



## Strengthening phytosanitary border controls

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This project seeks to improve the provision of inspection and diagnostic services by the Republic of Azerbaijan's State Phytosanitary Control Service (SPCS) and the State Customs Service in order to maintain the necessary level of phytosanitary protection for agricultural production and ecosystems in the country.

### **STDF/PG/316**

#### **Status**

Completed

#### **Start Date**

01/09/2014

#### **End Date**

31/12/2018

#### **Project Value (US\$)**

\$3,370,000

#### **STDF Contribution (US\$)**

\$1,120,000

#### **Beneficiaries**

Azerbaijan

#### **Implementing Entities**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

#### **Partners**

State Customs Committee (SCC), Azerbaijan

State Phytosanitary Control Service (SPCS), Azerbaijan

#### **Background**

Agriculture plays an important role in Azerbaijan's economy and currently employs about 40% of the workforce. The main arable crops are wheat, vegetables, various fruits, grapes, cotton, tea and citrus. In the context of Azerbaijan's rapid modernisation and improvements in infrastructure, developing the agrarian sector and increasing plant and plant product exports is crucial to the country's economy.

To facilitate this, the establishment of the State Phytosanitary Control Service (SPCS) was decreed in 2005 in order to implement the Phytosanitary Law. The mandate of the SPCS is to ensure the country's phytosanitary safety in relation to import, manufacture, storage and processing of plants and plant products. The SPCS still faces numerous challenges in its ability to implement this mandate effectively.

One key challenge is that as a result of the new "single window" principle, the SPCS is no longer present at border points. Now, in order to prevent the introduction and distribution of harmful organisms in the country, customs authorities need to constantly inform the SPSC concerning non-compliant imports. The process of official customs clearance of imported regulated articles is completed in destination after phytosanitary quarantine inspection and laboratory analysis. The customs authorities also apply corresponding measures whenever indicated by the SPCS.

This process makes it all the more important to address the lack of the SPCS's capacity to ensure the phytosanitary security of imported consignments of regulated articles, and particularly the detection and diagnosis of plant quarantine pests. The project therefore aims to enhance the practical capacity for phytosanitary inspection and diagnostic services in Azerbaijan in accordance with the international standards for phytosanitary measures of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

Training inspectors of SPCS, Customs and possibly other organizations involved in phytosanitary control on a permanent basis and diagnosing the potential pest risks will lead to maintaining the necessary level of phytosanitary protection for agriculture production in the country. While the project will not cover all the needs of the SPCS, it will also help to create synergy among agencies involved in the phytosanitary improvement of the country's agriculture.

This project is also expected to contribute to the implementation of the comprehensive national phytosanitary capacity building strategy under the World Bank's Agricultural Competitiveness Improvement Project (ACIP). The STDF intervention is closely linked to the component of the ACIP project which aims to modernize the Food safety, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Systems. This is directly compatible with the general policy of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to invest in value chains to open up market access of plants and plant commodities, among other agricultural products, to improve the increasing demand of the public for quality and safety of food products destined for the local market and to reduce import dependence in the face of rapid economic growth particularly in the industrial, financial and services sectors.

## **Expected Results**

### ***Pest diagnostics service strengthened***

The project aims to address gaps in the pest diagnostic system with the expectation that the system will have markedly evolved already within the first year of the project. The activities under this result are also sponsored by national funds, and supplemented by the ACIP project activities. A strategic plan for the diagnostic service will be developed. The diagnostics are intended to be strengthened through updating current equipment and reference materials, improving infrastructure, and training SPCS and Customs inspectors.

### ***Management of import regulatory system improved***

The project also intends to improve the implementation of IPPC - ISPM 20 – relating to the import regulatory system. It will focus on building the capacity of staff in the SPCS and Customs both at border and pre-border levels. This activity is directly linked to the actions on pest diagnostics and will require close coordination with the technical staff of the SPCS. The ACIP project is once again expected to complement this by strengthening the Pest Risk Analysis Unit of the SPCS. In addition, the project will be conducting a unique activity to enhance the capabilities of the technical staff of the SPCS. It will provide language training to staff at technical and management levels over the course of the project's duration. This will ensure that the service can operate in the international trading environment on a more equal footing. This, in turn, will enhance staff members' ability to negotiate market access, communicate cases of non-compliance, communicate matters of national policy, and participate more fully extra-regional in international phytosanitary fora and training. The project also expects to conduct training for mid- and senior-level managers in a number of management-related areas including project management, presentation skills and negotiation skills. These are all essential for management and communication in phytosanitary and trade environments.

### ***Pre-border inspection and export certification system improved***

Finally, the project aims to address shortfalls in the export certification system. The Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation conducted in 2011 revealed that there is a significant lack of capacity in the staff to certify exports, and in particular, there is a lack of documented procedures. The project seeks to address this need directly and links it to the pest diagnostic support component of the project. There will be one activity under the project that will implement a standardized approach to pest surveillance in a commodity of export value. Pests detected over the next two years will be processed using the enhanced abilities of the SPCS. These pests will be listed in a national database as the national pest list. This component will also be linked to the ACIP project on the aspects concerning PRA and Export Certification in which additional crops will be surveyed. Pests identified in the PRA component of the ACIP project as organisms of phytosanitary concern will be listed in the national regulated pest list. The STDF project will also develop, over the course of the 2.5-year project cycle, a phytosanitary information repository software and database. This will be a useful tool for the SPCS in making phytosanitary decisions and facilitating its work.

