



CAREC Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Week
Facilitating Safe and Sustainable Trade in the CAREC Region
19-22 April 2021

2nd CAREC Regional SPS Working Group Meeting
27 April 2021

Background Paper

Introduction

1. In 2015, the *Common Agenda for Modernization of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures for Trade (CAST)* was endorsed at the 14th CAREC Ministerial Conference.¹ CAST aims to (i) promote concerted SPS reforms; (ii) identify priority investments; and (iii) complement Customs-related trade facilitation measures. CAST is now part of the *CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030* which was endorsed in 2018 under the framework of *CAREC 2030 strategy*.²

2. To support CAST and CITA implementation, all 11 CAREC members have established their SPS national working groups (SPS NWGs) as of March 2019. SPS NWGs comprise representatives from ministries and agencies in charge of food safety, plant and animal health, Customs and other stakeholders. To date, the SPS NWGs are at various stages of developing their respective national SPS strategy and priority action plan.

3. In June 2019, senior representatives from SPS NWGs participated at the inaugural meeting of CAREC SPS regional working group (SPS RWG) held in Tashkent.³ The SPS RWG deliberated on regional initiatives and pilot projects to be implemented in coordination with the CAREC's Regional Trade Group and Customs Cooperation Committee. The SPS RWG endorsed the SPS workplan and welcomed the ADB 2019 report on *Modernizing Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in CAREC: An Assessment and the Way Forward*.⁴ The report provides an assessment of plant health, animal health, and food safety measures of CAREC countries and recommendations to address gaps in legislation, upgrade laboratory and inspection facilities, and enhance institutional and human resource capacities in SPS agencies.

Progress and Proposals

4. A series of regional policy dialogues and workshops were held to discuss approaches and initiatives including on regional pest surveillance; control and prevention of transboundary animal diseases; and innovation, including use of digital SPS certificates. These are complemented by targeted subregional and in-country capacity-building implemented by the World Trade Organization, the Asian Development Bank (ADB)⁵ and other development partners.

5. ***Developing horticulture value chains and pest surveillance capacities.*** To expand CAREC countries' trade opportunities and develop agricultural value chains, there is a need to improve their phytosanitary measures. Building on the outcomes of the *CAREC Policy Dialogue on Pest Surveillance* in March 2019 and pilot initiative in the Fergana Valley, the ADB, U.S. Agency

¹ <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-common-agenda-modernization-sps-measures-trade>

² <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-trade-agenda-2030-strategic-action-plan>

³ <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=sps-regional-working-group-meeting-2019>

⁴ <https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=modernizing-sanitary-phytosanitary-measures-carec-2019>

⁵ <https://www.adb.org/projects/49190-001/main>

for International Development Competitiveness, Trade and Jobs activity in Central Asia (USAID-CTJ), and European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) have been sharing information and jointly organizing activities to support alignment with International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) principles. Between 2019–2020, trainings on pest risk analysis and surveillance for National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were held. Following Uzbekistan’s accession to the IPPC in January 2020, virtual trainings on plant quarantine legislation, phytosanitary risk management, and plant clinics for the State Plant Quarantine Inspection and regional inspectorates were supported by ADB in February to March 2021. Meanwhile, USAID CTJ initiated a pilot pest surveillance for potential replication in other CAREC countries. ADB and CAREC Institute’s (forthcoming) policy brief on *Expanding CAREC Agri-Trade through the Use of Electronic Certificates* assessed the readiness of CAREC countries in adopting e-SPS, particularly the ePhyto system.

Action Item: Heads of NPPOs and participants at the *Fergana Valley Stakeholders’ Conference* on 20 April 2021 are expected to deliberate on the findings and proposals for activities to support CAREC NPPOs. This includes modernizing their plant quarantine legislations, implementing International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs), such as establishment of pest free areas, improved pest listing and surveillance, and adoption of ePhyto system.

