

Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Policy Framework for Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive Summary

The continent of Africa is currently experiencing a rapid growth of the intra-African agrifood market fueled by high population growth, rapid urbanization and income growth. Intra-African food demand is projected to increase by 178% by 2050. Africa's net food import bill is currently over USD 40 billion a year and is projected to reach USD 400 billion by 2030. In addition, Africa has the world's highest per capita incidences of foodborne illness, claiming 137,000 lives a year and causing 91 million cases of sickness, according to the World Health Organization. The risks include bacteria such as *Salmonella*, as well as parasites like tapeworm, and naturally occurring toxins such as aflatoxin. The heaviest burden falls on children under the age of five. Therefore, there is a need for African agriculture to undergo a structural transformation to meet rising food demands, while at the same time addressing the public health burden of foodborne illness among the most vulnerable populations.

Africa's development priorities are spelled out in Agenda 2063—the blueprint for the African Union's economic development in the coming decades. Specifically, Agenda 2063 identifies agricultural development as a high priority, as detailed in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP); this is further elaborated in Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. The Malabo Declaration (June 2014) specifies seven key commitments, including one on Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services. Further advanced by the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in March 2018, these commitments seek to harness market and trade opportunities locally, regionally, and internationally.

While there is demonstrated political will to expand intra-regional trade, African countries face several challenges to achieving this objective. Significant progress is ongoing towards reaching regional integration, which has contributed to reductions in tariffs. However, the application of non-tariff measures (NTMs), such as Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, remain a major impediment to effective trade. SPS measures are the foundation for domestic consumer health and safe trade, as they have the critical function of protecting countries from risks to public health and to animal and plant life and health. Weak capacities to enforce SPS measures can result in increased illness from foodborne disease as well as a country's exclusion from key markets, and poorly applied procedures can result in unnecessary costs, creating inefficiencies in the trading system.

To address some of the health and trade challenges faced by Africa, the African Union Commission (AUC) made a presentation to AU Member States' Ministers during their Second Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment of October 2017. The presentation underscored the negative effects that mycotoxins, metals and other contaminants pose on human and animal health and constituted a proposal to establish a Continental Food Safety Reference Laboratory. The Ministers endorsed the proposal and requested the AUC to develop a continental Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Policy Framework to facilitate harmonization of AU Member States' SPS policy in general and to inform the establishment of the Pan African Food Safety Laboratory in particular.

In response, the African Union's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) convened a team of local and international partners to:

- ▶ Develop a science-based AU continental SPS Policy Framework that would support AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in achieving their trade goals in the context of protecting plant, animal health and food safety and contribute to the Malabo goal of boosting intra-Africa and global trade; and
- ▶ Provide recommendations detailing necessary actions to implement the Framework.

The research, review, and consultation process undertaken by the team was anchored in a comprehensive review of literature dealing with African SPS policy, including RECs' SPS strategies, policies and plans of action. An online survey was sent to representatives from the AU's Continental SPS Committee, including RECs, International Standard Setting Bodies (ISSBs), multi-lateral institutions, and inter-governmental organizations and civil society, to share their successes and challenges, as well as to explore possible strategies for the SPS Policy Framework. Consultations were also held with Committee members to discuss these issues in more depth. Following this consultation period, a draft SPS Policy Framework was prepared and a consultative workshop organized with the SPS Committee in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At the workshop, participants engaged in discussions to refine the objectives, strategies and actions necessary for the development of an effective AU SPS Policy Framework, including the division of roles and responsibilities between the AUC, RECs, and Member States.



The challenges to implementation of SPS measures identified include: a lack of a clear continental institutional framework; limited scientific data sharing that is used to create policy; lack of awareness of SPS issues by all stakeholders (governments and private sector); low priority among decision makers; and inadequate financial resources devoted to SPS issues. In addition, the slow pace in ratification of regional SPS protocols, duplicated mandates among agencies at the national level, weak public sector enforcement of SPS compliance measures, inadequate or non-existent infrastructure, capacity, and laboratories, and weak national and regional coordination mechanisms were also noted. The AU SPS Policy Framework's four objectives address the diverse and intersecting needs and priorities of SPS systems in Africa, as follows:



Objective 1. Establish Harmonized Science-Based SPS Systems

- ▶ Support Member State efforts to establish harmonized science-based SPS systems, taking into account both the international standards and regional conditions.



Objective 2. Strengthen Collaboration and Trade Facilitation

- ▶ Increase efficiencies and reduce trading costs by working towards a cohesive continental SPS system.



Objective 3. Build Technical Capacity

- ▶ Maximize technical capacity in RECs, Member States, and stakeholders through cooperation and sharing of resources.



