



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

The SPS Agreement and its Committee turned 30

To mark this milestone,
Members were invited to
share Committee success
stories. Colleagues from
Canada, Chile, Ecuador,
Gabon, Madagascar,
Thailand, and
The Gambia shared
their insight on how the
Committee has helped
over the years.

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**Let's hear from
them and get
inspired for the
work ahead!**

Success story
from

Thailand

How the Committee helped resolve a trade concern over citrus fruits

Back in 2020, Japan had raised a specific trade concern in the Committee regarding import restrictions imposed by Thailand on fresh citrus fruits due to risks associated with sweet orange scab, a quarantine pest that results in scab-like lesions on citrus fruits. Japan viewed these import restrictions as more trade-restrictive than necessary to achieve Thailand’s regulatory objective, which was to prevent the entry of the disease into its territory. To Japan, alternative measures could effectively mitigate the risk of sweet orange scab while allowing for smooth trade with Thailand to continue. Instead of requiring a wax treatment in addition to other phytosanitary measures, Japan suggested alternative measures based on a systems approach, including visual inspection for all fruits. This specific trade concern was raised four times in the Committee over the course of 2020 and 2021.

To resolve the issue, Japan and Thailand initiated a series of collaborative technical consultations in parallel to discussions in the Committee. These technical consultations involved experts from Thailand’s Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and Japan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. The alternative measures proposed by Japan, based on scientific research and evidence, were at the heart of these consultations.

Japan and Thailand found a way forward through constructive dialogue. Thailand accepted Japan’s proposed alternative measures as an effective way to mitigate the risk of sweet orange scab in Japanese fresh citrus exports. The alternative measures were deemed fit to achieve the established appropriate level of SPS protection to prevent the entry of the disease into Thailand. This successful outcome ensured that Thailand’s phytosanitary objective be met without unnecessarily restricting trade and the specific trade concern that had been raised in the Committee was later reported as resolved!

This Committee success story shows the importance of transparency, recognition of equivalent SPS measures, and technical consultations.

 Find out more: [STC ID 470](#)



By providing a **forum to discuss SPS-related trade issues**, the Committee helps Members address trade tensions and find **concrete solutions** to implement the SPS Agreement and facilitate safe trade.



In **1995-2024**, the Committee discussed close to **600 specific trade concerns**. As of early 2025, **60%** of these had been reported as **resolved or partially resolved**, something the Committee can be proud of!

What is "equivalence"?

There are often several ways to manage SPS risks. If a Member shows that an alternative SPS measure (i.e. a measure different from the importing Member’s own SPS measure) achieves the importing Member’s acceptable level of SPS risk, this alternative SPS measure should be recognized as “equivalent” to the importing Member’s own SPS measure and trade should be allowed to continue.

See [Article 4](#) of the SPS Agreement



Decision on Equivalence [G/SPS/19/Rev.2](#)
Committee thematic sessions on equivalence, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

Success story
from

Canada

How Canada worked toward the successful adoption of the Committee catalogue of instruments

In the context of the SPS Agreement, various tools can help Members manage SPS trade issues that may arise between them. Canada had observed that while some mechanisms enjoyed broad usage by many Members, others appeared to be utilized less frequently. For example, while the Committee’s “Specific Trade Concerns” agenda item and bilateral discussions held on the margins of the Committee meeting were frequently being used, Members less frequently requested discussions on comments made on a notification of a proposed measure.

This prompted Canada to propose, in the context of the fourth review of the SPS Agreement, the creation of a catalogue of instruments available to Members to facilitate their timely use and help Members avoid or manage issues. Canada’s proposal was for the catalogue to include all mechanisms relevant to the SPS Agreement framework, such as the right to comment on SPS notifications and to meet to discuss notification comments, the targeted or strategic use of the Committee agenda item “Specific Trade Concerns”, and the possibility to use the IPPC or WOH dispute settlement procedures.

Many Members welcomed the proposal and highlighted the usefulness of developing a compendium of actions available to them in relation to the SPS Agreement. Over the subsequent years, the WTO Secretariat collaborated with Canada and Kenya to prepare a draft catalogue for discussion in the Committee. Later, in 2018, the Committee adopted the “Catalogue of instruments available to WTO Members to manage SPS issues”, a tool to help Members seek information, initiate consultations, and resolve trade frictions on food safety, animal, and plant health issues.

The development of this catalogue shows the review process, which calls for the Committee to periodically review the operation and implementation of the SPS Agreement, is an excellent opportunity for Members to identify and address a need. The catalogue is also a testament to the importance of collaboration between the Secretariat and Members and the long-lasting impact a policy tool can have to help Members manage SPS issues.

