

Information on SPS-related activities of the International Trade Centre (ITC)

STDF Working Group Meeting, March 2021

(Period covered: October 2020 - 1 March 2021)

The International Trade Centre is continuing its efforts to assist enterprises to meet technical requirements. An update of selected SPS-related activities of interest to the STDF Members is provided herewith.

PROJECTS

❖ **Bhutan: EU-Bhutan Trade Support Project, funded by the EU and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC)**

Within the project, ITC with the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) launched an in-dept programme on hygiene and food safety to train a pool of local trainers-cum-counsellors and SMEs from selected value chain products such as ginger and turmeric, mushrooms and Yak dairy to implement Codex HACCP. The first series of activity started with one-day Awareness Workshop on Food Hygiene and Food Safety for a large audience, followed by four-day Training Workshop on Codex Hygiene Principles and Requirements for target beneficiaries from 9 to 13 March 2021 at Khuruthang, Punakha.

The Workshops were organized with the objectives to: enhance the food business's top management commitment to the production and handling of safe food; educate on the importance of food hygiene by all personnel in the food business; enhance the understanding of selected Trainer cum Counselors (TcCs) to guide and support SMEs in an effective way to implement and comply with Codex food hygiene requirements.

❖ **EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme - MARKUP (July 2018 - July 2022 / Donor EU)**

This project aims to contribute to the economic development of the East African Community (EAC) region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), with the specific objective to improve market access of agro-industrial crop and horticultural sectors to the European Union, and among the five EAC partners. The selected products are avocado, cocoa, coffee, spices and tea.

All nine Tanzanian producer groups (comprising a total of 446 farmers) assisted under the project to implement GlobalG.A.P.(Good Agricultural Practice) were certified having been audited by a third party.

Implementation of GlobalG.A.P. among avocado producers in Kenya is ongoing. Implementation of quality improvement projects in enterprises in Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda by trained Quality Champions is also ongoing.

❖ **Uzbekistan - Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO (21-Feb 2020 - 20-Feb 2025 / Donor EU)**

The project supports Uzbekistan's development plans to modernize its economy through leveraging the process of WTO accession. The overall objective of the action is to contribute to the economic development of Uzbekistan by assisting the country to create a trade environment that is in conformity with international standards, including predictable and enforceable laws and regulations. The specific objective of the action is to create a trade environment that is in conformity with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

To reinforce SPS institutions and in particular to support the State Plant Quarantine Inspection, the plant health legislation has been reviewed and recommendations provided to improve control. A series of consultative and training workshops on pest risk analysis, risk categorization in plant health, and phytosanitary treatments were held between November 2020 and February 2021. All activities were conducted through a series of virtual meetings and webinar trainings.

❖ **Pakistan: Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (June 2019 – December 2024 / Donor European Union)**

ITC is implementing the EU-funded "Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress" (GRASP) project which aims to contribute to the reduction of poverty through development of rural micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in selected districts within two provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan and Sindh. GRASP will focus on selected product lines within livestock and horticulture.

In the context of this project, ITC is providing support to strengthen the SPS authorities in the two provinces which include the food safety authorities and the departments dealing with plant health and animal health. The project will also provide support to MSMEs to improve the quality and food safety of their products.

During the period under report, the food authorities in Sindh and Balochistan were assessed and a five-year action plan for their strengthening was developed. Officers of the Sindh Food Authority were trained on Meat Safety and Quality Standards based on a manual developed under the project.

❖ **Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - June 2023 / Donor European Union)**

The ARISE Plus project aims at building inclusive and sustainable trade growth in Myanmar through support to MSMEs in selected value chains (component 1), enhancing food safety and SPS compliance (component 2 – targeting tea, coffee, honey, horticulture products) and trade policy formulation and implementation (component 3). Under component 2, a number of activities have been completed.

Since 1 February 2021, ITC has put on hold the activities directly supporting the Government and which could be interpreted as legitimising the actions of the Military, while trying to maintain support to the people of Myanmar. The below are related to the activities for the period October 2020 – Feb / March 2021.

In the honey sector, eight Trainer cum Counsellors (TcCs) are trained and engaged to support honey processing factories to implement HACCP. More than 35

participants were trained through the workshop on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) implementation at a honey processing factory. As of December 2020, all TcCs delivered Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Pre-requisite Programme (PRP) training to the quality control team of eight honey processing factories.

Capacity building was provided on several key topics for improved controls and certification, including on pathology, surveillance and OIE listed disease management of honey bees to various stakeholders, as well as on the EU Trade Control in Expert System (TRACES).

Follow-up technical training was delivered for microbiological laboratories in January 2021. As part of the preparation, a gap assessment was conducted on the beneficiaries.

An Expression of Interest (EoI) for the tea and coffee companies was launched and a number of companies interested to work with the project were identified. A gap assessment to structure a proper official control system was under preparation.

An online quality platform for Myanmar is under development to make available information on technical requirements for target products and other information with four modules, namely quality compass, quality insights, quality connect and quality success.

In collaboration with the ARISE Plus Regional programme, the project initiated work on structuring the Myanmar national system for Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). Nineteen International Standards, Guidelines (Codex, International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures ISPM, GMP for honey sector and ISO) and codes of practices were translated in Myanmar language.

In total, 36 participants attended the online workshop on ISO 17020:2012 and EU regulation 625/2017 from 25 to 28 January. Inspection checklists for tea and coffee were drafted, and honey inspection checklists were revised and simplified.

