

PRESS RELEASE

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SANITARY/PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Agencies agree plan for food safety, animal/plant health assistance

Five international organizations, donors and representatives of beneficiary countries have approved, on 18 December 2006, a new medium term strategy for their joint efforts to help developing countries implement internationally-agreed standards for food safety and animal and plant health.

The strategy will strengthen the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) in its continued efforts to assist developing countries implement international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards. To date, the STDF has approved 23 projects and 21 project-preparation grants benefiting developing and least developed countries.

The STDF was created in 2002 as a trust fund by five organizations: UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and World Trade Organization (WTO). This followed a joint commitment made at WTO's Ministerial Conference in Doha in November 2001. The STDF is administered by the WTO.

The 18 December 2006 meeting in Rome was hosted by FAO, with representatives of the other organizations, donors and developing countries attending. The new strategy for the STDF aims to advance the facility in its capacity building efforts. It places much greater emphasis on the facility acting as a vehicle for co-ordination, fund mobilization and the identification and dissemination of best practice in the provision of SPS-related technical cooperation and capacity building. With increasing donor funds going into SPS-related technical co-operation projects, identifying and implementing good practices is of benefit to donors and recipients alike.

So far, 11 donors have committed funds to the STDF. With a new operating strategy in place, it is hoped that the annual funding target of US\$5 million will be met. The medium term strategy also sees a role for the STDF to act as a vehicle for facilitating grant applications mobilization, with project-preparation grants being used to attract funds from the wider donor community. Forty percent of facility resources are committed for least-developed countries and other low income economies.

Assisting developing countries in the use of international standards developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, International Plant Protection Convention and World Organization for Animal Health helps developing countries gain and maintain market access. It also improves their domestic human, animal and plant health situation.

For more information see:

<http://www.standardsfacility.org>

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