

# Application of the Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis Framework to inform SPS Decision Making in Belize

STDF/PG/365



<b>Partners</b>	Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) Belize Ministry of Natural Resources & Agriculture Belize Trade & Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)
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## A new approach to prioritize SPS investments

Belize exports a range of agri-food commodities. Like many small developing countries seeking to expand exports and access higher-value markets, Belize faces extensive demands to enhance SPS capacity. However, resources are insufficient to finance all the identified needs, and difficult choices and decisions must be made. To inform decision-making processes, public and private sector stakeholders used a new decision-support tool, developed by the STDF and based on Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA), to prioritize investment options offering the greatest returns in terms of trade and other public policy objectives.

### Key Objective

To prioritize SPS capacity building options (investments) in Belize and facilitate the development of a five-year strategic SPS plan.

### Project Achievements

#### *Diverse SPS capacity building needs (investments) prioritized*

Under this project, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), in close collaboration with relevant national stakeholders, applied a new decision-support tool to prioritize eight distinct SPS capacity building needs, based on clearly articulated decision criteria and weights. The capacity building needs were identified on the basis of stakeholder inputs and previous work carried out by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and others to evaluate SPS-related capacity building needs. In addition to the report produced, which is being fed into the development of a prioritized action plan to enhance SPS capacity, the complete dossier of SPS information and data compiled during the process is a useful output.

#### *Evidence to convince policy-makers and attract resources for SPS capacity building*

Data collection and analytical work carried out under this project helped to communicate the trade-related impacts of particular SPS investments to policy-makers at a glance. Clear and concise charts and graphs illustrated the returns on different types of investment, providing evidence to convince policy-makers of the value of addressing particular SPS-related issues and attract additional resources from the national budget. Within six months of the project's conclusion, ongoing investments to improve animal health controls for live cattle exports opened up new exports to Mexico. The analysis also revealed some oversights in previous work to estimate the costs of some SPS investments, which enabled missing data to be incorporated so that resources could be allocated most effectively.

#### *Enhanced dialogue and transparency in SPS priority-setting*

The project built on the strong relationships BAHA had already developed with other government agencies and the private sector. Relevant government agencies, the private sector and other shareholders with an interest in SPS issues were actively consulted on their views and perspectives on the range of SPS investment options to be considered, as well as decision criteria and weights to be used to prioritize the different options. Open discussions enhanced stakeholders' appreciation of what is required to gain and maintain market access for agri-food products, the role of BAHA in this regard, and the importance of adequate funding to ensure that functions are carried out effectively. BAHA expects that this will translate into greater support for its work in the future.

#### *Decision-support tool to be re-used by BAHA and expanded to other areas*

Based on the initial success of this project, BAHA expects to re-use this decision-support tool periodically in the future as SPS needs evolve. BAHA has plans to use this tool to support the development of a new strategic plan. It may also be used to prioritize investments within food safety, animal health and/or plant health. Other parts of government have indicated their interest to use this approach themselves. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture intends to use this tool to prioritize its programmes related to food and nutrition security, and foreign exchange earnings. The Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) will use it to prioritize areas for intervention with micro and small and medium-sized enterprises.



## Standards and Trade Development Facility

### Lessons Learned

#### *SPS authorities should drive and lead the process*

Use of the MCDA framework is enhanced when the SPS authorities have the capacity to effectively engage relevant public and private sector stakeholders and lead the data collection, analysis and review process. Some initial training is beneficial to enable national SPS authorities to understand the scope and limits of this prioritization tool, guide the various stakeholders involved through the steps involved (including to distinguish between genuine SPS needs and other non-SPS issues), obtain and incorporate the “best” available data, address issues related to data quality, utilize the computer software, and effectively communicate the results.

#### *Application of existing capacity evaluation tools enhances outcomes*

Access to the findings of other capacity evaluation frameworks, particularly the IPPC’s Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Tool, the OIE’s Tools for the Evaluation of the Performance of Veterinary Services (OIE-PVS) and Gap Analysis, and IICA’s Performance, Vision and Strategy (PVS) Tools, is beneficial to identify important SPS-related capacity needs, which should be considered in the prioritization of SPS investments using the MCDA framework.

#### *Good stakeholder representation and transparency is important*

Effective participation by the public and private sector enhances the process of using this decision-support tool and the results achieved. It also helps to improve access to available data and information, and to build ownership and support for follow-up. While SPS technical expertise is essential, including experts with a broader perspective on trade and socio-economic development enriches the analysis. Clearly documenting and sharing all the data and information used is key so that stakeholders can query the findings, and perceptions of bias are avoided. Decision criteria and weights should be assigned objectively to rule out subjectivity.

#### *An export-oriented tool for prioritizing SPS investments on an ongoing basis*

Use of the MCDA framework in Belize focused on gaps in SPS capacity that impede exports of specific agri-food products to particular markets. Experiences indicate that the framework could also be used, with minor modifications, to prioritize SPS capacity building needs related to both imports and exports, or in other areas. Application of this tool should not be seen as a one-off exercise, but rather as an approach which can be re-used to inform and enhance decision-making processes on an ongoing basis.

### Additional Resources

- MCDA report for Belize
- Final project report

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