Synergies are built with ongoing ITC projects through the development of e-learning courses on hygiene and food safety. These ongoing projects are: Inclusive tourism development with focus on Kayah state - NTF IV – funded by the Netherlands Trust Fund; and Myanmar: Upgrading horticulture supply and sustainable tourism to develop business linkages, UN Cluster on trade and productive capacity - funded by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) trust fund.

❖ Tajikistan: Enabling market access for agricultural products through improved food safety system (March 2018 - February 2021 / STDF - PG-447 implemented by ITC in collaboration with FAO in particular for output 1 on the regulatory control system)

The goal of the project is to improve export competitiveness of Tajik SMEs and food safety through better use of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines with focus on honey and apricot sectors. It enhances high value market access for Tajik agri-food producers and processors and increases the level of safety of Tajik domestic food by reducing the risk of contamination and improving the systems of control and monitoring of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines.

A group of 17 previously trained Tajik honey and apricot experts started in March/April 2020 to impart training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Integrated

Pest Management (IPM), Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), EU market access requirements as well as harvesting and post-harvest technology to farmers and producers. The first set of training was stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions and resumed in September/October 2020 covering a total of 15 workshops in several districts of Tajikistan for 304 participants (28 women) with strict application of the precautionary measures (wearing masks, providing hand sanitizers and following social distancing rules).

FAO and ITC conducted a series of virtual meetings on sampling and monitoring in relation to the resubmission of the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) for honey to the European Union by March 2021, as well as on supporting the general monitoring system of the country with regard to agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines.

The project further developed the information, education and communication (IEC) strategy and implementation plan. The plan includes the creation of awareness and sensitization material on good practices for the application of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines. The presentation of the IEC to stakeholders is scheduled on 30 March 2021.

In addition, the project is focusing on creating market linkages between suppliers of honey and apricots in Tajikistan, and national as well as international buyers. Several interviews with Tajik companies have been conducted to understand the companies' product and trade potential and how this would link to buyers' demands.

❖ **SYMST: Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam) (December 2018 – October 2022 / Donor European Union)**

The overall objective of the project is to improve food safety through better governance in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. The project aims to strengthen the regulatory framework for control of plant health and pesticides in the fruits and vegetable sector, and other plant products through the application of norms and standards and improve market access.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic the focus is to support exports of watermelon from the north to China; native rice from Vientiane to the European Union, and chili and basil to the European Union from Pakxe.

A training on EU regulations and on TRACES (TraAde Control and Expert System) (7-10 December) for DOA officials and private operators was conducted in hybrid mode for 70 participants at plenary sessions and few one-to-one coaching sessions. Two companies (coffee and vegetables) are now registered in the system along with three DOA competent authorities and follow-up was done on interceptions and adoption of regulation to issue online phyto certificates. An assessment of the Plant Protection Centre pesticides laboratory was completed with a road map for capacity building and preparation for accreditation ISO 17025; and a 15-day training on maximum residue levels (MRLs) conducted for five technicians in the use of LC-MS/MS (Liquid Chromatography with tandem mass spectrometry) for analyzing pesticides. A Technical Working Group (27-28 January) and Project Review Committee Meeting (29 January) was also conducted in Champasak Synergies. Three field missions to the three target provinces are ongoing to conduct training and collecting samples to test pesticides residues, assessment of the enforcement of the regulatory controls on plant health and food safety and design of pest management training,

In Viet Nam the identification phase is under completion; a 2-day webinar on EU regulations was conducted that led to the selection of target products such as dragon fruit, pomelo, and black pepper for export to the European Union. Plant health laboratories assessments were done for Plant Quarantine Diagnostics Center, Post-entry Plant Quarantine Center 1 and Northern Plant Protection Center. A training was also conducted on ISO/IEC 17025:2017, from 20 to 23 January by a national consultant for 15 participants (10 women) from three pest detection laboratories.

❖ **Thailand ARISE Plus Project (November 2020 – October 2023 / Donor European Union)**

The new ITC implemented ARISE Plus Thailand project, aims to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through international trade in Thailand. It supports greater connectivity and economic integration between Thailand and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region in line with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025.

Under this overall objective, ITC supports the enhancement and dissemination of organic agricultural practices in line with EU standards. In this context, the project aims at assisting the relevant departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) and private certification bodies on organic agriculture. One of the initial activities is an awareness and sensitization event on the new EU regulation for organic production.

❖ **Lao ARISE Plus Project (2012-2023 / Donor European Union)**

A team of future Quality Champions (QCs) has been identified and selected. These QCs will support Lao SME as trainers and coaches in the area of quality management and food safety. They will be trained and qualified over the next 15 months. Three out of 10 technical workshops were implemented online during the period. An initial version of the Lao Quality for Trade Platform was developed featuring quality requirement for selected product-market combinations.

The recommendations for strengthening the conformity assessment services have been validated by stakeholders through more than 10 online meetings; and implementation of the recommendations is planned in the areas of SPS such as assistance to strengthen the pesticides laboratories, training of inspectors of the food and drug department on HACCP.

For more information, please contact:

Ludovica Ghizzoni, ITC Adviser on Export Quality Management

Tel: +41 22 730 06 38

Fax: +41 22 730 05 76

E-mail: ghizzoni@intracen.org

Khemraj Ramful, ITC Senior Adviser on Export Quality Management

Tel: +41 22 730 04 87

Fax: +41 22 730 05 76

E-mail: ramful@intracen.org

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