

**Press Release N^o. 183 /2014****AUC launches continental SPS cluster committee**

Midrand, South Africa- August 21, 2014: The African Union Commission today launched the Continental Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee, to chart a roadmap and guidelines for AU member States to protect human, animal and plant life from risks arising from the entry or spread of pests, from plant- or animal-borne pests or diseases, or from additives, contaminants, toxins, or disease-causing organisms in foods, beverages and foodstuffs.



The committee led by the AUC's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) comprises representatives from sister departments of the AUC, the New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency and representatives from the Regional Economic Communities from across Africa. Representatives from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the

Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the AUC's Departments of Social Affairs and Trade and Industry, respectively are attending the two day meeting.

Opening the meeting to launch the committee, Dr. Josue Dione, Advisor to DREA Commissioner, H.E Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, highlighted the importance of concerted efforts to have a continental approach for tackling SPS issues and activities in Africa.

He said, "The AUC recognizes that addressing SPS issues is critical in boosting intra Africa trade and economic growth as articulated under pillar two and three of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)."

The continental SPS cluster committee is expected by the end of the two days to review and endorse the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the committee that was developed by the DREA-lead AU-SPS Cluster. The meeting will also develop a roadmap for the Continental SPS Committee and agree on the modus operandi of the Committee.

The launch of the committee was preceded by a two day meeting of the DREA-led AU-SPS cluster meeting, which was held to review the status of implementation of SPS activities by DREA and to review the Implementation of the Malabo AU Summit Decisions related to SPS and emerging issues.

At the AUC, a Central SPS-Cluster coordination unit based at the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture provides guidance on seamless implementation of SPS programs in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Agreement. WTO SPS Agreement calls for governments to base their SPS measures on international standards, guidelines, and recommendations developed by international standard setting organizations (FAO, WHO and Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex). Promoting the use of international standards facilitates trade by harmonizing different Members' SPS measures on as wide a basis as possible.

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