



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, DITC
Trade, Environment and Development Section

Workshop on Standards and Trade
(Geneva, 16 and 17 May 2002)

Background

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada, has been implementing a technical co-operation project to help identify policies that can address constraints by developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in responding to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and environmental requirements in international markets. Studies were undertaken in three developing regions, i.e. South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa and Central America. Sub-regional or national workshops were held in New Delhi, India (11-13 January 2001), San José, Costa Rica (20 August 2001) and Kampala, Uganda (13 September 2001).

The project addresses important issues in the context of the post-Doha work programme in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the WTO Committees on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade. The Doha Ministerial Declaration, in paragraph 32(i), called upon the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE), in pursuing work on all items on its agenda within its current terms of reference, to give particular attention to "the effect of environmental measures on market access, especially in relation to developing countries, in particular the least-developed among them"

A workshop will discuss the results of the project and recommend follow-up activities. The workshop will allow for an exchange of national experiences concerning SPS measures and environmental requirements and market access, as far as possible based on case studies in the fisheries, poultry and horticulture sectors. The workshop will also consider findings of papers and recent meetings on organic agriculture. Five scoping papers are available on this website

These scoping papers address the following common policy issues:

- How can Governments and business communities in developing countries mitigate possible adverse trade and competitiveness effects of SPS measures and environmental requirements? How can developing countries be pro-active in developing mechanisms to set standards for products of export interest to them?
- How can developed countries, in their standard setting processes, best take account the implications of their SPS measures and environmental standards on exports of developing countries?
- How can bilateral and multilateral aid agencies assist developing countries in maintaining export competitiveness and respond to environmental and SPS requirements?
- What recommendations could be made in the context of the WTO?

This project is being coordinated with similar activities by the International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO), the Commonwealth secretariat, the World Bank and the OECD. For example, the New Delhi workshop was organized in cooperation with the World Bank. Similarly, the secretariats of UNCTAD and the OECD have been coordinating activities under this project and the OECD project on “*the development dimension of trade and environment: strengthening OECD and developing country co-operation to help developing country exporters meet environmental standards*”.

UNCTAD’s work in this area is in accordance with the Bangkok Plan of Action, which called upon UNCTAD, in full cooperation with other relevant organizations, to promote analysis and consensus building with a view to identifying issues that could yield potential benefits to developing countries, including by “examining the potential trade and developmental effects and opportunities of environmental measures, taking into account the concerns of developing countries, particularly as regards potential effects on small and medium-sized enterprises” (paragraph 147, fourth bullet).

The project and workshop is also relevant in the context of the UNCTAD programme on “Technical assistance and capacity building for developing countries, especially LDCs, and economies in transition in support of their participation in the WTO Post-Doha work programme” (UNCTAD/RMS/TCS/1). The programme contains a specific “window” on environment, including on environmental/SPS requirements and market access.

UNCTAD and the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD) are initiating a new project on Building Capacity for Improved Policy Making and Negotiation on Key Trade and Environment Issues. This project *among other things* will help beneficiary developing countries strengthen their capacities to respond to SPS and environmental measures and to participate in international standard-setting processes.