



AQUACULTURE – TRADE ISSUES

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The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the intergovernmental organisation with the legal power to encourage adherence to international standards and mediate trade disputes. The WTO, with the signing of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), recognises the OIE as the reference standard setting organisation for animal health and zoonoses. To assist with the implementation of the SPS Agreement and facilitate trade, the WTO has created the SPS Committee. In addition, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), founded by the OIE, the WTO, FAO, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, provides a mechanism for donors to coordinate the support of projects aimed at improving Members' capacities to meet the obligations of WTO Membership.

Good governance and the credibility of national Veterinary Services are essential components in safe trade, and are ultimately demonstrated when importing countries accept official health certification provided by exporting countries. The responsibility for aquatic animal health may rest fully or partially with the Veterinary Services, or other governmental agencies may have this role. Regardless of the involvement of veterinarians in the Aquatic Animal Health Services (AAHS), it is clear that OIE standards can only be implemented effectively and health certification accepted internationally if the AAHS can demonstrate their effectiveness and credibility in a transparent manner. This is the global good offered to countries entering the OIE PVS Pathway, i.e. a transparent means to demonstrate the steps taken to assure good governance of the veterinary services or the AAHS. Ultimately, the biggest challenge for the international community is to create the incentives and generate the political will for strengthening VS and AAHS and providing for the universal recognition and application of the established international sanitary standards and, through this, fair and safe trade.

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