

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TRADE FACILITATION AGREEMENT RELATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) has the primary responsibility for coordinating and implementing USDA’s international trade policy, promotion, and capacity building activities, in collaboration with other USDA and U.S. Government agencies, international organizations, U.S. universities, agri-businesses, and private consultants.
- We see this session on assistance and capacity building as a valuable forum to exchange information on trade facilitation programming, and would like to highlight USDA technical assistance programs that have supported implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- Several articles of the TFA have positive implications for agricultural trade, such as notifications for enhanced controls or inspections (Article 5.1), risk management (Article 7.4), and perishable goods (Article 7.9). Alongside the broad mandate to review all import procedures and streamline or eliminate formalities¹, the implementation of the TFA is expected to reduce costs and make agricultural trade faster and more predictable.
- Citing some examples, FAS provides technical assistance through fellowships and scientific exchange programs, such as the Cochran Fellowship and Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship programs, as well as through the dispatch of USDA advisors and experts from other U.S. food regulatory agencies to assist foreign policymakers, regulators, scientists, and the private sector to address complex, trade-related issues.
- For instance, since October 2017, the United States has been engaged in piloting a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)-led ePhyto Solution Hub with Australia, Chile, China, Kenya, Korea, the Netherlands and New Zealand.
 - The Hub will allow all plant health certificate information to be exchanged electronically between countries in the form of an ePhyto. By providing a single point of exchange, the system seeks to increase safe trade, enhance connections, improve security, and provide the opportunity for countries to connect to traders and border agencies through national trade facilitation initiatives to develop “Single Windows.”
 - The IPPC ePhyto Solution Hub pilot is set to conclude in late June 2018.
- For another example, since 2016, USDA, in partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has worked with the Economic Community of

¹ TFA-defined “formalities”: Certifications, stamps, duplicate certificates, certified translations, and “apostilles”.

West African States (ECOWAS) and its Member States to 1) Develop risk-based inspection and sampling protocols for imported cargo; 2) Harmonize entry requirements for high risk commodities; 3) Mutually recognize plant health certificates; 4) Provide multilingual certificates and 5) improve country border operations protocols and manuals. These efforts are aimed at using international standards as the basis for decisions at the border and to facilitate the movement of staple and horticultural crops within the region.

- USDA strives to ensure our programs are demand-driven, results-oriented and sustainable. We work with recipient country governments, private sector and civil society to ensure that our programs support policy initiatives to strengthen capacity and reduce barriers to trade.
- The United States remains committed to providing technical assistance to developing country trading partners on trade facilitation issues to implement the Trade Facilitation agreement, to help Members meet their international obligations, and to facilitate trade in agricultural products.