



Enhancing capacity for food safety management in the Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable industry

The overall goal of the project is to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable industry, resulting in increased sales to high-value markets impacting positively on the livelihoods of 323,000 smallholder farmers.

STDF/PG/569

Status

On-going

Start Date

01/01/2020

End Date

31/12/2022

Project Value (US\$)

\$746,210

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$570,000

Beneficiaries

Kyrgyz Republic

Implementing Entities

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Partners

Association of Fruit and Vegetable Enterprises (AFVE), Kyrgyz Republic

Background

The Kyrgyz Republic joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) on 12 August 2015 and is required to comply with the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures of the EAEU regulatory framework with a transitional period of 3 years. Contrary to the expectation of the Kyrgyz Government to expand export markets for agro-food products, the first impact of joining the union was a marked decline in exports and a significant increase in agri-food imports from Russian and Kazakhstan. Despite the transition period, the trading partners in the EAEU countries requested Kyrgyz food business operators (FBOs) to demonstrate conformity with EAEU regulations for market access. In the meantime, domestic supermarket retailers are competing to offer high quality safe products that comply with EAEU SPS measures. In order to have efficient and effective systems in place, the official control agencies of the Kyrgyz Government, national experts and FBOs need to adopt international standards for long-term sustainability of the SPS control system.

Kyrgyz food processors and farmers face major challenges in adopting modern risk-based food safety management systems. The food business operators and farmers are unfamiliar with risk-based control systems and require expert support. There are a limited number of available national experts on food safety management with experience in risk assessment and practical aspects of HACCP and GAP. There is an urgent need of upgrading the knowledge and capacities of the national experts and FBOs with a regular programme of training courses. This can be achieved by standardisation of food safety training with course curricula for different levels of competence, enabling access to high-quality advisory and training materials on food safety management in Russian (official) or Kyrgyz (national) languages.

Concurrently, the official control agencies of the Kyrgyz Government need to update their knowledge and practices to shift from end-product based certification of conformity and state standards (GOST standards) to modern food safety management systems, modern methods of inspection/auditing of food safety management systems and international (Codex & ISO) standards. GOST standards are mostly product specific and contain a mixture of SPS measures and TBT regulations in one document.

The project will play a vital role in enabling Kyrgyzstan to meet the trade agreement SPS obligations of WTO and the EAEU, avoiding exclusion from the EAEU markets due to non-compliance with food safety requirements. The project will also enable the Government of Kyrgyzstan to provide sufficient evidence of intention to comply for an extension of the transition period to be granted for EAEU regulatory compliance. The FBOs will be in strong position to demonstrate to their customers in major trading partner countries (e.g. Russia and Kazakhstan) that improvements are ongoing to manage food safety risks effectively and for achievement of full regulatory compliance within the life of the project.

Expected Results

Enhanced capacity of Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable industry to adopt GAP, GHP & HACCP

The project will collect baseline data from the private sector and official control (OC) agencies to ensure the validity of the approach for outreach and training of farmers and FBOs, and to conduct a gender analysis of the target group in the private sector. Cooperation between Association of Fruit & Vegetable Enterprises (AFVE) industries, smallholder producers and other relevant actors of the fruit and vegetables value chain will be enhanced by signing formal agreements with each company. In order to implement food safety management systems, awareness and sign-up sessions with smallholder farmers who supply products to the food processing companies will be held.

A simple baseline audit of current infrastructure and practice for food safety management will be made for the selected FBOs and their smallholder suppliers to determine likely food safety risks, weaknesses in the current system and changes and additions needed to establish conformity with technical regulation TR/021/2011. Sets of supporting documentation and templates for record keeping for both GHP/HACCP in the processing factories and GAP for ensuring food safety on farm will be developed. Expert advice, technical support and mentoring will be continuously given to the FBOs and their smallholder suppliers to adopt food safety management systems that conform to the requirements of EAEU regulations.

Increased capacity of Kyrgyz service providers on risk assessment, GAP, GHP & HACCP in line with international standards

Supporting materials on food safety management in Russian and English will be prepared based on the standards of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) and International Standards Organisation (ISO). Already existing food safety training materials, particularly the ones available in Russian, will be reviewed and used as well. The knowledge, experience and skills set of most of the identified national experts in food safety working for private sector service providers, public sector agencies and as technical advisers for specific fruit and vegetable processing factories, will be formally assessed. The selected national experts will be trained as instructors to form a core of high calibre Kyrgyz experts in food safety management. These experts will drive the process of delivery of the proposed project and provide a strong basis for sustainability of national expertise and reduce reliance on external experts.

A standardised training system with syllabuses and training outcomes for national technical and vocational qualifications (NVQ) for food safety management with 4 levels of competence that meets international standards for national technical/vocational qualifications will be developed. Appropriate training materials on risk assessment, GAP, GHP, HACCP and modern inspection/auditing techniques for different target groups (farms, processors, service-providers & government inspection services) are envisaged.

Training programmes will be delivered by following a cascade approach to the beneficiaries consisting smallholder farmers, national experts, company technical advisers, relevant ministries, technical universities and relevant vocational training institutes. Electronic versions of all training and supporting materials produced will be supplied to the STDF and made freely available on the AFVE website.

Enhanced capacity of competent authorities to inspect and certify HACCP based systems in Kyrgyz fruit and vegetable processing industries as being compliant with the regulatory requirements of the EAEU

Procedures for risk assessment and inspection of regulatory conformity of food safety management systems for fruit and vegetable processing industries will be prepared in-line with international standards (ISO19011) in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The role and responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture for on-farm audits and inspection will be strengthened and a clear, efficient and stream-line inspection system by both ministries will be achieved. FBOs, and on-farm producers will be informed of the requirements and processes that they need to comply with.

National secondary regulations to support the uptake of GAP, or GHP/HACCP in fruit and vegetable chain will be reviewed and updated if necessary. TR/021/2011 as a Regulation of the EAEU is directly transposed to national legislation and does not require any legal drafting. However, the review may show other complementary tasks that need to be addressed to ensure the legal requirements to be met by FBOs and farmers are clearly set out.