



THE SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES (SPS) PROGRAMME

POSITIONING CARIFORUM TO FISH WHERE THE BIG FISH ARE



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To feed a man

THE CASE FOR A STRONGER FISHERIES SECTOR

A popular proverb tells us that if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; but if you teach that man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime!

For thousands of years, seafood has been respected all over the world as a good way for people to feed their families and also put some money into their pockets. In fact, fish is the food product that is sold most in international markets, with tropical shrimp being among the most valuable fishery commodity. Today, although activities related to fisheries continue to provide an important source of employment and export revenue to many African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, there has been rising concern over food security as well as the safe handling of seafood products. Food security refers to a country's ability to produce enough wholesome and nutritious foods to supply to all its' people, at all times.

In response to these concerns and challenges, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) is making efforts to develop effective food safety systems that will provide better ways of handling seafood products; and that would guarantee a brighter future for the fisheries sector. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures Programme is a big step in the right direction.

SPS IN A NUTSHELL

SPS measures have to do with human, and animal and plant health standards and activities

which protect against risks from contamination, toxins or disease-causing matter in food. SPS measures can take many forms such as:

- Requiring products to come from a disease-free area
- Inspection of products
- Specific treatment or processing of products
- Setting certain allowable maximum levels of pesticide residues
- Permitting the use of only certain ingredients in food.

SPS AND THE WORLD ECONOMY

Fisheries is one of the few sectors which is showing increasing participation in world trade. This means that it can be very profitable for local fisher-folk, processors and wholesalers to equip themselves to take full advantage of international markets. However, because European buyers are much more safety-conscious in matters of food, fisheries products run the risk of being rejected when they do not meet the high quality standards.

One of the most common reasons why food products are likely to be rejected is because of chemical residues and various cancer causing ingredients in foods. Also, not knowing what is required by the regulators, and other players



across the international fisheries scene can spark disagreement in trade, which can hurt fisheries exports from Cariforum.

The European Consensus on Development (ECD) was created to address some of these problems by promoting the smooth and gradual addition of developing countries into the world economy. CARIFORUM members have all signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU) which governs how the two regions will co-operate on a wide range of issues related to trade. Some of these issues include duties charged on imports of goods, and the market standards they are required to meet.

The SPS program will encourage governments to set up national SPS measures that are in keeping with the usually higher international standards. This will be done through a process called harmonization. Therefore, the successful implementation of the SPS program will upgrade the fisheries Sector, bringing it to the level of the international market. In addition to this, The SPS programme will also encourage CARIFORUM states to develop and adopt the same SPS measures. An important benefit of this kind of harmonization, is that no country as a competitive advantage of the other.

IMPLEMENTING THE SPS PROGRAMME

The SPS programme will be handled by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), with the fisheries component being coordinated by the CRFM. This project is responsible to deliver: The success of any initiative is dependent on the enactment of the laws to give it weight; guidelines to assess

what comes out of it; a master plan for all to follow, and the training to ensure that fishers and processors know what the market expects.

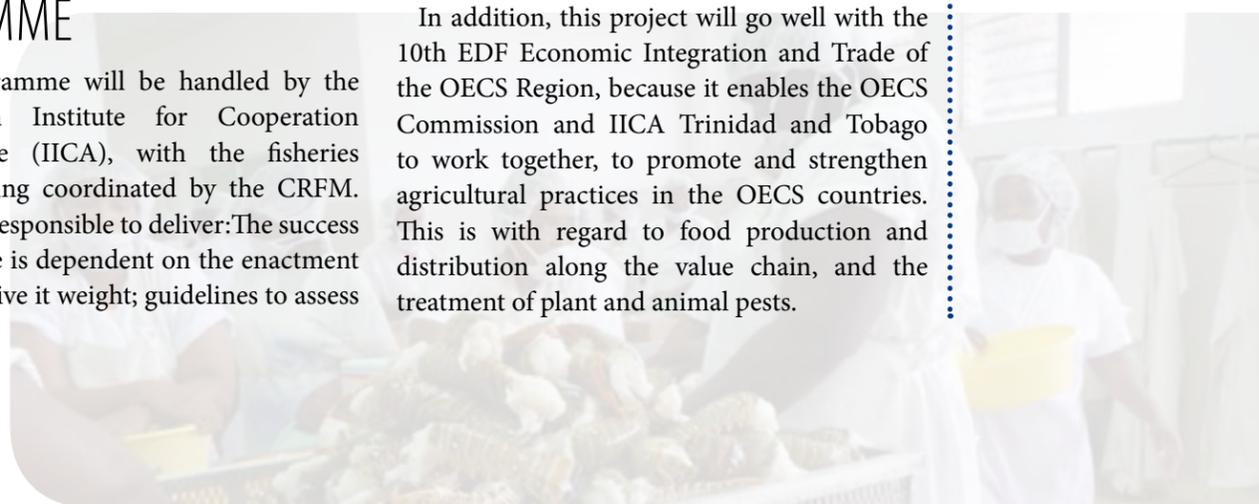
This project has the responsibility to ensure these three important components are achieved through:

- The laws, processes, standards, measures and guidelines for national and regional SPS regimes.
- Strategies and tactics that will be used in coordinating and supporting the implementation of the SPS measures in the SPS CARIFORUM member states
- Training and certification of fishers and processors; and the upgrading of facilities and equipment to meet the SPS requirements of international trade.

