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**CHAPTER 7**

**SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

**Article 7.1: Definitions**

1. The definitions in Annex A of the SPS Agreement are incorporated into this Chapter and shall form part of this Chapter, *mutatis mutandis*.
2. In addition, for the purposes of this Chapter:

**competent authority** means a government body of each Party responsible for measures and matters referred to in this Chapter;

**emergency measure** means a sanitary or phytosanitary measure that is applied by an importing Party to another Party to address an urgent problem of human, animal or plant life or health protection that arises or threatens to arise in the Party applying the measure;

**import check** means an inspection, examination, sampling, review of documentation, test or procedure, including laboratory, organoleptic or identity, conducted at the border by an importing Party or its representative to determine if a consignment complies<sup>1</sup> with the sanitary and phytosanitary requirements of the importing Party;

**import programme** means mandatory sanitary or phytosanitary policies, procedures or requirements of an importing Party that govern the importation of goods;

**primary representative** means the government body of a Party that is responsible for the implementation of this Chapter and the coordination of that Party's participation in Committee activities under Article 7.5 (Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures);

**risk analysis** means the process that consists of three components: risk assessment; risk management; and risk communication;

**risk communication** means the exchange of information and opinions concerning risk and risk-related factors between risk assessors, risk managers, consumers and other interested parties; and

**risk management** means the weighing of policy alternatives in light of the results of risk assessment and, if required, selecting and implementing appropriate control options, including regulatory measures.

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<sup>1</sup> For greater certainty, the Parties recognise that import checks are one of many tools available to assess compliance with an importing Party's sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

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**Article 7.2: Objectives**

The objectives of this Chapter are to:

- (a) protect human, animal or plant life or health in the territories of the Parties while facilitating and expanding trade by utilising a variety of means to address and seek to resolve sanitary and phytosanitary issues;
- (b) reinforce and build on the SPS Agreement;
- (c) strengthen communication, consultation and cooperation between the Parties, and particularly between the Parties' competent authorities and primary representatives;
- (d) ensure that sanitary or phytosanitary measures implemented by a Party do not create unjustified obstacles to trade;
- (e) enhance transparency in and understanding of the application of each Party's sanitary and phytosanitary measures; and
- (f) encourage the development and adoption of international standards, guidelines and recommendations, and promote their implementation by the Parties.

**Article 7.3: Scope**

1. This Chapter shall apply to all sanitary and phytosanitary measures of a Party that may, directly or indirectly, affect trade between the Parties.
2. Nothing in this Chapter prevents a Party from adopting or maintaining halal requirements for food and food products in accordance with Islamic law.

**Article 7.4: General Provisions**

1. The Parties affirm their rights and obligations under the SPS Agreement.
2. Nothing in this Agreement shall limit the rights and obligations that each Party has under the SPS Agreement.

**Article 7.5: Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

1. For the purposes of the effective implementation and operation of this Chapter, the Parties hereby establish a Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (Committee), composed of government representatives of each Party responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary matters.
2. The objectives of the Committee are to:

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- (a) enhance each Party's implementation of this Chapter;
  - (b) consider sanitary and phytosanitary matters of mutual interest; and
  - (c) enhance communication and cooperation on sanitary and phytosanitary matters.
3. The Committee:
- (a) shall provide a forum to improve the Parties' understanding of sanitary and phytosanitary issues that relate to the implementation of the SPS Agreement and this Chapter;
  - (b) shall provide a forum to enhance mutual understanding of each Party's sanitary and phytosanitary measures and the regulatory processes that relate to those measures;
  - (c) shall exchange information on the implementation of this Chapter;
  - (d) shall determine the appropriate means, which may include ad hoc working groups, to undertake specific tasks related to the functions of the Committee;
  - (e) may identify and develop technical assistance and cooperation projects between the Parties on sanitary and phytosanitary measures;
  - (f) may serve as a forum for a Party to share information on a sanitary or phytosanitary issue that has arisen between it and another Party or Parties, provided that the Parties between which the issue has arisen have first attempted to address the issue through discussions between themselves; and
  - (g) may consult on matters and positions for the meetings of the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures established under Article 12 of the SPS Agreement (WTO SPS Committee), and meetings held under the auspices of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the International Plant Protection Convention.
4. The Committee shall establish its terms of reference at its first meeting and may revise those terms as needed.
5. The Committee shall meet within one year of the date of entry into force of this Agreement and once a year thereafter unless Parties agree otherwise.

