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Policy Brief to Enhance Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) Compliance in Sudan



INTRODUCTION

Exploitation of market opportunities for food and agricultural products is subject to compliance to international standards particularly the sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures developed by the CODEX, OIE and IPPC. These standards, guidelines and recommendations are recognized by the WTO member states under the WTO-SPS agreement for facilitation of trade while protecting human, plant and animal health.

The SPS measures are applied:

- (a) To protect animal or plant life or health within the territory of the Member from risks arising from the entry, establishment or spread of pests, diseases, disease-carrying organisms;
- (b) To protect human or animal life or health within the territory of the Member from risks arising from additives, contaminants, toxins or disease-causing organisms in foods, beverages or feedstuffs;

- (c) To protect human life or health within the territory of the Member from risks arising from diseases carried by animals, plants or products thereof, or from the entry, establishment or spread of pests;
- (d) To prevent or limit other damage within the territory of the Member from the entry, establishment or spread of pests.

The measures include all relevant laws, decrees, regulations, requirements and procedures including, end product criteria; processes and production methods; testing, inspection, certification and approval procedures; quarantine treatments including relevant requirements associated with the transport of animals or plants, or with the materials necessary for their survival during transport; provisions on relevant statistical methods, sampling procedures and methods of risk assessment; and packaging and labeling requirements directly related to food safety.

Inadequate capacity for compliance by some IGAD member states has been a hindrance to accessing and expanding the lucrative Middle East and North African and other livestock markets every time there is an outbreak of a trans-boundary animal disease like Rift Valley Fever (RVF) that occurred in 1997/1998, 2000/2002. More recently in 2019 there was another serious ban on exports of livestock and livestock related commodities to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE). These bans that included chilled beef and other food safety issues have led to massive losses in the livestock industry in Sudan and negatively impacted on livelihoods and economy.

In recognition of this challenge, IGAD/ICPALD in collaboration with Regional Pastoral Livelihood Pastoral Resilience Project (RPLRP) funded by the World Bank group and in collaboration with USAID developed National SPS strategies for five other IGAD member countries. Sudan and South Sudan were left out even though they do substantial livestock and livestock products trade with the Middle East and North African countries.

Consequently, IGAD/ICPALD jointly with AU-IBAR and UN-FAO in collaboration with the Government of Sudan has supported this consultancy to develop and validate a National Five year SPS Strategy and Action Plan for Sudan.

The Objective of this SPS Strategy policy brief is therefore to:

Share information on the existence of the SPS strategy that contributes to enhanced capacity and guide all the players on mechanisms for quick and coordinated response to challenges on food safety, animal health and plant health to reduce losses and maintain national and international market requirements.

Buy-in of the policy makers and advocate for resource mobilization to enhance implementation of the national SPS strategy in Sudan.

STATUS OF SPS MEASURES COMPLIANCE IN SUDAN

The scope of the assessment was on the status of SPS measures compliance in Sudan as stipulated in the WTO-SPS agreement and advocated by AU-SPS policy framework and IGAD region SPS Strategy and plan of action. This included: the policy framework, the legislation and regulatory framework; the institutional framework, laboratories; human capacity; industry and consumer responsibilities in the plants, animal health and food safety in value chains.

The National government and with support from development partners such as UN- FAO, AU-IBAR, IGAD, COMESA, World bank, NGOs and Private sector has made significant contribution to adopt and implement the SPS measures as stipulated by the international standards setting organization where Sudan is a member despite not being a WTO member state.

There are a number of laws and regulations such as acts of parliament and recommendations for the control of plant health, animal health and food safety in the country but these cannot effectively respond to the emerging challenges as some are outdated, overlap in application for example in The Food Control Act 1973 and the Standards and Metrology Act 2008 where responsibilities are shared and do not provide a holistic preventive approach on a scientific basis such as risk analysis provision.

There are regulatory agencies for example; the Ministry of trade is responsible for registering the exporters and giving trademarks. Ministry of health is registering imported food products and runs analysis to check its safety. SSMO is taking responsibility of issuing certificate of compliance according to the Sudanese Standard and specification but they still do not comply with the international requirements and specifications due to weak and complacent enforcement because of limited financial resources to the sector.

The analysis found that assigned responsibilities in some institutions and agencies are spread across

several professions, sectors and institutions for example as shown in, supervision and inspection of food processing plants which is shared responsibility of Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Animal Resources and Fisheries and Ministry of Industry (MOI). These should be harmonized or restructured to strengthen compliance.

