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Success Stories, African Countries

Agenda item 10.6

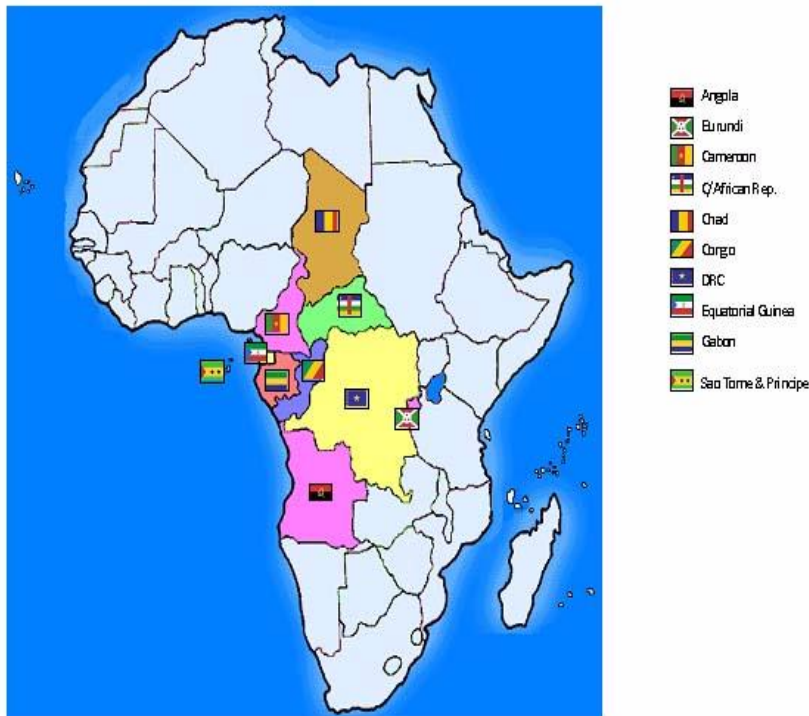
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Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome & Principe**

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CMP 9: DOCUMENTATION OF SUCCESS STORIES

Code and Title of Project: TCP/RAF/3312 : *Support to phytosanitary capacity building in member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).*

Countries involved : Angola , Burundi , Cameroon , Central African Republic , Chad , Republic of Congo , Democratic Republic of Congo , Gabon , Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome & Principe



Background and problem addressed

The circulation of agricultural products, seeds and other planting materials, either within or outside the Central African sub-region, involves both sanitary and phytosanitary risks. At the same time, access to foreign markets for agricultural products grown in the sub-region requires compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards in accordance with international instruments such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization. Of great concern is the risk of introducing exotic pests and transboundary plant diseases that can be disseminated through food imports, seeds and other planting materials (stem cuttings, tubers, bulbs , etc. .). In order to help countries meet international standards for trade in agricultural products, prevent pest risks and manage them properly when they occur, concerted efforts are needed at sub-regional level, given the transboundary nature of these problems ; hence the need to address them in a community-based approach through this sub- regional project which aims at strengthening the capacities of National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) .

FAO's response

Following a request from both ECCAS and CEMAC and in order to address the problems mentioned above, FAO approved a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) FAO on 01/07/2011 with a budget of **USD 495,000**. The activities of the project were completed on 31/12/2013.

The project aims to strengthen the capacities of National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) in order to participate actively in the implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention.

The partner institutions of this project were the NPPOs and other national services and non- state actors in member countries of ECCAS and CEMAC.

Results and effects of the project

At the end of the project the following results /outputs were obtained :

- Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (through the 13 modules of the new PCE tool) was completed by six of the 10 countries involved in the project (Burundi , Central African Republic , Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo , Gabon and Chad) and partially completed for two others (Cameroon and Sao Tome and Principe).
- A national phytosanitary capacity building strategy has been formulated for each of the six countries mentioned above, as well as sub- regional strategy.
- National plant protection regulations, some of which date back to the 1950s and 1960s, were reviewed and updated in seven countries (Burundi , Central African Republic , Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad) in compliance with the IPPC and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS agreement) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- A memorandum of cooperation and coordination among the countries in the sub-region regarding governance of the IPPC in the ECCAS and CEMAC sub-region has been developed.
- The capacities of 80 NPPO agents of the 10 countries of ECCAS and CEMAC have been strengthened on the PCE tool, standard setting process and phytosanitary information exchange.
- Ten editors of the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) of the 10 countries of ECCAS and CEMAC have been trained in the maintenance of this information exchange tool between the contracting countries IPPC.

