

SPS News

Welcome to the SPS NEWSLETTER which will report on Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues currently being addressed at the National SPS Committee. The newsletter will be published biannually by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and will be electronically available on the DAFF website.

National SPS Committee

The National SPS Committee was reinstated as a platform to co-ordinate and address SPS and associated TBT related issues. The mandate of the committee includes discussions on issues affecting market access of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products, implementation of the WTO SPS Agreement and promoting SA's regulatory ability. The committee is constituted of various directorates within the Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF); Health (Doh); Trade and Industry (the dti); International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), the SA Revenue Service (SARS) and the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS). Since its inception in 2012, the committee has had several successful meetings on SPS engagements and developments at International Standard Setting Organisations and within the region.

Update on market access issues

Indonesia - Jakarta port closure affecting the exports of South Africa's horticultural products (Notification No. G/SPS/N/IDN/48)

- Following Indonesia's notification to the WTO – SPS in 2012, access to the Jakarta Port by South Africa exporters is contingent on SA receiving recognition of its food safety system by the Indonesian authorities. An application for recognition of SA's food safety system was submitted in 2012, however, a decision is still pending.

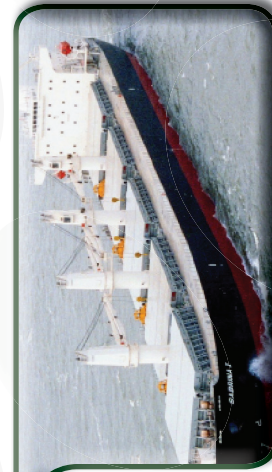
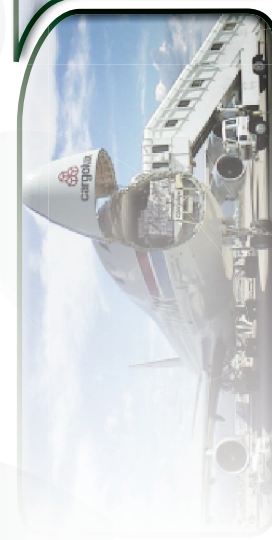
- A Stakeholder Forum to address trade concerns of Indonesia has been established by DIRCO. Representatives on the forum include DAFF, DIRCO, the dti as well as some of the key industry stakeholders. The first meeting of the Stakeholder Forum took place in March 2013 and facilitated discussions on industry challenges relating to the amendment of Indonesia's import licensing regulations that was notified to the WTO in 2012 (Notification No. G/SPS/N/IDN/55).

Brazil - Import of pork to SA

- Following protracted bilateral engagements there has been progress in opening the South Africa market for Brazilian pork. However, imports remain subject to ongoing negotiation of a health certificate which will include requirements for Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). SA's import requirements for PRRS were notified to the WTO in 2012 with an implementation date of 31 May 2013 (Notification No. G/SPS/N/ZAF/31/Add.2).

Thailand - Exports of SA's horticultural products

- Despite SA's extensive engagement with the Thailand authorities on a diplomatic and bilateral level, including through the WTO SPS Committee, the ban of SA's fruit exports to Thailand has been upheld since 2008.
- There has been no movement on the finalisation of Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) for South African commodities such as table grapes, apples, pears and stone fruit which prior to the amendment of Thailand's New Plant Quarantine Act, historically had access to the Thailand market without any notified interceptions of potentially damaging pests on consignments of exported fruit.
- South Africa will continue to engage its Thailand counterparts to confirm that the appropriate technical processes are being followed to conclude the required PRA with urgency.





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Reporting on SPS engagements

WTO SPS Committee

- A WTO SPS Committee meeting was held from 18 to 22 March 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. The official meeting was preceded by informal meetings that included discussions on the *ad-hoc* consultation procedure in terms of Article 12.2 of the SPS Agreement. The draft procedure on *ad-hoc* consultation is intended to streamline what is commonly known as “Good offices of the Chair” to facilitate *ad-hoc* consultations between members. Informal discussions made some progress towards achieving consensus on some of the outstanding issues and the fifth revision of the draft document was made available for submission of comments by 19 April 2013.