**Article 7.6: Competent Authorities and Contact Points**

Each Party shall provide the other Parties with a written description of the sanitary and phytosanitary responsibilities of its competent authorities and contact points within each

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of these authorities and identify its primary representative within 60 days of the date of entry into force of this Agreement for that Party. Each Party shall keep this information up to date.

**Article 7.7: Adaptation to Regional Conditions, Including Pest- or Disease-Free Areas and Areas of Low Pest or Disease Prevalence**

1. The Parties recognise that adaptation to regional conditions, including regionalisation, zoning and compartmentalisation, is an important means to facilitate trade.
2. The Parties shall take into account the relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
3. The Parties may cooperate on the recognition of pest- or disease-free areas, and areas of low pest or disease prevalence with the objective of acquiring confidence in the procedures followed by each Party for the recognition of pest- or disease-free areas, and areas of low pest or disease prevalence.
4. When an importing Party receives a request for a determination of regional conditions from an exporting Party and determines that the information provided by the exporting Party is sufficient, it shall initiate an assessment within a reasonable period of time.
5. When an importing Party commences an assessment of a request for a determination of regional conditions under paragraph 4, that Party shall promptly, on request of the exporting Party, explain its process for making the determination of regional conditions.
6. On request of the exporting Party, the importing Party shall inform the exporting Party of the status of the assessment of the exporting Party's request for a determination of regional conditions.
7. When an importing Party adopts a measure that recognises specific regional conditions of an exporting Party, the importing Party shall communicate that measure to the exporting Party in writing and implement the measure within a reasonable period of time.
8. The importing and exporting Parties involved in a particular determination may also decide in advance the risk management measures that will apply to trade between them in the event of a change in the status.
9. The Parties involved in a determination recognising regional conditions are encouraged, if mutually agreed, to report the outcome to the Committee.
10. If the evaluation of the evidence provided by the exporting Party does not result in a determination to recognise pest- or disease-free areas, or areas of low pest and disease prevalence, the importing Party shall provide the exporting Party with the rationale for its determination.
11. If there is an incident that results in the importing Party modifying or revoking the determination recognising regional conditions, on request of the exporting Party, the Parties involved shall cooperate to assess whether the determination can be reinstated.

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**Article 7.8: Equivalence**

1. The Parties acknowledge that recognition of the equivalence of sanitary and phytosanitary measures is an important means to facilitate trade. Further to Article 4 of the SPS Agreement, the Parties shall apply equivalence to a group of measures or on a systems-wide basis, to the extent feasible and appropriate. In determining the equivalence of a specific sanitary or phytosanitary measure, group of measures or on a systems-wide basis, each Party shall take into account the relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
2. On request of the exporting Party, the importing Party shall explain the objective and rationale of its sanitary or phytosanitary measure and clearly identify the risk the sanitary or phytosanitary measure is intended to address.
3. When an importing Party receives a request for an equivalence assessment and determines that the information provided by the exporting Party is sufficient, it shall initiate the equivalence assessment within a reasonable period of time.
4. When an importing Party commences an equivalence assessment, that Party shall promptly, on request of the exporting Party, explain its equivalence process and plan for making the equivalence determination and, if the determination results in recognition, for enabling trade.
5. In determining the equivalence of a sanitary or phytosanitary measure, an importing Party shall take into account available knowledge, information and relevant experience, as well as the regulatory competence of the exporting Party.
6. The importing Party shall recognise the equivalence of a sanitary or phytosanitary measure if the exporting Party objectively demonstrates to the importing Party that the exporting Party's measure:
  - (a) achieves the same level of protection as the importing Party's measure; or
  - (b) has the same effect in achieving the objective as the importing Party's measure.<sup>2</sup>
7. When an importing Party adopts a measure that recognises the equivalence of an exporting Party's specific sanitary or phytosanitary measure, group of measures or measures on a systems-wide basis, the importing Party shall communicate the measure it has adopted to the exporting Party in writing and implement the measure within a reasonable period of time.
8. The Parties involved in an equivalence determination that results in recognition are encouraged, if mutually agreed, to report the outcome to the Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> No Party shall have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) for this subparagraph.

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9. If an equivalence determination does not result in recognition by the importing Party, the importing Party shall provide the exporting Party with the rationale for its decision.

**Article 7.9: Science and Risk Analysis**

1. The Parties recognise the importance of ensuring that their respective sanitary and phytosanitary measures are based on scientific principles.