HOW SPS IMPLEMENTATION DELIVERS BENEFIT

As a result of the successful implementation of SPS, the CARIFORUM members will be able to supply safe, quality fish and fisheries products that meet domestic needs and international standards. This will, in turn considerably reduce the amounts of products that are rejected by buyers in the export market. Safe and quality fish need proper market. Therefore SPS implementation will see a marked improvement in the marketing and trade of fish and fisheries products from Cariforum member countries.

In addition, this project will go well with the 10th EDF Economic Integration and Trade of the OECS Region, because it enables the OECS Commission and IICA Trinidad and Tobago to work together, to promote and strengthen agricultural practices in the OECS countries. This is with regard to food production and distribution along the value chain, and the treatment of plant and animal pests.



Preparing lobsters for export in Belize. Proper sanitary measures mean more value added.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES AND CRFM'S RESPONSE

ISSUES / CHALLENGE	MAIN SPS PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES
<p>THE WORLD IS MORE FOOD SAFETY-CONSCIOUS</p> <p>As efforts continue towards more trade within the CARIFORUM states at the international level, the fisheries sector faces more pressure from consumer and advocacy groups who continue to demand quality and healthy foods for human consumption.</p>	<p>Proper laws, standards and policies to support sustainable fisheries in the CRFM countries, will be established. This will guide the industry by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spelling out the requirements for fishery product facilities, establishments or factories, • laying down the base for quality and safety assurance systems. • A strong and effective national coordination mechanism will, in the long run: • maximize profits from agricultural and fisheries production, • improve the food safety and quality record of the country • place it in the best place to reach markets both regionally and internationally.
<p>TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND PHYSICAL CAPACITY</p> <p>In order to have effective and efficient systems for agricultural and fisheries health and food safety, there must be strong technical skills amongst fisheries employees and stakeholders, as well as the necessary physical infrastructural capability.</p> <p>THE NEED FOR MORE AWARENESS</p> <p>Many CRFM countries do not really understand the need and importance of SPS measures. As a result of this, not enough monies are set aside for fisheries health and food safety control services. This lack of awareness has also resulted in the introduction of serious pests and invasive fish species (notably the lion fish) into the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several "Train the Trainers" courses are to be planned for regulatory and industry employees on how to develop SPS guidelines. • Fisher folk will be trained in harvesting and handling techniques that will contribute to maintaining of fish stocks and reducing negative impacts on the marine environment. • There will be improvements in proper waste-disposal and usage. • Food safety operational manuals are to be developed and distributed
<p>MANAGEMENT WOES</p> <p>In many CRFM states, the responsibility for managing SPS efforts is spread over a number of agencies. This lack of structure often leads to patchy standards that are harder to enforce and monitor for progress.</p>	<p>Competent authorities will be established for specific areas. This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the efficient and effective delivery of fisheries services to stakeholders, • remove duplication of efforts, • generally make national stakeholders and international trading partners more confident <p>Where it makes more sense to do so financially and time-wise, some SPS operations will be done collectively These include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing SPS legislation, • upgrading and use of laboratories, training, • public education, • establishment of databases and • discussion forums on new and emerging issues, • adoption of positions and input into the international forum and standard setting bodies. <p>Accordingly, the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA's) is a regional agency which was created for the main reason of avoiding duplication of operations that other agencies are already doing.</p>
<p>ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS</p> <p>The biodiversity of the ecosystems in the region provide a rich source of income for many local fisher-folk; however, they are very fragile, often being severely affected by natural disasters such as hurricanes.</p>	<p>Many wide-ranging weather and climate related early warning systems will be developed for the agriculture sector including the fisheries sub-sector. Therefore, this will contribute significantly to a decrease in the financial losses related to natural disasters.</p>

