 SPS Committee thematic sessions and workshops).

1.15. Building on the success of the 2022 edition, in March 2024 the Secretariat organized a [workshop on transparency](#), which brought together SPS national notification authorities and national enquiry points. Participants engaged in a technical discussion on SPS transparency-related work and exchanged experiences on the use of online transparency tools. They benefited from presentations on the transparency-related work of the SPS and TBT Committees, the monitoring of the implementation of international standards, and Members' experiences on notifications and coordination with domestic stakeholders and trading partners.

1.16. In June 2024, a [thematic session on digital tools](#) was held, based on a suggestion made by the United States in the context of the Sixth Review. The thematic session aimed to explore the utilization of technological solutions in the SPS field, focusing on facilitating safe trade through

¹⁰ [G/SPS/GEN/2261](#).

¹¹ [G/SPS/GEN/804/Rev.16](#) and [G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.24](#). See also [G/SPS/GEN/804/Rev.16/Corr.1](#) and [G/SPS/GEN/204/Rev.24/Corr.1](#).

¹² [G/SPS/GEN/2227](#).

¹³ [G/SPS/GEN/2228](#).

¹⁴ [G/SPS/GEN/2259](#).

¹⁵ [G/SPS/GEN/2189](#).

¹⁶ [G/SPS/GEN/2198](#); [G/SPS/GEN/2231](#); and [G/SPS/GEN/2257](#).

¹⁷ [G/SPS/GEN/997/Rev.14](#). See [G/SPS/GEN/521/Rev.19](#) for a report of SPS technical assistance and training activities in 1994-2023.

enhanced transparency and efficiency. Much of the discussion focused on the increased use of the electronic phytosanitary certificate solution developed by the IPPC, with linkages to [STDF work](#). E-certificates are believed to help combat fraud and corruption, foster greater reliability of trade, save costs, paper, and time (e.g. Morocco saves USD 40m/year, processing time was cut down by 97% in Ecuador), and contribute to sustainability. Other digital tools discussed incorporated AI to focus inspections on high-risk shipments and combat food fraud. The Secretariat presented possible enhancements to the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#), as well as a related STDF project ([STDF/PG/1000](#)).

1.17. Two other thematic sessions proposed in the context of the Sixth Review were held in November 2024. A [thematic session on emerging risks and agricultural technologies to address them](#) was based upon a joint proposal by Canada and the European Union.¹⁸ Building on the productive discussions held as part of the MC12 SPS Declaration Work Programme, this thematic session explored: (i) ways to define, identify, and characterize SPS-related emerging risks that pose a threat to food safety, human, plant or animal life or health; and (ii) the development and implementation of new agricultural technologies to address emerging risks, and the barriers to their successful implementation. Speakers discussed a wide variety of topics, from SPS-risks related to the uptake of e-commerce and changes in disease and pest pressures to AI, automated processes, and novel treatments, such as irradiation. The event highlighted the crucial role of the SPS Committee in taking the discussion forward on topical issues relating to emerging challenges and innovation. As a follow-up to this event, the SPS Committee is planning another thematic session in March 2025 to discuss innovative regulatory approaches to facilitate safe trade.

1.18. The other thematic session of November 2024 was on [monitoring the use of international standards, specifically looking at the implementation of the Codex Guidelines for Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes](#) (the Codex vTPA Guidelines). This thematic session was based on a proposal submitted by Belize.¹⁹ It explored different approaches to implement the Codex vTPA Guidelines and discussed three related STDF pilot projects: a project in West Africa led by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) ([STDF/PG/665](#)); a project in Central America led by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) ([STDF/PG/682](#)); and one in East Africa led by Land O'Lakes Venture 37 ([STDF/PG/842](#)). The thematic session also addressed tools, such as the [UNIDO/STDF vTPA programme assessment tool](#), data sharing and other strategies that support the assessment or use of third-party assurance programmes by regulators, and opportunities for capacity building and up-scaling.

Table 1 – 2024 SPS Committee thematic sessions and workshops

Date	Topic	Relevant documents
18-19 March 2024	Workshop on Transparency	G/SPS/GEN/2192/Rev.2 ; G/SPS/R/113
25 June 2024	Thematic Session on Digital Tools	G/SPS/GEN/2224/Rev.2 ; Annex A of G/SPS/R/114
11 November 2024	Thematic Session on Emerging Risks and Agricultural Technologies to Address Them	G/SPS/GEN/2253/Rev.1
12 November 2024	Thematic Session on Codex Guidelines for Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes	G/SPS/GEN/2254/Rev.1

1.19. In addition to these activities, several side events were organized in the margins of the SPS Committee meetings (see Table 2 – 2024 SPS Committee side events): an EU/[COLEAD side event introducing the AGRINFO information programme on new EU policies](#); an [STDF side event to celebrate Francophonie day](#); a [side event on agricultural applications of precision biotechnology](#); an [event on innovating for food security: the role of digital connectivity](#) organized as part of the WTO Aid for Trade Global Review; a WTO information session on the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#); and an event co-hosted by the United States, Canada, Australia, and the International Grain Trade Coalition on [Navigating Challenges in International Grain Trade: Sustainability, Innovation, and Policy](#).

¹⁸ [G/SPS/W/369](#).

¹⁹ [G/SPS/W/362/Rev.1](#).

Table 2 – 2024 SPS Committee side events

Date	Organizer(s)	Event	Relevant documents
19 March 2024	COLEAD	Introducing the EU-funded AGRINFO Information Programme on New EU Policies and Regulations	G/SPS/GEN/2205 ; JOB/SPS/34
20 March 2024	STDF	International Francophonie Day	G/SPS/GEN/2198 ; JOB/SPS/34
25 June 2024	United States, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Guatemala, and Paraguay	Agricultural applications of precision biotechnology	G/SPS/GEN/1658/Rev.4 ; WTO/AIR/SPS/45
27 June 2024	International Seed Federation, STDF, International Grain Trade Coalition, and Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation	Innovating for Food Security: The Role of Digital Connectivity	G/SPS/GEN/2231 ; WTO/AIR/SPS/45
13 November 2024	WTO Secretariat	Information session on the ePing SPS&TBT Platform	WTO/AIR/SPS/47
14 November 2024	United States, Canada, Australia, and the International Grain Trade Coalition	Navigating Challenges in International Grain Trade: Sustainability, Innovation, and Policy	WTO/AIR/SPS/47

SPS@30

1.20. The SPS Committee celebrated the 30th anniversary of the SPS Agreement. In November 2024, SPS delegates participated in informal celebrations and attended a reception hosted by the STDF.

2025 SPS Committee Meetings

1.21. The SPS Committee tentatively agreed to hold regular meetings on 19-21 March, 18-20 June, and 5-7 November 2025.²⁰ Other planned activities include intersessional consultations to advance the work on the Sixth Review recommendations on 29 January 2025 and a thematic session on innovative regulatory approaches to facilitate safe trade during the March 2025 Committee week.

²⁰ [G/SPS/GEN/2214/Rev.1](#).