2. Each Party shall ensure that its sanitary and phytosanitary measures either conform to the relevant international standards, guidelines or recommendations or, if its sanitary and phytosanitary measures do not conform to international standards, guidelines or recommendations, that they are based on documented and objective scientific evidence that is rationally related to the measures, while recognising the Parties' obligations regarding assessment of risk under Article 5 of the SPS Agreement.<sup>3</sup>

3. Recognising the Parties' rights and obligations under the relevant provisions of the SPS Agreement, nothing in this Chapter shall be construed to prevent a Party from:

- (a) establishing the level of protection it determines to be appropriate;
- (b) establishing or maintaining an approval procedure that requires a risk analysis to be conducted before the Party grants a product access to its market; or
- (c) adopting or maintaining a sanitary or phytosanitary measure on a provisional basis.

4. Each Party shall:

- (a) ensure that its sanitary and phytosanitary measures do not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate between Parties where identical or similar conditions prevail, including between its own territory and that of other Parties; and
- (b) conduct its risk analysis in a manner that is documented and that provides interested persons and other Parties an opportunity to comment, in a manner to be determined by that Party<sup>4</sup>.

5. Each Party shall ensure that each risk assessment it conducts is appropriate to the circumstances of the risk at issue and takes into account reasonably available and relevant scientific data, including qualitative and quantitative information.

6. When conducting its risk analysis, each Party shall:

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<sup>3</sup> No Party shall have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) for this paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> For greater certainty, paragraph 4(b) applies only to a risk analysis for a sanitary or phytosanitary measure that constitutes a sanitary or phytosanitary regulation for the purposes of Annex B of the SPS Agreement.

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- (a) take into account relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations;
- (b) consider risk management options that are not more trade restrictive<sup>5</sup> than required, including the facilitation of trade by not taking any measure, to achieve the level of protection that the Party has determined to be appropriate; and
- (c) select a risk management option that is not more trade restrictive than required to achieve the sanitary or phytosanitary objective, taking into account technical and economic feasibility.

7. If an importing Party requires a risk analysis to evaluate a request from an exporting Party to authorise importation of a good of that exporting Party, the importing Party shall provide, on request of the exporting Party, an explanation of the information required for the risk assessment. On receipt of the required information from the exporting Party, the importing Party shall endeavour to facilitate the evaluation of the request for authorisation by scheduling work on this request in accordance with the procedures, policies, resources, and laws and regulations of the importing Party.

8. On request of the exporting Party, the importing Party shall inform the exporting Party of the progress of a specific risk analysis request, and of any delay that may occur during the process.

9. If the importing Party, as a result of a risk analysis, adopts a sanitary or phytosanitary measure that allows trade to commence or resume, the importing Party shall implement the measure within a reasonable period of time.

10. Without prejudice to Article 7.14 (Emergency Measures), no Party shall stop the importation of a good of another Party solely for the reason that the importing Party is undertaking a review of its sanitary or phytosanitary measure, if the importing Party permitted the importation of that good of the other Party when the review was initiated.

**Article 7.10: Audits<sup>6</sup>**

1. To determine an exporting Party's ability to provide required assurances and meet the sanitary and phytosanitary measures of the importing Party, each importing Party shall have the right, subject to this Article, to audit the exporting Party's competent authorities and associated or designated inspection systems. That audit may include an assessment of the

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of paragraphs 6(b) and 6(c), a risk management option is not more trade-restrictive than required unless there is another option reasonably available, taking into account technical and economic feasibility, that achieves the appropriate level of sanitary or phytosanitary protection and is significantly less restrictive to trade.

<sup>6</sup> For greater certainty, nothing in this Article prevents an importing Party from performing an inspection of a facility for the purposes of determining if the facility conforms with the importing Party's sanitary or phytosanitary requirements or conforms with sanitary or phytosanitary requirements that the importing Party has determined to be equivalent to its sanitary or phytosanitary requirements.

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competent authorities' control programmes, including: if appropriate, reviews of the inspection and audit programmes; and on-site inspections of facilities.

2. An audit shall be systems-based and designed to check the effectiveness of the regulatory controls of the competent authorities of the exporting Party.

3. In undertaking an audit, a Party shall take into account relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.

4. Prior to the commencement of an audit, the importing Party and exporting Party involved shall discuss the rationale and decide: the objectives and scope of the audit; the criteria or requirements against which the exporting Party will be assessed; and the itinerary and procedures for conducting the audit.

