Promoting market access for honey and apricot products in Tajikistan

The overall goal of this project was to improve the export competitiveness of Tajikistan's small and medium-sized enterprises with a particular focus on the apricot and honey sectors. The project focused on enhancing food safety practices in these value chains through improved understanding and management of veterinary drugs, pesticides and other contaminants, which will reduce the risk of contamination in processed foods and improve food safety and quality.

STDF/PG/447

Status
Completed

Start Date
01/04/2018

End Date
28/02/2022

Project Value (US$)
$1,053,196

STDF Contribution (US$)
$786,121

Beneficiaries
Tajikistan

Implementing Entities
International Trade Centre (ITC)

Partners
Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
Ministry of Agriculture
Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Population
Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Agency on Standardization, Metrology, Certification and Trade Inspection - Tajikistandard
Dehkan Farm Association of the Apricot Growers of Asht District
National Association of Small and Medium Businesses
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Background

Tajikistan's agricultural sector employs about 64% of the country's population and contributes to 28% of GDP, making it
important for overall economic growth. The fruit and vegetable sector has seen growth over the past 10 years, aided by
government support. The main export markets for food and agricultural products are Russia, Turkey, the EU and other Central
Asian states.

Favourable climatic conditions, good water supply and fertile soil enable the production of high-quality fruit and vegetables,
particularly in the Sughd and Khatlon regions in the north and south, respectively. Apart from fruit (apricots, peaches, apples,
lemons and cherries), farmers in the country cultivate almonds, pistachios, onions and cotton.

Despite these favourable conditions, small and medium-sized enterprises faced significant barriers to trade due to non-
compliance with maximum residue levels (MRLs). While a basic regulatory framework for SPS standards is in place, due to a
lack of funds, capacity and organization, Tajikistan’s agricultural products often do not comply with international standards.

By focusing on incorporating regional and international best practices in the sustainable and effective use veterinary drugs and
pesticides, this project aimed to regain and access new markets for apricot and honey improve the monitoring of MRLs.

Results

Established and operationalized a regulatory system for veterinary drugs, pesticides and other contaminants

Tajikistan developed its first National Residue Monitoring Plan for honey and apricots to monitor residues of veterinary drugs,
pesticides and other contaminants. Laboratory testing activities conducted as part of the project highlighted ongoing
improvements to reduce the levels of harmful substances in honey and apricots, compared to the baseline study.

Strengthened capacity for safe use of veterinary drugs, pesticides and other contaminants

A database was created that includes information on all registered veterinary drugs and pesticides in Tajikistan, as well as
substances used by producers. This database underpins the new monitoring plan and provides the necessary information to
expand the use of authorized products. Tajik officials also proposed 11 new maximum residue limits for honey production
through a legislative amendment.

More than 300 apricot farmers and beekeepers participated in training to improve their knowledge and skills on the proper use
of pesticides and veterinary drugs. In addition, 30 local trainers and food safety advisers benefitted from new knowledge on
risk-based food control systems and monitoring mechanisms, creating a pool of in-country experts ready to support ongoing
food safety improvements in Tajikistan.

Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic severely limited opportunities to build close working relationships between organizations in Tajikistan
and the project implementation team. This created challenges for communication, increased the need for contingency planning
and slowed delivery. While much can be achieved by working remotely, travel is still essential to develop trust and good
working relationships.

Conducting a stakeholder analysis at the outset of the project helped identify new opportunities to leverage partnerships for
better results and ensure greater coherence with other ongoing work. Building on this analysis, the project stakeholders
identified ways to collaborate with other donor-supported projects. This created synergies and ensured the effective use of
resources.

Documenting knowledge that was transferred during training activities in user-friendly guides or handbooks serves as a helpful
resource to support ongoing learning and knowledge transfer.