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The World Bank Group's support to capacity development in plant health

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Many countries can reduce poverty and increase the incomes of those in the agricultural value chain by improving market access and reducing trading costs. Trade facilitation enhances countries' competitiveness, allowing them to trade in goods and services more efficiently with lower transaction costs. Trade facilitation is also an important driver of government efficiencies and effectiveness.

The Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP) is managed by the World Bank Group's (WBG) Macroeconomics, Trade & Investment (MTI) Global Practice. It provides support to countries seeking assistance to align their trade procedures with the World Trade Organization, Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

The TFSP is designed to provide practical and demand-driven assistance to countries seeking to implement the TFA. The main Program components include technical assistance to establishing the reforms required under the TFA; the measurement of success and knowledge and learning which can be shared nationally, regionally and internationally. Specifically, the Program helps developing countries reform trade facilitation laws, procedures, processes, systems and consultative mechanisms within the context of the articles of the TFA.



The sequencing of support is a critical element in achieving success. The TFSP follows three key phases. During the initial phase, the WBG focuses on scoping the extent of reforms needed based upon a collaborative assessment by the country and a WBG technical team leading to the prioritization of activities to establish a workplan of change. Phase two focuses on identifying the key reforms that can be achieved in the short and medium terms and providing technical advice to support implementation

and in securing financing (e.g. World Bank loans). The final phase focuses on the longer term and securing funding for larger scale infrastructure projects.

A key element of the assistance is ensuring the full and effective implementation of the TFA. This includes working with all border agencies to increase collaboration and to reduce unnecessary and duplicative documentary and procedural border processes. One specific area of support is the implementation of risk-based measures in keeping with Article 7.4. The article requires Members “... to concentrate customs control and, to the extent possible other relevant border controls, on high-risk consignments and expedite the release of low-risk consignments...” The principles of risk-based border management should therefore be considered in the control of plants and plant products moving in trade.

Many national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) rely on documentary, identity and physical inspections at the border to manage the risk of all commodities entering the country even though requirements for pre-exit treatments, inspections, sampling, testing have been performed prior to export. Commodity inspections are often performed as “tailgate” inspections in which a sample of the consignment located at the door of the shipping container is examined. These types of inspections have variable success, since the sample size is limited and not representative of the overall lot.



The routine application of border inspections for imported commodities often also fails to recognize operational information that can allow NPPOs to more strategically focus resources on its key priorities. Many NPPOs lack the necessary staff to meet the various obligations of a phytosanitary system, yet still apply routine border inspections for all imported commodities. Data on the compliance of countries in meeting import requirements, compliance of exporters or export locations, and compliance information of importers can be used to prioritize border activities and allow NPPOs to align resources to the highest risks or to address other phytosanitary needs.

In many countries, border activities are often performed by each border agency in isolation. The establishment of collaborative approaches to border management can also improve trade flows and the efficiencies and effectiveness of border agencies. Some examples of border collaboration are provided below:

1. Collaboration between Customs, NPPOs and traders to identify those shipments which present a risk in advance of arrival and to plan import activities can both assist in ensuring safer trade while allowing importers to plan their activities;
2. Coordination of inspection activities between border agencies to reduce multiple sequential inspections will reduce trade costs;
3. Sharing of compliance information between border agencies can be used to develop coordinated compliance-based import programs.

Other changes to the way in which NPPOs handle imported consignments can be also effective in better managing risks and reducing trade costs. For example, transitioning at-border inspections to the destination, where appropriate and feasible, may result in improved inspection conditions and in reducing wait times at the border. The TFSP analysis of overall border approach and the development of an integrated workplan that allows for alignment with the TFA in a coordinated and cooperative way that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency all border agencies.

The TFSP also works to develop knowledge products including global analytical products, toolkits, monitoring tools, validation guides and peer to peer learning events which help countries learn from their experiences. Recently, the World Bank Group, the World Trade Organization and the World Animal Health Organization sponsored a learning event in Cape Town, South Africa and Castries, St. Lucia to assist the Southern African Development Community and the Caribbean, respectively, in increasing understanding of the linkages between the TFA and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS Agreement) and in exploring ways in which coordinating border clearance processes could facilitate safe trade. The International Plant Protection Convention Secretariat was a key contributor to these events.

The WBG is also working closely with the IPPC Secretariat to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines the scope of ongoing collaboration between the two organizations in capacity development. The MOU provides guidance on the WBG support to the implementation of ePhyto in developing countries. The IPPC Secretariat is the custodian and governor of ePhyto. The WBG in its capacity development efforts is working to integrate ePhyto as a component trade facilitation to support coordination between standard setting bodies to ensure the interoperability of electronic platforms. Through its work on the TFSP, the WBG is well positioned to assist countries in implementing automation that improves the efficiency of both governments and traders. Many of the key benefits of ePhyto are realized through increased interoperability of information between border agencies and using the data generated by the ePhyto platform to prioritize inspection and other phytosanitary activities. The WBG is also working with developing countries to establish trade portals that consolidate and make available regulatory and procedural information and to establish Single Windows (SW) that facilitate documentary processing. The interoperability of ePhyto with SW is a critical need in many developing countries. Many are at various stages of implementing a SW system and need support in integrating the ePhyto platform within their operational workflows and in ensuring that the developmental plan for SW considers the ePhyto platform. Since the WBG is supporting SW implementation, it is fittingly placed to assist in these efforts.

Other areas of WBG support to the capacity development in plant health include:

1. The development and deployment of an online survey to identify the key constraints in the trade of perishables. The survey will collect data from traders on the impact of border procedures on the loss and damage to perishable goods which can be used to identify some of the potential points at which reforms can be targeted;
2. A project on identifying the constraints of women traders is being undertaken through focus groups to identify where best to support women traders;
3. The WBG is contributing the IPPC Secretariat's development of a strategy for addressing the risks presented by the movement of sea containers;
4. The WBG working through the Standards and Development Trade Facility is working with the IPPC, the OIE, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a cross-agency assessment of border procedures to support TFA reforms in countries.

The IPPC Secretariat – WBG MOU is expected to be finalized in mid-2019 and will be a useful framework for ongoing cooperation between the organizations. Although it formalizes the relationship, much of the existing work of the WBG is intended to complement the objectives of the IPPC. Increased collaboration, communication and direct bilateral cooperation will only increase the positive outcomes in facilitating safe trade.