5. The auditing Party shall provide the audited Party the opportunity to comment on the findings of the audit and take any such comments into account before the auditing Party makes its conclusions and takes any action. The auditing Party shall provide a report setting out its conclusions in writing to the audited Party within a reasonable period of time.

6. A decision or action taken by the auditing Party as a result of the audit shall be supported by objective evidence and data that can be verified, taking into account the auditing Party's knowledge of, relevant experience with, and confidence in, the audited Party. This objective evidence and data shall be provided to the audited Party on request.

7. The costs incurred by the auditing Party shall be borne by the auditing Party, unless both Parties decide otherwise.

8. The auditing Party and audited Party shall each ensure that procedures are in place to prevent the disclosure of confidential information that is acquired during the audit process.

**Article 7.11: Import Checks**

1. Each Party shall ensure that its import programmes are based on the risks associated with importations, and the import checks are carried out without undue delay.<sup>7</sup>

2. A Party shall make available to another Party, on request, information on its import procedures and its basis for determining the nature and frequency of import checks, including the factors it considers to determine the risks associated with importations.

3. A Party may amend the frequency of its import checks as a result of experience gained through import checks or as a result of actions or discussions provided for in this Chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> For greater certainty, nothing in this Article prohibits a Party from performing import checks to obtain information to assess risk or to determine the need for, develop or periodically review a risk-based import programme.



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4. An importing Party shall provide to another Party, on request, information regarding the analytical methods, quality controls, sampling procedures and facilities that the importing Party uses to test a good. The importing Party shall ensure that any testing is conducted using appropriate and validated methods in a facility that operates under a quality assurance programme that is consistent with international laboratory standards. The importing Party shall maintain physical or electronic documentation regarding the identification, collection, sampling, transportation and storage of the test sample, and the analytical methods used on the test sample.

5. An importing Party shall ensure that its final decision in response to a finding of non-conformity with the importing Party's sanitary or phytosanitary measure, is limited to what is reasonable and necessary, and is rationally related to the available science.

6. If an importing Party prohibits or restricts the importation of a good of another Party on the basis of an adverse result of an import check, the importing Party shall provide a notification about the adverse result to at least one of the following: the importer or its agent; the exporter; the manufacturer; or the exporting Party.

7. When the importing Party provides a notification pursuant to paragraph 6, it shall:

(a) include:

(i) the reason for the prohibition or restriction;

(ii) the legal basis or authorisation for the action; and

(iii) information on the status of the affected goods and, if appropriate, on their disposition;

(b) do so in a manner consistent with its laws, regulations and requirements as soon as possible and no later than seven days<sup>8</sup> after the date of the decision to prohibit or restrict, unless the good is seized by a customs administration; and

(c) if the notification has not already been provided through another channel, transmit the notification by electronic means, if practicable.

8. An importing Party that prohibits or restricts the importation of a good of another Party on the basis of an adverse result of an import check shall provide an opportunity for a review of the decision and consider any relevant information submitted to assist in the review. The review request and information should be submitted to the importing Party within a reasonable period of time.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this paragraph, the term "days" does not include national holidays of the importing Party.

<sup>9</sup> For greater certainty, nothing in this Article prevents an importing Party from disposing of goods which are found to have an infectious pathogen or pest that, if urgent action is not taken, can spread and cause damage to human, animal or plant life or health in the Party's territory.

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9. If an importing Party determines that there is a significant, sustained or recurring pattern of non-conformity with a sanitary or phytosanitary measure, the importing Party shall notify the exporting Party of the non-conformity.

10. On request, an importing Party shall provide to the exporting Party available information on goods from the exporting Party that were found not to conform to an sanitary or phytosanitary measure of the importing Party.

**Article 7.12: Certification**

1. The Parties recognise that assurances with respect to sanitary or phytosanitary requirements may be provided through means other than certificates and that different systems may be capable of meeting the same sanitary or phytosanitary objective.

2. If an importing Party requires certification for trade in a good, the Party shall ensure that the certification requirement is applied, in meeting the Party's sanitary or phytosanitary objectives, only to the extent necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health.

3. In applying certification requirements, an importing Party shall take into account relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.

4. An importing Party shall limit attestations and information it requires on the certificates to essential information that is related to the sanitary or phytosanitary objectives of the importing Party.