6. **Addressing transboundary animal diseases (TADs).** The *Policy Dialogue on Control and Prevention of TADs* in April 2019 underscored the alignment of animal health legislation with the guidelines of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE); harmonization of measures within the region; and improved capacities for diagnostics and disease control to promote safe trade of animal and animal products. In October 2019, the General Administration of Customs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) organized an international exchange and training on animal quarantine for five CAREC members to strengthen cooperation on TADs with Central Asian neighboring countries.

Action Item: At the session on *Addressing Transboundary Animal Diseases and Food Safety Issues* on 21 April 2021, ADB, OIE and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) will present on projects and proposals for regional cooperation initiatives. CAREC members will share their perspectives on these proposals.

7. **Facilitating safe trade through risk management and paperless trade.** At the inaugural meeting of the CAREC SPS RWG, a proposal was made to bring together the CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee and SPS RWG to deliberate on issues of common interest and improve coordination, particularly at the borders. From January to February 2021, ADB and CAREC Institute jointly developed a series of knowledge-sharing modules on CAREC trade on (i) Regional Improvement of Border Services projects (Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Tajikistan) and national single windows (Azerbaijan, PRC, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan)⁶ and (ii) digital SPS certification.⁷

Action Item: At the *Joint Meeting of the CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee and SPS Regional Working Group* on 22 April 2021, the World Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and Georgia Revenue Services will discuss integrated risk management systems. Participants will deliberate on proposed topics for future dialogues and joint capacity-building such as on national single window.

8. **Adopting food safety management and inspection systems.** Adopting modern food safety management and inspection systems aligned with Codex standards is crucial to public health and access to export markets. However, good manufacturing practice (GMP), good hygiene practice (GHP) and hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP), are particularly challenging for small food manufacturers and catering operators. To address gaps in resources and capacity,

⁶ <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=knowledge-sharing-modules-on-carec-trade-regional-improvement-of-border-services> or <https://elearning.carecinstitute.org/>

⁷ <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=knowledge-sharing-modules-on-carec-trade-modernizing-sps-measures-and-use-of-digital-certification>.

implementation of cost-effective simplified food safety management and inspection systems is being piloted in Turkmenistan. In 2019-2020, inspectors of the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service, Ministry of Health of Turkmenistan were trained on risk profiling and assessment of food safety management. Training modules are currently being developed for CAREC-wide usability.

9. ***Aligning SPS legislation and other in-country support.*** Initial review and advisory support to plant quarantine laws with respect to alignment with the WTO agreement on SPS were undertaken for Mongolia (2018), Pakistan (2019), Turkmenistan (2019), and Uzbekistan (2021). Policy advice and training on risk assessment and categorization were provided for Mongolia (2019). Training modules on risk assessment for animal by-products were developed for Georgia (2020). Technical support for Kyrgyz Republic is underway for the preparation of practical guidelines on the application of the rules for importation of food products from third countries. However, most activities, including proposed trade policy and SPS training for Afghanistan, was postponed due to travel restrictions brought by the current pandemic.

Action Item: CAREC members are requested to revisit their SPS NWG strategies and action plans as well as the proposed activities in **Appendix 1: Proposed Regional SPS Work Plan 2021-2023**. Comments and suggestions on the workplan – especially those that could potentially be delivered virtually – are requested on or before the 2nd meeting of CAREC SPS regional working group on **27 April 2021**.