Objective 4. Increase Political Support and Public and Private Sector Investment in SPS Systems

- ▶ Enhance opportunities to expand intra-African trade of plants, animals, and food through strengthened public-private cooperation, awareness raising, and resource mobilization.

The full policy document also includes an implementation framework that provides detailed explanations of each objective, including the strategies and actions needed to accomplish them. Further, it proposes potential roles and priority-setting for the responsible institutions and other stakeholders. Transparency within the AU, harmonization among the Member States and RECs, science-based SPS international standards, private sector compliance with SPS measures, information sharing, demand-driven capacity building, proactive measures, and resource mobilization are just a few of the themes highlighted within these objectives. Finally, possibilities for financing mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation and reporting are briefly mentioned.

The full adoption and efficient implementation of the Framework and Implementation Plan will lay the foundation for increased agricultural development and trade of safe food products within Africa and beyond the continent.

Objective 1. Establish Harmonized Science-Based SPS Systems

Support Member State efforts to establish harmonized science-based SPS systems, taking into account both the international standards and regional conditions.

Strategy 1.1	Support Member States' legislative/regulatory review, harmonization, and modernization of SPS legal/regulatory frameworks based on international standards.
Strategy 1.2	Encourage Member States to establish and comply with science-based SPS measures to safeguard human, animal, and plant life and health.
Strategy 1.3	Promote the use of risk assessment to ensure the least restriction trade whenever possible while minimizing risk to public health.
Strategy 1.4	Establish and promote systems of surveillance for priority pathogens, pests and food and feed safety hazards of highest concern in plants, animals, and food.
Strategy 1.5	Advocate for the use of the concepts of regionalization/zoning and compartmentalization (recognizing Pest- or Disease-Free Areas and Areas of Low Pest or Disease Prevalence throughout the continent) to facilitate safe trade.

Objective 2. Strengthen Collaboration and Trade Facilitation

Increase efficiencies and reduce trading costs by working towards a harmonized continental SPS system.

Strategy 2.1	Assist Member States in leveraging existing REC SPS harmonization efforts as work continues towards unified continental SPS standards that are based on international standards.
Strategy 2.2	Support Member States and REC efforts to determine science-based equivalence and commit to mutual recognition.
Strategy 2.3	Engage Member States and RECs to effectively participate in CAC, OIE, IPPC, and WTO SPS activities.
Strategy 2.4	Encourage Member States to adopt, adapt, and implement harmonized SPS audit and verification systems.
Strategy 2.5	Support Member States to implement transparent import and export inspections and certification systems.
Strategy 2.6	Streamline border crossing soft and hard infrastructures, procedures, and processes.
Strategy 2.7	Enhance capacity of AfCFTA Secretariat and relevant AU technical offices to coordinate the collaboration of Member States and RECs in SPS matters, including information exchange and sharing.

Objective 3. Build Technical Capacity

Maximize technical capacity in RECs, Member States, and stakeholders through cooperation and sharing of resources.

Strategy 3.1	Promote demand-driven capacity building through utilization of inclusive prioritization processes and formal needs assessments.
Strategy 3.2	Support creation/strengthening of regional centers of excellence to provide SPS technical assistance and expand human resources at national and regional levels.
Strategy 3.3	Help to develop needed physical infrastructure such as regional reference testing laboratories.
Strategy 3.4	Increase technical capacity for early warning and response systems (EWARS) at national, regional, and continental levels.
Strategy 3.5	Foster information sharing, such as through digital platforms, web-based networks, and tools (e.g., test results, action plans, etc.).

Objective 4. Increase Political Support and Public and Private Sector Investment in SPS Systems

Enhance opportunities to expand intra-African trade of plants, animals, and food through strengthened public-private cooperation, awareness raising, and resource mobilization.


Strategy 4.1	Support Member States' commitment to transparency with all stakeholders in SPS systems.
Strategy 4.2	Provide technical capacities for developing and supporting public-private partnerships to achieve mutual SPS goals (e.g., engage existing farmer/producer organizations, trader groups, SMEs, miller associations, retailers).
Strategy 4.3	Enhance public-private partnerships to improve SPS compliance, formulate and institute mechanisms to gradually transition informal trade to more formal channels (e.g., stepwise certification schemes).
Strategy 4.4	Advocate and raise awareness with Member States and RECs on SPS issues at high levels of government and among the private sector and public to create the demand for strong SPS systems.
Strategy 4.5	Use AUC's global platform for financial resource mobilization to solicit for financial and technical resources to implement SPS measures in Member States.



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