- Informal discussions by the WTO SPS Committee on a proposal for the definition of SPS related private standards continued. The following proposal by China “SPS related private standards are sanitary and phytosanitary requirements developed and/or applied by a private body or non-governmental entity” was considered as the basis for further discussion and input.

- The meeting formally discussed trade concerns.
- Within the formal meeting, the South African delegation made a statement as a follow-up to the IPPC report on the status of the SAVEU consultations regarding citrus black spot (CBS).

SPS trade concerns

Applications to the OIE for disease freedom status

- Two applications have been submitted to the OIE requesting disease freedom for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and zoning for African horse sickness.

- Both requests have not been favourably considered by the OIE as yet and DAFF Animal Health officials are currently engaging the OIE to address identified shortfalls.

- An OIE mission on Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) took place in 2012 and the final report is being awaited.

SA/EU citrus black spot trade concerns

- In October 2012 the EU informed South Africa that they will be instituting a five interception threshold for phytosanitary non-compliance of CBS in the current export season. Several engagements between SA and EU counterparts on the CBS issue have taken place, including a facilitated bilateral meeting convened by the IPPC in February 2013 in Rome as part of its obligations under the IPPC dispute settlement procedure.
- It was agreed that for the current export season that after every CBS interception, the EU and SA will consult and exchange information regarding the intercepted consignment.
- The EU agreed that the European Food Safety Authority’s (EFSA) Pest Risk Analysis on CBS, which is expected in June 2013, will be made available for international comments.

Reporting on disease and/or pest outbreaks

Bactrocerca invadens (BI)

- There has been a change in the status of *Bactrocerca invadens* in South Africa wherein previously, the pest status was reported on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) as being transient under eradication, however, the pest status has now been updated to reflect that BI is present in some parts of South Africa (Vhembe District in Limpopo Province) owing to detections over the summer period. BI is currently under control in the areas where detection was reported.
- With mango being a favourite host for BI, challenges were reported with the control and eradication of BI in the area in question after heavy rains and flooding, where mango is a very important commodity for smallholder farmers and at a private household level.
- With Zimbabwe recently becoming a member of the IPPC, it is anticipated that further information will be forthcoming on the status of BI in Zimbabwe.





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Cross-cutting SPS/TBT issues

Fisheries

- Reported that there have been two outbreaks of fish production diseases (Abalone Tubercle Mycosis) in aquaculture for which research has been commissioned.
- Reported on challenges with the export of aquaculture products (shellfish) to China because of amendments of import requirements relating to maximum residue levels (MRLs). It was agreed to pursue the matter bilaterally with the Chinese counterparts.

Meat labelling

- Reported that the basis of the meat labelling scandal in SA is the result of cross-species contamination of meat products that have not been labelled correctly.
- Confirmation was provided that all imported horse, water buffalo and kangaroo meat was legally imported and certified as such.
- Following discussions at senior government level a decision was taken that the meat labelling matter in South Africa should not be regarded as a health or food safety issue but as a labelling issue that needs to be addressed together with the Department of Trade and Industry in terms of the Consumer Protection Act. Subsequently the dti, DAFF and DoH are working closely together to develop an action plan and strategy that comprehensively addresses meat labelling issues and will report back to senior government structures shortly.

Regional coordination of SPS matters

SADC

- Reported that the SADC SPS Annex to the SADC Protocol on Trade provides an enabling framework to promote cooperation and harmonisation within the SADC on SPS issues in the interest of advancing regional and intra Africa trade.

- However, in order for the provisions of the SPS Annex to be legally binding it has to be ratified by the South African government. Ratification of the SPS Annex through the Parliamentary system is currently underway.
- SA continues to participate in regional meetings facilitated by the SADC Secretariat on SPS matters and recently made inputs towards the finalisation of an SPS indicator matrix as part of a mechanism for monitoring, reporting and evaluating the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Trade, including the SPS Annex.

Upcoming meetings

- WTO SPS Committee meeting: 24 to 28 June 2013

For further information, please contact: **Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**

Directorate Food Import and Export Standards

Tel.: +27 12 319 6095

Web.: www.daff.gov.za

