INITIATIVES OF THE AFRICAN UNION TO SUPPORT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COORDINATION ON SPS ISSUES

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Brief Introduction on the African Union

Coordination Activities

Other trade negotiation mechanisms
African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)

- Technical Office of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the AUC
- To support and coordinate the utilization of animals (livestock, fisheries and wildlife) as a resource for human wellbeing in the Member States of the African Union and to contribute to economic development.

AU-IBAR’s Core Functions

The specific areas of the mandate are summarized under the following core functions:

- Improve animal health, disease prevention and control systems
- Enhance animal resource production systems and ecosystem management
- Improve access to inputs, services and markets for animals and animal products
Countries need to demonstrate that the sanitary measures they are applying are:
- science-based,
- meet international standards, and
- do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.

Inadequate inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms at national and regional level to respond to SPS issues

Inadequate consultation processes for building common position at national, regional and continental levels

Low participation of African countries in activities of International Standard Setting Organizations (OIE, CAC & IPPC) and in the work of the WTO SPS Committee
AU Heads of States and Governments Decision to Promote African coordinated positions on matters of common concern to the continent and its people in international fora.

AU-IBAR Strategic Plan 2018 – 2023

Promote the development of (and compliance to) standards and regulations, with the objective of strengthening Africa’s ability to set and comply with essential production and trade standards and Promote the African voice.
Standards and Trade Secretariat for Animal Health and Food Safety

Objectives of the Standards and Trade Secretariat

Permanent SPS coordination mechanism in AU-IBAR established after the Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard setting Organizations (PAN-SPSO) Project

To strengthen, sustain and facilitate the effective participation of African countries in the activities of the OIE, Codex Alimentarius Commission in international standards on animal health and food safety

Strengthen and sustain participation of AU Member States in the work of the WTO SPS Committee

To promote regional and international trade
Coordination activities
Concept of Coordinated Position (African Voice)

- To address Africa’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary concerns on a larger platform
- To ensure effective participation in OIE, Codex, IPPC and WTO/SPS Committee meeting with a stronger voice
- To build synergy in order to resolve animal health, food safety and plant health issues of mutual concern
- To promote dialogue with other regional blocs for mutual support during standard setting
Coordination activities

- Expert meetings to build common positions for draft OIE standards (terrestrial & aquatic) prior to meetings of OIE specialist commissions

- Annual CVOs meetings to develop common positions prior to OIE General Sessions

- Expert meetings to develop common positions on draft Codex standards prior to priority Codex committee meetings

- Annual Codex Contact Point Officers meetings to develop common positions prior to Sessions of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

- Inter-regional coordination with EU (OIE); US and Latin America (Codex)

- Electronic forum/physical meetings to discuss specific trade concerns prior to WTO/SPS Committee sessions in March, July and October

- Supporting physical participation of AU MS in sessions of OIE, CAC and WTO SPS Committee

- Trainings to strengthen national SPS coordination mechanisms
Technical Meeting of Animal Health Experts
National SPS Workshop in The Gambia

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Other Coordination Approaches undertaken by AU-IBAR

- Facilitating bilateral missions and conferences between government officials from the Greater Horn of Africa (GHoA) and countries from middle East and North Africa (MENA) to promote disease free livestock exports

- Trust building approach
Strengthening the participation of African countries: Africa, a voice

The results
Since 2008, significant progress has been made in coordinating AU Member States to advance the priority animal health, welfare and veterinary public health, food safety issues of interest to the continent at the OIE and CAC.

Despite these successes, there is still a need to improve coordination and consultation on draft OIE chapters at the national level.

Effective and functional consultation mechanisms and processes, which at the national level include all stakeholders in the food chain, are essential for effective participation in the development of an African Common Voice on animal health standards and in the process OIE standards development.
Project for improving national coordination on OIE standard setting

- Support to African Union Member States to improve the coordination and quality of participation in standard setting activities in animal health, welfare and veterinary public health

- In order to improve the quality of participation in the development of the African Common Voice on international standards for animal health, welfare and veterinary public health, AU-IBAR will provide co-financing support to the veterinary authorities of the Member States of the African Union:
  - To improve multisectoral and multidisciplinary coordination and collaboration, as well as awareness raising and knowledge sharing on animal health, public health and environmental health standards in the Member States; and
  - For countries to fulfill their obligations by submitting science-based comments to support the development of OIE standards.

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Conclusions

- Political will is critical for sustaining national SPS activities
- Continued awareness building effort and feedback mechanisms on priority SPS issues necessary to sustain stakeholder interest
- Holistic engagement of stakeholders is necessary to generate national positions reflective of national SPS priorities
- Increased confidence among ISSO delegates to contribute at ISSO meetings is realized once common positions have been agreed upon
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