Appendix 1: Draft CAREC SPS Workplan 2021-2023

Interventions	Description	Participating Countries	Implementation Period	Status and Proposals	Agencies and/or Development Partners	Country Comments/ Proposals
Regional Policy Dialogues new topic/s to be identified by CAREC						
Capacity building						
Horticulture value chain development and cross-border trade	Support the participation of CAREC in global and regional value chains (e.g., agricultural value chain in the Fergana valley)	KAZ, KGZ, TAJ, TKM, UZB	2019-2022	Ongoing: Pilot SPS work for Fergana countries jointly supported by ADB and USAID CTJ; pest surveillance pilot in UZB led by USAID-CTJ. Completed: trainings on PRA and pest surveillance (2019-2020); trainings on plant quarantine legislation, phytosanitary risk management and plant clinics for UZB (2021)	CAREC NPPOs, USAID-CTJ, EPPO, IPPC, ADB	
Implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures	Training on establishment of pest free areas	KAZ, KGZ, TAJ, TKM, UZB	2021	Proposed. to be supported by USAID-CTJ and ADB		
Addressing transboundary animal diseases (TADs)	Strengthen cooperation and information exchange on TADs including through OIE reference laboratories or twinning activities	regional	2021-2022	Completed: International exchange and training on animal and plant quarantine organized by PRC Customs (2019)	PRC Customs; OIE	
Adopting food safety	Piloting cost-effective	TKM	2019-2021	Ongoing: Trainers' training modules being developed.	TKM	

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management and inspections systems	simplified modern risk-based food safety management and inspections systems			Completed: Physical workshop on risk-based food safety management and inspection (2019)		
Alignment of legislations with the WTO SPS Agreement						
Plant quarantine legislation	Policy advice and technical support in incorporating IPPC principles in national plant quarantine law	MON, PAK, TKM, UZB	2019-2021	Postponed seminar for PAK due to travel restrictions. Completed: MON (2018), PAK (2019), TKM (2019), UZB (2021)	MON, PAK, TKM, UZB	
SPS risk assessment	Training on risk assessment for animal by-products	GEO	2021	Actual training postponed due to travel restrictions, training modules completed (2020); Completed: Review of legislation and policy advice on risk assessment and categorization for MON (2019)	GEO	
Supporting SPS NWGs	Continuing support for SPS NWG in the implementation of their respective national SPS priorities and action plans	AFG, KGZ	2018-2022	Ongoing: Guidelines for importing food products (KGZ). Postponed due to travel restrictions: Tailor-fit training on emerging trade/SPS issues (AFG)	AFG, KGZ	
Knowledge products						

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Knowledge-Sharing Module on CAREC Trade: Facilitating Trade Through Digital Certification	E-learning module on digital phytosanitary certification to be disseminated to SPS working groups.	REG	2021	Developed by WTO, ADB and CAREC Institute and will be accessible via CAREC Institute e-learning platform and CAREC Program website. Proposed: CAREC countries to disseminate and discuss at national level	ADB, CAREC Institute, WTO	
Policy brief on SPS digital certificate	Analysis on the readiness of CAREC countries on digital SPS certificates, lessons from PRC and UZB	REG	2020-2022	Ongoing: Draft policy brief for release. Proposed: Feasibility analysis for interested CAREC country	ADB, CAREC Institute, WTO, IPPC	
<i>Investment projects</i>						
Regional Upgrades for SPS Measures for Trade (RUST) project	The project includes alignment of SPS measures with WTO agreement and upgrade of inspection management system applying risk assessment tools.	MON	2016-2021	Construction works to upgrade veterinary, phytosanitary and food safety laboratories, quarantine and inspection facilities underway.	MON	
Joint border control		AZE, GEO	2021	Scoping for potential regional improvement of border services		

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				or regional upgrades for SPS measures for trade		
Needs assessment	borders infrastructure development, including laboratory capacity and cold-chain facilities	AFG, PAK	2020–2022	Proposed: Federal Board of Revenue of PAK confirmed Torkham border. Draft: initial scoping paper for AFG (2020)	AFG, PAK	

Acronyms:

ADB – Asian Development Bank

AFG – Afghanistan

EPPO – European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization

GEO – Georgia

IPPC – International Plant Protection Convention

KAZ – Kazakhstan

KGZ – Kyrgyz Republic

MON – Mongolia

NPPOs – National Plant Protection Organization

NWGs – National Working Groups

OIE – World Organisation for Animal Health

PAK – Pakistan

PRC – People's Republic of China

TKM – Turkmenistan

USAID-CTJ – U.S. Agency for International Development Competitiveness, Trade and Jobs activity in Central Asia

UZB – Uzbekistan

WTO – World Trade Organization