The study established that there a number of policy guidelines on plant and animal health; in addition there was a draft food safety policy; the Majority of policy makers acknowledged that there are competent human resources that require specialized skills in risk analysis despite the low level of financial resources to implement and enforce the SPS measures. It was also affirmed that there was no strategy to guide SPS compliance in the country.

There are adequate established regulatory physical infrastructure such as laboratories and quarantine stations with human resource. However, full knowledge of SPS measures, implementation and enforcement within the relevant government departments and institutions as well as in the agricultural food supply chains, is not up to the standards.

Sudan is active in both plant and animal production bio-safety and technology particularly in research institutions and universities that have embraced biotechnology in banana tissue culture and in animal vaccines production.

CHALLENGES OF THE SPS COMPLIANCE IN SUDAN

The main issues facing the SPS measures compliance in Sudan are:

- Inadequate policy, legal and regulatory coordination environment. however; There are insufficient policy directions as well as many Acts and regulations that negatively impact on the SPS compliance in Sudan. For example, some of these acts are outdated, overlapping while others share responsibility for implementation and enforcement between several ministries and institutions.

- Weak public and private capacity and coordination to facilitate efficient and effective SPS compliance to meet international standards.
- Weak institutional arrangements and linkages for SPS compliance
- Low levels of crops and livestock productivity.
- Low financial support to plant health, animal health and Food safety compliance for market access.
- Insufficient management of trans-boundary diseases and pests.
Compliance to SPS is hampered by implementation of diseases and pest programmes by few trained personnel.
- Low SPS public education, advocacy and awareness in the food chain;
Lack of awareness and education on SPS requirements domestically and internationally may lead to disruptions of trade in agricultural commodities due to diseases and pests.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policy actions are recommended for Sudan in order to guarantee sustainable implementation and compliance to SPS measures for national, regional and international trade.

Policy, Legal and Regulatory Framework.

Review, harmonize and modernize the policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for SPS measures compliance to support evidence-based risk management interventions in accordance with international standards for protection of animal health (OIE), plant health (IPPC) and human health food safety (CAC); enhanced implementation and enforcement for facilitation of trade in agricultural commodities.

Human Capacity Building

Build the technical competence of its human resource both in public and private sectors for animal, plant and food safety after a needs assessment to be in line with modern SPS expectation; facilitating them to attend short training sessions and refreshers, regional forums and standards setting conferences to ensure skills are retained over time.

Infrastructure Capacity Building

Strengthen regulatory infrastructural capacity in both public and private institutions after a needs assessment and implement strategies and enforce legislations that protect economic utilization of the infrastructure including for testing (laboratories), quarantine and research for plants, animal health and food safety that supports SPS compliance.

Institutional Arrangement

Undertake a comprehensive analysis to determine the regulatory deficits, then reorganize and transform the regulatory institutions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness while strengthening communication and information systems within all SPS compliance institutions.

Crops and Livestock Productivity

Implement and enforce internationally recognized good agriculture and animal husbandry practices (GAHP), good hygienic practices (GHP) and good manufacturing practices (GMP) and safety systems such as disease and pest free areas/zones and improved technologies like traceability system, residues, contaminants and additives testing, seed, animal genetics and food quality certification while strengthening relevant plants, animals research and extension services linkages.

Market Access and Infrastructure Development

Develop, improve and maintain plant and livestock produce marketing infrastructure at ports of entry; support investment in marketing infrastructure including abattoirs for value addition by private sector; enhance protection of livestock holding grounds, out

spans, livestock sale yards, crops aggregation centres and processing and preservation plants, quarantines and laboratories and use of technology that support agricultural commodities marketing.

Enhance and harmonize mechanisms for strengthening produce market data collection, collation, dissemination and use of information through technology, develop linkages among the local and international markets stakeholders; participate in review and harmonization and market access and negotiation forums.

Science-Based SPS Systems on Disease and Pests

Establish and promote early warning systems of surveillance, emergency response and reporting for priority pathogens, pests, food and feed safety hazards of highest concern in plants, animals, and food while strengthening close collaboration with neighbouring countries to prevent and manage of trans-boundary diseases and pests using scientific approach.

Partnerships and Linkages with Consumers and Stakeholders

Recognize the right of consumers to safe nutritious food as well as supporting the creation of a public consumer protection office; strengthen the collaboration, linkages with OIE, IPPC and CAC, synergy, advocacy and networking among all consumers and their organizations, industry stakeholders and regulatory agencies to ensure efficient information sharing, education and awareness on SPS issues including participation in standards formulation in the food chain.

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