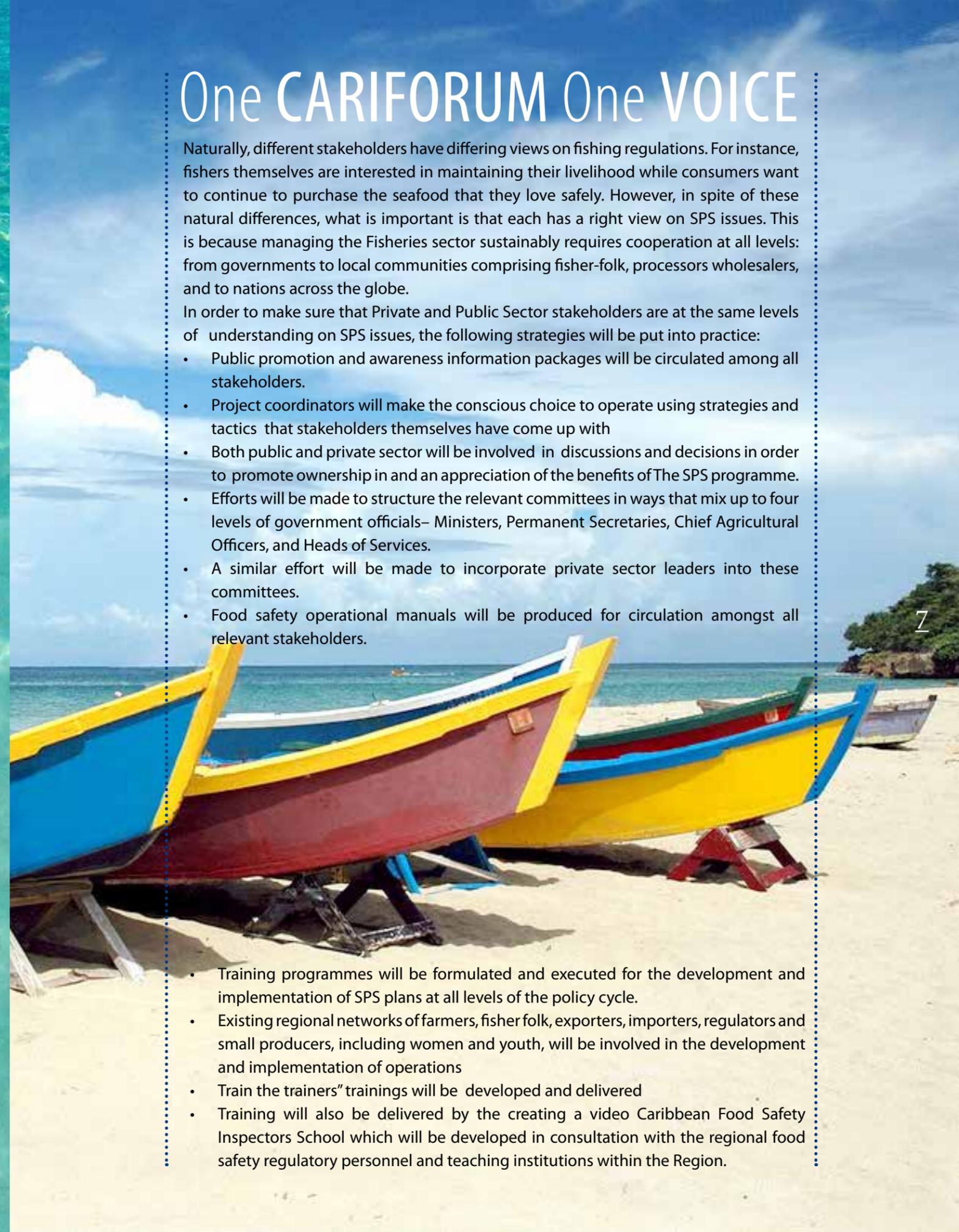
One CARIFORUM One VOICE

Naturally, different stakeholders have differing views on fishing regulations. For instance, fishers themselves are interested in maintaining their livelihood while consumers want to continue to purchase the seafood that they love safely. However, in spite of these natural differences, what is important is that each has a right view on SPS issues. This is because managing the Fisheries sector sustainably requires cooperation at all levels: from governments to local communities comprising fisher-folk, processors wholesalers, and to nations across the globe.

In order to make sure that Private and Public Sector stakeholders are at the same levels of understanding on SPS issues, the following strategies will be put into practice:

- Public promotion and awareness information packages will be circulated among all stakeholders.
- Project coordinators will make the conscious choice to operate using strategies and tactics that stakeholders themselves have come up with
- Both public and private sector will be involved in discussions and decisions in order to promote ownership in and an appreciation of the benefits of The SPS programme.
- Efforts will be made to structure the relevant committees in ways that mix up to four levels of government officials– Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Chief Agricultural Officers, and Heads of Services.
- A similar effort will be made to incorporate private sector leaders into these committees.
- Food safety operational manuals will be produced for circulation amongst all relevant stakeholders.

- Training programmes will be formulated and executed for the development and implementation of SPS plans at all levels of the policy cycle.
- Existing regional networks of farmers, fisher folk, exporters, importers, regulators and small producers, including women and youth, will be involved in the development and implementation of operations
- Train the trainers" trainings will be developed and delivered
- Training will also be delivered by the creating a video Caribbean Food Safety Inspectors School which will be developed in consultation with the regional food safety regulatory personnel and teaching institutions within the Region.





European Union 10th EDF
Support to the Forum of Caribbean States in the implementation of the
commitments undertaken under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)