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SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AND PLANT HEALTH PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN MAURITIUS

June 2019

SDGs:



Countries:

Mauritius

Project Codes:

TCP/MAR/3601

FAO Contribution:

USD 380 000

Duration:

1 December 2016 – 31 March 2019

Contact Info:

FAO Representation in Mauritius

FAO-MG@fao.org

Implementing Partner

Ministry of Agro-Industry and Fisheries (MOAIFS).

Beneficiaries

Relevant ministries, chambers of commerce, extension workers and researchers, input dealers, exporters, diagnostic service providers, food business operators, farmers, traders and consumers.

Country Programming Framework

Priority Area B “Promote sustainable agriculture for food and nutrition security”. Outcome: Improved enabling policy, legal and institutional environment for evidence-based decision-making in support of a sustainable increase in agriculture production governance framework related to land strengthened agricultural statistic system. Output: Institutional capacities for monitoring, surveillance, early warning and prevention of animal and plant diseases and pests improved.



BACKGROUND

Crop production in the Republic of Mauritius is constrained by outbreaks of pests and diseases. The lack of early warning systems to alert decision-makers and farmers to emerging threats compromises agricultural production and food safety, and leads to a reliance on the use of agrochemicals that harm the environment and increase the risk of residue in produce. In addition, Mauritius imports around 77 percent of its food requirements. As a result, there is a high risk of unsafe food and plant and animal pests and diseases entering the country, where capacity to detect, analyse and quarantine and to identify and respond to food hazards and pests is low.

The Government has endeavoured to enhance food security and safety. However, insufficient support has been given to strengthening institutional surveillance, diagnostic, control and management capacities for food safety and plant health systems. The Government thus sought assistance from FAO to improve food security and safety through sustainable agriculture. The project would do this by enhancing the capacity of plant protection and food safety control systems to provide improved public services, by formulating and implementing international agreements, regulations and standards to promote transparent markets, and by enhancing market opportunities and mechanisms to monitor plant pests and diseases, assess risks and deliver timely early warning.

IMPACT

Thanks to the project, control systems are now in a position to provide public services to improve plant health protection and food safety. The gains made under the project, including enhanced linkages among private and public-sector stakeholders, local expertise and improved capacity and greater ownership by local stakeholders, will ensure the sustainability of agriculture sector strategies and interventions designed to enhance food security and safety.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

The project was implemented by existing institutions in the plant health and food safety systems in Mauritius, with support from consultants. Project activities focused on building the capacity of key players in public-sector institutions involved in food safety and plant health systems through training workshops, the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for treatment facilities and inspections, the drafting of regulations and the creation of awareness among key stakeholders of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues. The project also strengthened the food safety contact point, established and supported the plant health secretariat, established a national SPS coordinating committee and supported its participation in SPS forums. Finally, it established functional and inclusive surveillance networks for plant pests and diseases and for the monitoring of food safety activities, including a biosecurity plan and a national survey of key plant pests. These mechanisms were established to identify and monitor plant pests and diseases and food contaminants and to deliver integrated timely early warning.

IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK PLAN

The project was implemented by institutions in the plant health and food safety systems in Mauritius, with support from consultants recruited by the project. Partner institutions included MOAIFS, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life (MOHQL), the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries, Shipping and Outer Islands. The original duration of the project was 24 months. Following delays caused by slow administrative procedures linked to the recruitment of a project coordinator, a request was made for a no-cost project extension. This was granted in June 2018. The project outcome regarding the formulation of international agreements, mechanisms and standards was not covered by the project as responsibility for this was assumed by the National Biosafety Committee.

FOLLOW-UP FOR GOVERNMENT ATTENTION

The skills acquired through training should be shared and implemented. Technical staff need to participate regularly in local, regional and international workshops in order to keep abreast in the field of food safety. Awareness workshops on SPS issues should also be carried out at regular intervals. In addition, the Ministry should support the participation of relevant staff in regional SPS forums and awareness creation workshops. The SOPs developed by the project need to be approved by the Ministry and adopted for routine use. The National Plant Protection Office (NPPO) should ensure that the new national SPS committee is set up, with representatives from the Mauritius Sugarcane Industry Research Institute (MSIRI) and importers. The biosecurity plan developed by the project should be implemented by relevant partners and stakeholders. The pest survey also needs to be ongoing and the pest list regularly updated in line with the biosecurity plan and the Plant Protection Act.



SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

The Ministry is committed to improved coordination of all partners involved in the crop protection sector. This will prevent duplication of activities, and ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. A number of the working documents produced under the project will also remain available as reference documents.

2. Environmental sustainability

The early detection and prevention of pests and diseases will lead to a more judicious and responsible use of pesticides, as well as contributing to environmental sustainability.

3. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

The implementation of the biosecurity plan elaborated under the project will better prepare the country against pest and disease outbreaks and so contribute to improving food security.

4. Technological sustainability

The NPPO laboratory benefited from modern equipment that can be used for rapid disease diagnosis. This will help to reduce the quarantine period and increase food production.

The early detection and prevention of entry of pests and diseases will contribute to good agricultural practices with regard to the use of chemical pesticides.

5. Economic sustainability

The areas of plant health and food safety have government support and are considered priority sectors in the country. Although implementation of the biosecurity plan could be carried out from the national budget, support from development partners might help to ensure that the plan is regularly updated.

DOCUMENTS AND OUTREACH PRODUCTS

- ❑ Operations manual: Strengthening the plant health protection system in Mauritius. Rose Njeru, Asha Dookun Saumtally and Nawshad Joomun. May 2018. 31 pp.
- ❑ Training manual: Strengthening the plant health protection system in Mauritius. Rose Njeru, Asha Dookun Saumtally and Nawshad Joomun. May 2018. 65 pp.
- ❑ Wood packaging material inspection and certification manual. Chiluba Mwape and Ambinintsoa Bemananjara. August 2018. 34 pp.
- ❑ Phytosanitary import inspection manual. Chiluba Mwape and Ambinintsoa Bemananjara. August 2018. 10 pp.
- ❑ Phytosanitary export inspection and inspection manual and certification. Chiluba Mwape and Ambinintsoa Bemananjara. August 2018. 30 pp.
- ❑ Nematology training manual. Compiled by Zibusiso Sibanda. Contributors: J. Kimenju, Z. Sibanda, H. Talwana and W. Wanjohi. September 2018. 6 pp.
- ❑ Nematology practical manual. Compiled by Zibusiso Sibanda. Contributors: J. Kimenju, Z. Sibanda, H. Talwana and W. Wanjohi. September 2018. 23 pp.
- ❑ Leaflet on top ten aflatoxin questions. Partnership for Aflatoxin in Africa (PACA). September 2018.
- ❑ Leaflet on PACA 1 results and impacts, PACA. September 2018.
- ❑ Roll-up banner for final workshop. MOAIFS. March 2019.
- ❑ Pest and disease survey report on selected crops in Mauritius and Rodrigues, April 2019, 5 pp.
- ❑ National biosecurity plan for Mauritius. Chiluba Mwape and Peter Sinyangwe. May 2019. 62 pp.



ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	Improved food security and safety through sustainable agriculture in Mauritius		
Outcome 1	International agreements, mechanisms and standards that promote more efficient and inclusive trade and markets are formulated and implemented in Mauritius		
	Indicator	At least two regulations related to International trade to conform to international trade agreements formulated.	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	Not covered under project as formulation needed to be done at Ministry level. Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) Act being updated by MOAIFS, Food Act (1998) currently under review by MOHQL, Plant Protection Act (2006) expected to be updated by the end of 2019.	
Outcome 2	Improved capacity to deliver regular information and trigger timely actions against potential, known and emerging plant pests and diseases and food contaminants to agriculture, food and nutrition		
	Indicator	Early warning alerts issued. Reports of reduced cases of emerging and known plant pests and diseases. Reports of reduced cases of food contamination. Reports of reduced agro-chemical residues in products.	
	Baseline	Three early warning alert systems for plant pests (white grub and white fly, and partial system for late blight) currently available.	
	End Target	Three early warning alerts for plant pests and two for food hazards issued.	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	75% achieved, poor coordination between institutions and authorities involved in surveillance. Implementation of biosecurity plan and establishment of National Biosafety Committee should contribute to better coordination of activities and assignment of responsibilities among major actors.	
Output 1	Capacity of plant protection and food safety control institutions to provide public services related to plant health protection and food safety enhanced		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of documents produced	Seven documents produced: one operations manual and one training manual on plant pests and diseases; one training manual and one reference manual on plant parasitic nematology; three SOPs prepared for NPPO	Partially (80%)
	Baseline	No documents	
Comments	80%. Regulations under GMO Act being taken care of by MOAIFS		
Activity 1.1	Training workshop 1		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Training carried out in plant pests, pest survey, pest risk analysis, surveillance in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Hands-on training provided in molecular diagnosis of plant pests and diseases and in plant parasitic nematology. One candidate sponsored for training in Fusarium wilt of banana, which is a quarantine pest.	
Activity 1.2	Training workshop 2		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Workshop held on general food hazards and food safety survey techniques. Technical staff need to regularly participate in local/regional/international workshops in order to keep abreast in the field of food safety.	
Activity 1.3	Development of standard operating procedures and training on inspection		
	Achieved	Partially (905)	
	Comments	Three SOPs prepared for the NPPO: export certification, import inspection and wood packaging certification. Training on Inspection at ports of entry done. SOPs need to be approved by the Ministry and adopted for routine use by NPPO.	
Activity 1.4	Drafting of regulations		
	Achieved	No	
	Comments	The drafting of regulations is being done at Ministry level under the guidance of the National Biosafety Committee.	