 Catalogue of instruments available to WTO Members to manage SPS issues [G/SPS/63](#)



The Committee periodically reviews the operation and implementation of the SPS Agreement. **This is an excellent opportunity for Members to discuss gaps and push forward new ideas.**



As of early 2025, the sixth review of the operation and implementation of the SPS Agreement was underway. Possible recommendations for Committee work ahead deal with modern challenges, new technologies and digital tools, transparency, special and differential treatment, cooperation with Codex, IPPC, and WOH, and various other topics.

[Review of Operation and Implementation of SPS Agreement](#)



Committee decisions and documents

Over time, the Committee adopted different documents – whether in the form of decisions, reports, guidelines, recommendations, catalogues, or else – to assist with the implementation of the SPS Agreement and management of SPS-related trade issues. The “Catalogue of instruments available to WTO Members to manage SPS issues” is one of these documents issued by the Committee, but there are many more!



See [Committee major decisions and documents](#)

ePing, the gift that keeps on giving

For Ecuador, the SPS Agreement has been fundamental in protecting the health of domestic consumers and, at the same time, facilitating access to foreign markets for Ecuadorian agricultural and fishery products. Over the years, the SPS Agreement has strengthened Ecuador's trade policy and SPS management capacity, and the country has integrated SPS provisions into bilateral and regional trade agreements.

In this context, the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) has become an essential tool for monitoring SPS regulations and identifying technical barriers to trade. The platform has facilitated coordination between Ecuadorian institutions, the private sector, and international organizations, strengthened transparency, and made access to information on Members' trade policies more efficient. Importantly, the tool has allowed Ecuador to analyze the impact of trade regulations and foster cooperation to optimize policies that favor international trade.

Ecuador actively promotes the use of ePing at the domestic level as well as among other WTO Members. At WTO level, Ecuador has participated in constructive discussions focused on improvement and expansion of the platform. Ecuador's commitment to the successful operation of the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) reflects the country's will to continue optimizing WTO technological tools that benefit all Members and contribute to secure and sustainable global trade.

ePing, what is it?

Each year, Members notify around **2,000 SPS regulations** that may affect international trade, and it can be a challenge to keep track. The [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) is a free, publicly available tool, that fosters transparency and helps stakeholders keep track of SPS requirements in markets of interest. **Users can:**

- **Browse [notifications](#)** on new and updated SPS (and TBT) requirements
- **Find information on [trade concerns](#)** discussed in the WTO SPS (and TBT) Committees
- **Receive [email alerts](#)** and follow notifications on products and/or markets of interest
- **Find [contact details](#)** of enquiry points and notification authorities
- **Reach out** to national and international counterparts
- **Notify** draft SPS (and TBT) regulations online!



By facilitating timely access and dialogue on SPS regulatory developments worldwide, **ePing is a key tool to foster cooperation and facilitate safe trade.**



SPS notification highlights of 2024

+2,000 SPS notifications

Developing economies made up for **75%** of all SPS notifications

First-time SPS notifier: **Cambodia (congratulations!)**

Top 10 notifiers:

Brazil; Uganda; European Union; Tanzania; Kenya; Japan; Thailand; United States; Rwanda; and Burundi.



What's next for ePing?

A new project funded by the [Standards and Trade Development Facility](#) will promote the use of ePing in five countries in Africa ([STDF/PG/1000](#)). Through technological enhancements and new capacity building approaches, the project seeks to make it easier for public and private sector users to keep abreast of and communicate on SPS and TBT measures affecting trade.



More on transparency: [Article 7](#) and [Annex B](#) of the SPS Agreement

[SPS transparency webpage](#)

Recommended SPS transparency procedures [G/SPS/7/Rev.5](#)

Annual reports on transparency [G/SPS/GEN/804/*](#)

Success story from **Chile**

How a lunch in Geneva set Chile on its path to become an active participant in the Committee

In the early 90', when the world was still fine-tuning the details of what would become the WTO, a Chilean official from the Agriculture and Livestock Service (SAG) found himself in a somewhat improvised situation. Without much information about what was to be negotiated or experience in international diplomacy, Gonzalo Ríos was sent to Geneva to participate in SPS talks. He was a total novice on the subject.

The Chilean ambassador in Geneva, realizing that poor Gonzalo Ríos had no idea where to start, came up with a simple but effective strategy: arrange a lunch. "A lunch with whom?", you may ask. The lunch was set up with a WTO official whom Gonzalo did not know. Without much further preparation, he showed up at the lunch, not knowing what to expect, but eager to learn.