5. An importing Party should provide to another Party, on request, the rationale for any attestations or information that the importing Party requires to be included on a certificate.

6. The Parties may agree to work cooperatively to develop model certificates to accompany specific goods traded between the Parties, taking into account relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.

7. The Parties shall promote the implementation of electronic certification and other technologies to facilitate trade.

**Article 7.13: Transparency**<sup>10</sup>

1. The Parties recognise the value of sharing information about their sanitary and phytosanitary measures on an ongoing basis, and of providing interested persons and other Parties with the opportunity to comment on their proposed sanitary and phytosanitary measures.

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<sup>10</sup> For greater certainty, this Article applies only to a sanitary or phytosanitary measure that constitutes a sanitary or phytosanitary regulation for the purposes of Annex B of the SPS Agreement.

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2. In implementing this Article, each Party shall take into account relevant guidance of the WTO SPS Committee and international standards, guidelines and recommendations.
3. A Party shall notify a proposed sanitary or phytosanitary measure that may have an effect on the trade of another Party, including any that conforms to international standards, guidelines or recommendations, by using the WTO SPS notification submission system as a means of notifying the other Parties.
4. Unless urgent problems of human, animal or plant life or health protection arise or threaten to arise, or the measure is of a trade-facilitating nature, a Party shall normally allow at least 60 days for interested persons and other Parties to provide written comments on the proposed measure after it makes the notification under paragraph 3. If feasible and appropriate, the Party should allow more than 60 days. The Party shall consider any reasonable request from an interested person or another Party to extend the comment period. On request of another Party, the Party shall respond to the written comments of the other Party in an appropriate manner.
5. The Party shall make available to the public, by electronic means in an official journal or on a website, the proposed sanitary or phytosanitary measure notified under paragraph 3, the legal basis for the measure, and the written comments or a summary of the written comments that the Party has received from the public on the measure.
6. If a Party proposes a sanitary or phytosanitary measure which does not conform to an international standard, guideline or recommendation, the Party shall provide to another Party, on request, and to the extent permitted by the confidentiality and privacy requirements of the Party's law, the relevant documentation that the Party considered in developing the proposed measure, including documented and objective scientific evidence that is rationally related to the measure, such as risk assessments, relevant studies and expert opinions.
7. A Party that proposes to adopt a sanitary or phytosanitary measure shall discuss with another Party, on request and if appropriate and feasible, any scientific or trade concerns that the other Party may raise regarding the proposed measure and the availability of alternative, less trade-restrictive approaches for achieving the objective of the measure.
8. Each Party shall publish, preferably by electronic means, notices of final sanitary or phytosanitary measures in an official journal or website.
9. Each Party shall notify the other Parties of final sanitary or phytosanitary measures through the WTO SPS notification submission system. Each Party shall ensure that the text or the notice of a final sanitary or phytosanitary measure specifies the date on which the measure takes effect and the legal basis for the measure. A Party shall also make available to another Party, on request, and to the extent permitted by the confidentiality and privacy requirements of the Party's law, significant written comments and relevant documentation considered to support the measure that were received during the comment period.
10. If a final sanitary or phytosanitary measure is substantively altered from the proposed measure, a Party shall also include in the notice of the final sanitary or phytosanitary measure that it publishes, an explanation of:

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- (a) the objective and rationale of the measure and how the measure advances that objective and rationale; and
- (b) any substantive revisions that it made to the proposed measure.

11. An exporting Party shall notify the importing Party through the contact points referred to in Article 7.6 (Competent Authorities and Contact Points) in a timely and appropriate manner:

- (a) if it has knowledge of a significant sanitary or phytosanitary risk related to the export of a good from its territory;
- (b) of urgent situations where a change in animal or plant health status in the territory of the exporting Party may affect current trade;
- (c) of significant changes in the status of a regionalised pest or disease;
- (d) of new scientific findings of importance which affect the regulatory response with respect to food safety, pests or diseases; and
- (e) of significant changes in food safety, pest or disease management, control or eradication policies or practices that may affect current trade.

12. If feasible and appropriate, a Party should provide an interval of more than six months between the date it publishes a final sanitary or phytosanitary measure and the date on which the measure takes effect, unless the measure is intended to address an urgent problem of human, animal or plant life or health protection or the measure is of a trade-facilitating nature.

13. A Party shall provide to another Party, on request, all sanitary or phytosanitary measures related to the importation of a good into that Party's territory.

