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Global Agricultural Information Network

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Africa Launches Continental SPS Committee

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Approved By:

Michael G. Francom, Ag Counselor

Prepared By:

Michael G. Francom

Report Highlights:

The African Union Commission (AUC) recently launched a continental SPS Committee to assist member states in their efforts to protect human, animal and plant health. In particular, the Committee will help members address trade-related SPS barriers, the resolution of which is vital for the continent to reach its goal of tripling intra Africa agricultural trade by 2025.

African Union Commission Launches SPS Committee:

The African Union Commission (AUC) launched its continental SPS Committee in August 2014. The overarching purpose of the Committee is to help member states develop WTO-consistent, SPS frameworks to protect human, animal and plant health. To achieve this on a macro country level, the Committee works with member states to integrate SPS matters, including trade, into their individual CAADP investment plans. It also provides policy guidance, supports regulatory harmonization, disseminates best practices, and assists in resource mobilization and capacity development. The AUC subsequently announced this launch at the WTO SPS Committee in October 2014. (G/SPS/GEN/1363)

The resolution of SPS trade-related barriers is essential for Africa to reach its goal of tripling intra Africa agriculture trade by 2025, as outlined in the [Implementation Strategy & Roadmap \(ISR\) to Achieve the 2025 Vision on CAADP](#). Specifically, under strategic action area 1b of the ISR, the AUC, member states and partners will work together towards ‘harmonizing trade regimes, measures and standards, removing non-tariff barriers (e.g. SPS-related obstacles), and setting up national and continental trade agreements.’ Further, these actions are integrally connected with the Boosting Intra Africa Trade initiative, the soon-to-be launched Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), and the expected establishment of a continental food safety authority. See [GAIN ET1502](#) for details on the proposed African food safety authority.

The continental SPS Committee is led by the Department of Rural Economy & Agriculture (DREA), under the AUC. Committee members are from other AUC Departments, such as Trade & Industry, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Agency (NEPAD), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Forum for Ag Research in Africa (FARA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the African Development Bank and the private sector.

One of DREA’s goals, as stated in 3.1.14 of its [Strategic and Operational Plan \(2014-17\)](#), was to establish the continental SPS Committee. This goal now appears complete with the August launch event. In addition, the Department’s plan has a number of other supporting SPS goals, some of which parallel the Committee’s responsibilities. These goals are: increase and improve SPS information sharing, awareness (1.7.6); deliver SPS capacity building training at continental, regional and national levels (3.1.9); conduct SPS scoping studies at national and REC levels (3.1.10); hold consultations with RECs and member states to harmonize SPS policies and frameworks (3.1.11); support SPS policy and formulation within member states and RECs (3.1.12); and mainstream the SPS agenda into country CAADP investment plans (3.1.13).