This is where the magic happened. At that lunch, Gonzalo met Gretchen Stanton, a key official of the GATT. With a pleasant and fluid conversation about the work that awaited them, a relationship was built that would be fundamental for Chile's future in international negotiations. Thanks to that talk, and Gretchen's goodwill, Gonzalo earned a spot at the negotiating table. Unbeknownst to him at the time, that lunch was Chile's first step toward playing an influential role in the SPS Agreement. Chile began to contribute valuable technical expertise at each Committee meeting. Chile made proposals that helped shape important aspects of the SPS Committee's work, such as the work on regionalization and transparency. This was not just an international victory. At the national level, the impact was equally great. The SAG created a Department of International Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a specialized structure to follow the SPS Agreement, which operates to this day.

That lunch and the conversation that had seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary were the first steps for Chile to position itself as a key player in the WTO SPS talks. The country not only advanced in international trade agreements, but also trained a new generation of professionals specialized in SPS issues.



Are you a new delegate to the SPS Committee?

Find out more:
[relevant information for new SPS delegates](#)

An institution is only as good as its people.

Committee transparency workshop and other TA activities, what is happening in Gabon now?

With the lessons learned from technical assistance, Gabon undertook a series of actions to strengthen the conformity of its agricultural products to international standards in the area of food safety. One aspect of this technical assistance was capacity building on best practices through seminars and workshops organised by the WTO, to enable national SPS experts to better understand the SPS Agreement and SPS approval processes.

In March 2024, Gabon benefited from WTO support to participate in the [Committee Transparency Workshop](#). The workshop was targeted at national notification authorities and enquiry points, with the objective of improving their knowledge and the implementation of the SPS transparency framework in participants' countries. Gabon is also proud to have participated in the [WTO Regional SPS Workshop for French-speaking Africa](#), held in Rabat in December 2024, as well as in earlier WTO activities, such a virtual training on ePing dedicated to Gabon and a [virtual course on essentials for SPS Committee participation](#).

Upon return to Gabon from the Transparency Workshop, various agencies and structures involved on SPS matters were briefed on the main takeaways of the workshop. This led to the adoption of a resolution to initiate necessary steps for the setting-up of a national SPS committee. As of early 2025, Gabon was considering a draft decree regarding the creation, composition, and functioning of this committee.

Gabon also now more regularly follows Committee meetings and events, which helps national authorities to prepare for future challenges and adopt innovative strategies to manage SPS risks. In terms of its SPS framework, Gabon has put in place a modern certification system for agricultural products to be exported. This system ensures that agricultural products meet international food safety standards, thereby facilitating access to international markets. Laboratories to undertake food and phytosanitary controls were modernized and traceability of food products was improved. These improvements help reducing contamination risks and foster trust among domestic and international consumers.



Find out more: [Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures — events, workshops and training](#)



Participating in the Transparency Workshop in Geneva was a great opportunity and its objective, to allow enquiry points and notification authorities from different Members to better grasp the SPS transparency framework, was fully met.

Mr Judicaël Mounguengui,
national focal point for WTO SPS
notifications, Gabon



WTO events are key for national SPS experts to understand the principles set out in the SPS Agreement and SPS certification processes.

Ms Myrlande Ignounga
Mounguengui,
Ministry of Commerce, SMEs,
and SMLs, Gabon



Success story from **The Gambia**

From domestic coordination to Committee events and technical assistance

Like many other countries around the world, The Gambia suffers from SPS challenges that affect its capacity to trade and its economic development. A majorly cited example of how SPS-related issues affect the average Gambian life is the changes in groundnut exports to the European Union and other major markets due to high levels of aflatoxin. The importance of these issues and repercussions on the economy as well as the importance of collaboration domestically led The Gambia to set up a national SPS committee comprising of different stakeholders relevant to SPS matters.

A national SPS committee was launched in early 2023 to enhance coordination and SPS-related decision-making at the domestic level. This committee consists of representatives from the Food Safety and Quality Authority (also acting as the SPS National Enquiry Point), the Ministry of Trade (also acting as the National SPS Notification Authority), the National Plant Protection Organization, the Department of Livestock Services, The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency, the National Nutrition Agency, and private sector stakeholders and consumer protection organizations.