**Article 7.14: Emergency Measures**

1. If a Party adopts an emergency measure that is necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health, the Party shall promptly notify the other Parties of that measure through the primary representative and the relevant contact point referred to in Article 7.6 (Competent Authorities and Contact Points). The Party that adopts the emergency measure shall take into consideration any information provided by other Parties in response to the notification.

2. If a Party adopts an emergency measure, it shall review the scientific basis of that measure within six months and make available the results of the review to any Party on request. If the emergency measure is maintained after the review, because the reason for its adoption remains, the Party should review the measure periodically.

**Article 7.15: Cooperation**

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1. The Parties shall explore opportunities for further cooperation, collaboration and information exchange between the Parties on sanitary and phytosanitary matters of mutual interest, consistent with this Chapter. Those opportunities may include trade facilitation initiatives and technical assistance. The Parties shall cooperate to facilitate the implementation of this Chapter.

2. The Parties shall cooperate and may jointly identify work on sanitary and phytosanitary matters with the goal of eliminating unnecessary obstacles to trade between the Parties.

**Article 7.16: Information Exchange**

A Party may request information from another Party on a matter arising under this Chapter. A Party that receives a request for information shall endeavour to provide available information to the requesting Party within a reasonable period of time, and if possible, by electronic means.

**Article 7.17: Cooperative Technical Consultations**

1. If a Party has concerns regarding any matter arising under this Chapter with another Party, it shall endeavour to resolve the matter by using the administrative procedures that the other Party's competent authority has available. If the relevant Parties have bilateral or other mechanisms available to address the matter, the Party raising the matter shall endeavour to resolve the matter through those mechanisms, if it considers that it is appropriate to do so. A Party may have recourse to the Cooperative Technical Consultations (CTC) set out in paragraph 2 at any time it considers that the continued use of the administrative procedures or bilateral or other mechanisms would not resolve the matter.

2. One or more Parties (requesting Party) may initiate CTC with another Party (responding Party) to discuss any matter arising under this Chapter that the requesting Party considers may adversely affect its trade by delivering a request to the primary representative of the responding Party. The request shall be in writing and identify the reason for the request, including a description of the requesting Party's concerns about the matter, and set out the provisions of this Chapter that relate to the matter.

3. Unless the requesting Party and the responding Party (the consulting Parties) agree otherwise, the responding Party shall acknowledge the request in writing within seven days of the date of its receipt.

4. Unless the consulting Parties agree otherwise, the consulting Parties shall meet within 30 days of the responding Party's acknowledgement of the request to discuss the matter identified in the request, with the aim of resolving the matter within 180 days of the request if possible. The meeting shall be in person or by electronic means.

5. The consulting Parties shall ensure the appropriate involvement of relevant trade and regulatory agencies in meetings held pursuant to this Article.

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6. All communications between the consulting Parties in the course of CTC, as well as all documents generated for CTC, shall be kept confidential unless the consulting Parties agree otherwise and without prejudice to the rights and obligations of any Party under this Agreement, the WTO Agreement or any other international agreement to which it is a party.

7. The requesting Party may cease CTC proceedings under this Article and have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) if:

- (a) the meeting referred to in paragraph 4 does not take place within 37 days of the date of the request, or such other timeframe as the consulting Parties may agree under paragraphs 3 and 4; or
- (b) the meeting referred to in paragraph 4 has been held.

8. No Party shall have recourse to dispute settlement under Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) for a matter arising under this Chapter without first seeking to resolve the matter through CTC in accordance with this Article.

**Article 7.18: Dispute Settlement**

1. Unless otherwise provided in this Chapter, Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) shall apply to this Chapter, subject to the following:

- (a) with respect to Article 7.8 (Equivalence), Article 7.10 (Audits) and Article 7.11 (Import Checks), Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) shall apply with respect to a responding Party as of one year after the date of entry into force of this Agreement for that Party; and
- (b) with respect to Article 7.9 (Science and Risk Analysis), Chapter 28 (Dispute Settlement) shall apply with respect to a responding Party as of two years after the date of entry into force of this Agreement for that Party.

2. In a dispute under this Chapter that involves scientific or technical issues, a panel should seek advice from experts chosen by the panel in consultation with the Parties involved in the dispute. To this end, the panel may, if it deems appropriate, establish an advisory technical experts group, or consult the relevant international standard setting organisations, at the request of either Party to the dispute or on its own initiative.