- **Follow-up and sustainability of the project**

National authorities, through the ministries of agriculture, as well as those of ECCAS and CEMAC have been regularly informed on the progress of the project. Thus, cognizant of the potential impact of the project for the sub- region and the good performance of the participants of Central Africa in the Eighth Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) held in Rome from 8 to 12 April 2013 , CEMAC and ECCAS committed themselves to supporting the organization of the preparatory meeting in 2014 of the Ninth Session of the CPM in order to sustain this achievement. Thus , CEMAC has allocated a budget which helped to organize a preparatory meeting of this current session of the CPM in Libreville, Gabon from 25 to 27 February 2014, in conjunction with the FAO Sub- Regional Office for the Central Africa (SFC) and the IPPC Secretariat.

In order to pursue phytosanitary capacity building, SFC has included the activities in its 2014-2015 biennial programme, in connection with the new strategic framework of FAO. The national and sub- regional phytosanitary capacity building strategies will be translated into projects for resource mobilization. Moreover, steps are underway to document experiences gained through this project to serve as a reference for other regions and IPPC contracting parties.

Catalytic effects during and after the project

The project has benefited from the support and participation of CEMAC and ECCAS during its implementation. CEMAC intends to allocate funds obtained from the European Union to consolidate the achievements of the project. A technical and financial proposal is being prepared by the FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa (SFC). The project served as a model for other regions or countries (South Pacific, West Africa , North Africa) who want to emulate it. In this respect, it has been positively assessed by IPPC statutory bodies. The report of the second meeting of the IPPC Capacity Development Committee, held in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia from 27 to 31 May 2013 , referred to this project in these terms: ***“A regional project for Central Africa was working to strengthen national and regional phytosanitary capacity in ten countries, based on application of the PCE. The countries were successfully interacting with one another to learn from their experiences, for example stakeholder involvement. The project has shown clearly increased knowledge and capacity to deal with IPPC issues, and increased participation at CPM-8 was evident. Expression of interest in reproducing this model in West Africa and the SW Pacific have been made”***.

- **Results with a “human face”**

In addition to NPPO officers whose capacities the project has contributed to developing in various IPPC related fields, seven junior professionals (staff of the Ministry of Agriculture of Gabon seconded to SFC), two interns from the University of Science and Technology, Masuku, in Gabon and one intern from Cornell University in the USA have also been trained within the framework of this project. Towards the end of the project, Ms. Alphonsine Louhouari, Head of Department of Plant Protection in the Republic of Congo said the following words in an email message sent to the Lead Technical Officer (LTO Officer) of the project on 23/10/2013: ***“I thank the project for providing me with training on the PCE tool and giving me the opportunity to conduct together with my colleagues the work on the phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation of my country and the development of the national strategy. This was a moving experience for me although I have encountered many constraints. I feel proud today because I feel reassured that I can lead a project whatever its nature”***. Thus the strengthened capacities of Ms. Louhouari earned her the nomination, on 19/11/2013, as her country’s official IPPC Contact Point. Ms. Louhouari’s example is one among many others. Other official Contact Points have their own experiences on how this project has affected their professional life.

Lessons learned

- **Collaboration** : Serving as an example of a successful collaboration, this project has mobilized various entities, namely the NPPOs , the IPPC Secretariat, FAO’s Development Law Service (LEGN) and SFC around a common goal.

- **National ownership:** The implementation of the project was country- driven, with all the plant protection stakeholders mobilized around the IPPC Contact Points who have demonstrated leadership especially in the conduct of the PCE and the development of national phytosanitary capacity building strategies.
- **Cost-effectiveness :** With an average cost of less than \$ 50,000 / country , this project was cost effective, given the products and services obtained and their induced effects.
- **Sub-Regional Cooperation:** The Regional Economic Communities (ECCAS and CEMAC) have proven to be important partners in the implementation and internalization of the project results.