While the current committee is still young, it has registered some important achievements. Not least important is the successful coordination to put forward a speaker for the 2023 Committee [thematic session on risk communication, misinformation, and disinformation](#) in Geneva. Using the national SPS committee as a platform, an expert was identified and put forward to deliver a [presentation to share The Gambian experience on misinformation and disinformation related to food safety issues](#). He presented cases of issues related to the presence of plastic in rice and misinformation about expired foods, and the steps taken to engage with consumers, establish facts, and debunk claims.

Another important achievement was using the national SPS committee to coordinate a request for a capacity-building activity by WTO experts in The Gambia. This SPS national seminar was held in September 2023 to enhance participants' understanding and knowledge of the benefits of the implementation of the SPS Agreement and to explore tools to improve national coordination in the country.



The newly set-up national committee was a crucial platform to help The Gambia participate successfully in a Committee event and share its view on important risk communication issues in the country.

Mr Abdoulie Jallow, Food Safety and Quality Authority, The Gambia



Find out more: www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/news-and-events/news-details/jp/c/1632316/

Success story from **Madagascar**

SPS Transparency Champions Course

Madagascar has recently participated in a number of WTO SPS trainings, including the 2024 edition of the [Transparency Champions Course](#) and the March 2024 [Transparency Workshop](#). These activities enabled participants to acquire essential skills to meet the challenges they face in their transparency activities. Participants developed key skills to use the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) for informed decision-making and effective communication, and to foster timely responses from competent authorities on new SPS notifications of relevance in domestic contexts.

The country is confident that these trainings will result in an improvement in the performance of notification authorities and enquiry points from beneficiary countries, who will be able to contribute more significantly to the objectives of transparency in the SPS context. In the case of Madagascar, participation in these events promoted the establishment of the national SPS coordination committee which is hoped to contribute to improving the fulfilment of transparency obligations in the country.

And because sharing is caring, it is important that participants share their knowledge with their colleagues and the relevant authorities upon return in their home countries to maximize the impact of trainings. During the SPS Transparency Champions Course, participants were coached to develop an action plan to implement upon their return home.

To follow-up on his action plan, the participant from Madagascar played an active role in sharing skills and knowledge: he convened an information and working meeting to explain the importance of SPS coordination mechanisms for the country and discuss how to successfully set up a national committee that could serve this function in a country dedicated to consumer protection and the development of its economy through trade. Relevant competent authorities in Madagascar, such as the Directorate of Plant Protection, the Directorate of Veterinary Services and the Fisheries Health Authority were invited to the meeting. Where are we at now? An action plan for the establishment of this national SPS committee has been validated by the competent authorities in Madagascar and, as of early 2025, it was being implemented!



Find out more: [WTO 2024 SPS Transparency Champions Course concludes in Geneva](#)



The 2024 edition of the Transparency Champions Programme brought together 25 government officials from across the world. In 2025, participants will report on the implementation of their action plans, including impact on SPS coordination and capacity building on ePing at national and regional levels.



My action plan aimed at setting up a national SPS committee and strengthening the uptake of ePing by public and private sector actors. It is underway and I look forward to reporting on further steps.



Mr Fetranirina Ramahefarivo
National SPS enquiry point
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock



SPS Committee Events and Technical Assistance

SPS Committee thematic sessions and workshops

The Committee organizes thematic sessions and workshops where Members can exchange views and experiences on key topics covered by the SPS Agreement and hear from international organizations, academia, industry, and other stakeholders. Once a topic is decided by the Committee, Members are invited to put forward speakers for these events to ensure the experiences shared are diverse and the events are successful! Don't miss the next opportunity to share your domestic experience!

2023-24 thematic sessions and workshops looked at: [digital tools](#) | [emerging risks and new agricultural technologies](#) | [Codex guidelines for voluntary third-party assurance programmes](#) | [risk communication, misinformation, and disinformation](#)

WTO SPS Technical Assistance

The WTO Secretariat organizes technical assistance activities on the SPS Agreement in English, French, and Spanish.

- **E-Learning** course on the SPS Agreement, one click away.
- National SPS seminars, with a broad SPS coverage, a focus on specific SPS topics, or covering other WTO areas.
- Regional SPS workshops tailored to the region's needs and interests.
- Thematic SPS workshops in Geneva, covering the SPS transparency framework or other topics upon suggestions by Members.
- Flagship SPS courses in Geneva, which are hands-on activities requiring each participant to implement an action plan to address an SPS challenge in their country.



More information: [G/SPS/GEN/997/*](https://www.wto.org/gsp/gen/997/*)

STAY TUNED
for **future Committee**
events and TA!



Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
— events, workshops and training

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