

# STRENGTHENING SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY (SPS) CAPACITIES FOR IMPROVING TRADE OF TROPICAL FRUITS

**Ramli Md Afandi**

Plant Biosecurity Division, Department of Agriculture, Malaysia  
Corresponding author: ramli@moa.gov.my

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures is an agreement on how governments can apply food safety, animal and plant health measures while facilitating trade. In relation to plant health, the SPS Agreement allows National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) to impose regulations, while taking into account the International Standards of Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) to protect their economy or environment from damage due to entry, establishment or spread of pests and diseases of plants. ISPMs are standards, guidelines and recommendations recognized by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) as the basis for phytosanitary measures implemented by contracting parties under WTO. SPS measures applied by importing countries is necessary with its main purpose to protect the safety and health of humans, animal and plants. However, strict SPS measures may result as a hindrance to trade as exporting countries may not be able to fulfil importing countries' import requirement on SPS measures due to economic and various technical restrictions. As one of the major tropical fruits producing countries in Southeast Asia, Malaysia's fruit industry has the potential to be expanded to meet the growing international demand of tropical and exotic fruits. Malaysia's experience in requesting market access to countries with stringent SPS measures prompted the Malaysian NPPO, Department of Agriculture (DOA), Malaysia to strengthen and improve some crucial aspects along the production chains. Emphasis is given at the farm, where planting, pest and disease management and harvesting are involved. At the processing facility - post-harvest handling, treatment, packaging, traceability and transportation are amongst the critical points where pest infestation is most likely to occur, hence these elements should be given the utmost priority by exporters. In addition, DOA Malaysia, through its extension and advisory services, is highlighting the importance of certifications such as myGAP (Malaysian Good Agriculture Practice), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), as well as Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) to its farmers and exporters. These certifications are seen as important tools to increase confidence of the importing country as the farmers and exporters granted with such certifications, are guaranteed to practice best farm management, effective pest and disease control as well as proper post-harvest handling that are essential in fulfilling strict SPS requirements.

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