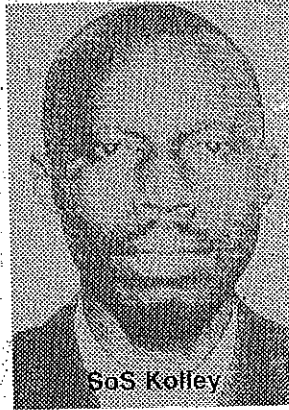


Stakeholders meet on WTO agreements

by Hatab Fadera

The Department of State for Trade, Industry and Employment, in collaboration with the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation, yesterday started a three-day training seminar on the World Trade Organisation's notification requirements under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary

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SoS Kolley

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(SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreements, at the Corinthia Atlantic Hotel, Banjul.

The seminar will look at an array of issues revolving around the SPS and the TBT agreements. The seminar is also expected to produce a road map for The Gambia to become a full participant in the SPS and the TBT.

Speaking at the occasion, Abdou Kolley, the secretary of state for Trade, Industry and Employment, said the training will assist The Gambia in identifying practical ways in which it can effectively make use of its rights under the SPS and TBT agreements to fulfil notification obligations.

Part of The Gambia's obligations as a member of the WTO under these requirements is to effectively notify and respond to enquiries from other WTO member countries by providing information on the legislation and technical regulations applicable to trade in goods.

"The notification also

enables the WTO members to know what changes are being made, so that the country's trade is impeded. However, one of the major constraints of meeting this notification requirement is the limited capacity that we have to handle enquires," said SoS Kolley.

According to him, this training seminar will help in building the capacity to better manage notification and ensure that producers and exporters are not only informed on the SPS and TBT requirements at the national level but also of their trading partners.

The Trade SoS noted that the impact of SPS and TBT measures on international trade is significant and will continue to grow as consumers in both developed and developing countries strive for increased food safety.

Like many countries, he said, The Gambia faces significant challenges concerning quality assurance, in various aspects, particularly for its exports to the European Union. In this regard, he said the gov-

ernment, with the support of the European Union, was able to launch, early this year, the Competitiveness Support and Harmonisation of TBT and SPS Measures Project under the framework of the West African Quality Programme.

SoS Kolley challenged the participants to use the seminar to strengthen communication and networking among institutions that deal with SPS and TBT issues.

For his part, Paços Konandreas, an expert in commerce at the Agency for International Trade and Cooperation, observed that though The Gambia may be a small country, it has a very open economy that accommodates trade in import and export.

Madam Gayatri Kanth, the programme coordinator at the agency, said her agency deemed it necessary to provide technical assistance and collaboration that will enable The Gambia to know its needs and requirements.

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