Activity 1.5	Training workshop		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Awareness workshop on SPS issues carried out in Mauritius and Rodrigues with relevant stakeholders. Awareness workshops on SPS issues to be carried out at regular intervals.	
Output 2	Capacity of plant protection and food safety control systems enhanced		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of activities completed	Number and extent of activities completed	Partially (75%)
Baseline	A crop biosecurity committee already exists at level of NPPO and a National Codex Committee exists at the level of the Food Technology Laboratory.		
Comments	Training and equipment acquired need to be put to routine use and networks established need to be strengthened and formalized. National Crop Biosecurity and Codex Committees need to meet regularly and the Ministry needs to be updated on issues of national importance.		
Activity 2.1	Strengthen Codex Enquiry Point and Food Safety Committee		
	Achieved	Partially (75%)	
	Comments	Basic Infrastructure provided, as well as training in role and functions of Codex Enquiry Point. Application for grant submitted to FAO for support to set up a Web site and run the enquiry point. Ministry needs to support participation of relevant staff in regional SPS forums and awareness creation workshops.	
Activity 2.2	Ministry needs to support participation of relevant staff in regional SPS forums and awareness creation workshops		
	Achieved	Partially (75%)	
	Comments	Basic infrastructure and laboratory equipment provided to upgrade facilities at NPPO. Sponsored participation of Head of NPPO at International Plant Protection Convention regional workshop in September 2018.	
Activity 2.3	Strengthen Animal Health Enquiry Point		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Basic infrastructure provided in line with budget availability under the project. Ministry to seek alternative funding to support operation of animal health enquiry point.	
Activity 2.4	Establish National SPS Coordinating Committee		
	Achieved	Partially (50%)	
	Comments	Request submitted to the Ministry. NPPO expected to conduct follow-up and ensure that new National SPS Committee is set up and comprises representatives from MSIRI and importers.	
Activity 2.5	Participation by one MSIRI staff member at the Biennial Regional Southern Africa Development Community sugarcane biosecurity working group		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Sponsored participation of one MSIRI staff member at International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists Pathology Workshop in Coimbatore, India, September 2018.	

Output 3	Mechanisms to identify and monitor plant pests and diseases and food contaminants and to deliver integrated timely early warning established		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of documents produced	1 National biosecurity plan drafted	Yes
Comments	Biosecurity plan developed needs to be implemented by relevant partners and stakeholders.		
Activity 3.1	Establish a surveillance unit to coordinate the activities		
	Achieved	Partially (50%)	
	Comments	Structure proposed in national biosecurity plan. Proposals made in biosecurity plan need to be implemented and monitored. Implementation and follow-up to be done by relevant stakeholders.	
Activity 3.2	Conduct training for network		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Regular training to be held for new staff and to maintain collaboration among relevant institutions.	
Activity 3.3	Conduct national survey of key plant pests		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Activity carried out on selected crops only. Pest survey needs to be ongoing and pest list regularly updated in line with biosecurity plan and Plant Protection Act.	

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