



STDF Working Group Meeting

SPS related UNIDO project developments
October 2016 - March 2017

20-21 March 2017

Geneva

Title of the project: Arab food safety initiative for Trade Facilitation – SAFE

Countries: Arab Region

Donor: The Kingdom of Sweden

Thematic areas: Food Safety



The Project “**Enhancement of Regional Trade Capacities in Food Through a Harmonized Regional Conformity Assessment and Food Safety Systems in Countries of the League of Arab States**” known as the Arab Food Safety for Trade Facilitation Initiative or SAFE is a regional capacity development initiative funded by the Government of Sweden’s International development agency (Sida) and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in partnership with the League of Arab States (LAS) and its specialized organizations the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD).

SAFE’s objective is to support regional efforts, coordinated by AIDMO and AOAD, aiming at achieving regional integration, harmonization and effective coordination in food safety measures and standards in compliance with international trade rules and regulations to facilitate trade under the Pan-Arab greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA).

The Arab Taskforce on Food Safety (ATF) was struck under SAFE, as a high level, specialized steering group composed primarily of senior representatives from competent authorities responsible for food safety and food safety standards in countries of the LAS, signatories to the GAFTA treaty, with the main responsibility to provide **high level advice and guidance** on the Project implementation aiming for the enhancement of coordination and harmonization of food safety measures, including food safety standards.

1. Targeted Initiatives towards Regional Coordination and Harmonization of Food Safety

A series of initiatives have been identified as initial steps to support SAFE's implementation. These initiatives have been endorsed by ATF members at their second meeting in September 2016.

2-1 Arab Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (ARSFF) – Led by Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

This initiative aims to design and implement a Rapid Alert System to report and exchange information on food and feed safety, in the Arab region. The initiative aims to build on best practices for similar systems established in the region e.g., Gulf Rapid Alert System for Food (GRASF) and internationally e.g., the EU's Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). At its first meeting, held in Cairo in January 2017.

Continued efforts are underway to review existing similar Rapid Alert systems internationally, including those under use in the Arab region, and to leverage such experience for the purposes of developing the Regional (Arab) system.

2-2- Arab Codex Initiative – Led by Lebanon

This initiative, in cooperation with FAO, aims to strengthen regional coordination amongst countries of the Arab region on their participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and subsidiary bodies. It also aims to enhance their contribution in the development and amendments of Codex standards in a manner that considers the realities and protects the interests of the region. Another objective aims to strengthen the capacity of national Codex Contact Points (CCPs) and National Codex Committees (NCCs) in the Arab region.

A first workshop was held under this initiative in Beirut, in February 2017 with the participation of FAO HQs. The workshop gathered several representatives of Codex Contact points and National Codex Committees. The workshop was an opportunity to review the current situation of Codex work in the Arab region and to make recommendations on future investments and the application of best practices to strengthen coordination of the Arab contribution into Codex work.



2-3- Arab Initiative for Common Food Import/Export Certificates – Led by Jordan

This initiative aims to develop and implement a common set of Arab Food Import/Export Certificates aligned with Codex standards and guidelines, in particular Codex standard: CAC/GL38-2001 and leveraging best practices established in the region and internationally. This initiative is designed to pave the way towards enhancing food import/export control systems leading to equivalence and/or harmonization between these systems in the region.

The first meeting of the Expert WG dedicated to this initiative met in Amman in December 2016, and agreed to focus its efforts in leveraging Arab best practices and Codex standards towards the development and adoption of a common Arab official food import/export certificate: Common format for generic certificates; common guidance on production, issuance and use of such certificates.



2-4 Arab Country Assessment Initiative – Led by Egypt

This initiative will leverage the FAO country assessment tool to assess the food safety capacity of Arab countries, including the effectiveness of their food control systems. The assessment tool will be made available in Arabic and efforts will be devoted to develop an Arab cohort of trained experts, able to contribute to such assessments. At least 2 pilot studies will be undertaken in the Arab region and will serve as a foundation for prioritizing investments in food safety capacity building. This initiative will be implemented in close cooperation with FAO's Food Safety and Quality team.



2-5- Arab Initiative on Risk Assessment – Led by Morocco

This initiative aims to develop a common Arab approach for food safety risk assessment that supports sustainable coordination and harmonization of food safety standards in the Arab region, in alignment with international best practices. This is a critical initiative to support enhanced convergence of food safety decisions, including food safety standards.

The first meeting of the Arab Expert Working Group (EWG) on risk assessment supporting this initiative was held in Rabat, Morocco, in December 2016 and adopted a set of recommendations and actions to help anchor Arab food safety decisions in scientific risk assessment. The EWG agreed to adopt an incremental approach in generating the required food consumption and occurrence data needed for exposure assessments in the Arab region. The endorsed workplan for this initiative also included efforts to disseminate best practices of food safety risk assessment through the development of an Arab open-access publication in the area of “food regulatory science” and to work towards unification of scientific terminology in Arabic used in food risk analysis disciplines, including risk assessment. These tools could serve as a reference made available to Arab scientists and regulators. A training program and several workshops are being planned to develop Arab competencies in food safety risk assessment, serving the region as a whole.



2. UNIDO – FAO cooperation on food safety in the Arab Region

In order to ensure effective interagency cooperation to support the implementation of this initiative, UNIDO and FAO are working jointly on the following areas:

- **Country Assessments:** The newly developed FAO food safety capacity assessment tool will be leveraged and adapted to the Arab region, to help identify priorities for areas of investment in food safety capacity and competency development. A group of professionals will be trained to conduct such assessments and at least 2 pilot studies will be implemented in the region. Lessons learnt and best practices on the implementation of the FAO assessment tool will be documented and published.
- **Arab Codex Initiative:** Expert advice will be provided by FAO to the enhancement of the Codex national structures in Arab countries and their contribution in the international food standard setting process, including effective participation in Codex proceedings. Training workshops will be organized for Codex contact points and coordinators of national codex committees in the Arab region, to support improved preparedness to participation in Codex committees and the translation of Codex standards into national food safety standards.

The Arab Food Safety for Trade facilitation initiative will be used as a demonstration project to enhance collaboration and complementarity between UNIDO and FAO in their respective food safety capacity building initiatives.

3. Global engagement

Representatives of Arab food safety competent authorities took part, for the first time, in the annual meeting of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) in Houston, Texas from February 28th to March 4th, 2017. This meeting is one of the largest food safety gatherings at the international level, organized by the Consumer Goods Forum, and held annually. This year's event had a record attendance of more than 1,200 delegates from 54 countries.



ATF members contributed to the discussions of the Government to Government (G2G) meeting, along with other 16 other food safety competent authorities, on challenges and opportunities associated with the development and use of private certification processes. They were also part of the Government to Business (G2B) meeting which enabled a direct exchange between food safety Government officials and members of the Board of the GFSI.

Beyond attending the proceedings of the GFSI conference, this event enabled ATF representatives to hold a series of bilateral meetings with several food safety leaders, competent authorities and food safety organizations from around the world. Bilateral meetings with food safety agencies in the United States, Canada, the European Union, Finland, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, Australia and New-Zealand offered the opportunity to explore collaboration between Arab food safety experts and their international counterparts in the context of the implementation of SAFE.

This event enabled to showcase on the international stage, the progress of SAFE, as a unique initiative driving the food safety agenda in the Arab region towards enhanced coordination and harmonization.

Title of the project: Regional cooperation on Accreditation

Countries: Arab Region

Donor: The Kingdom of Sweden

Thematic areas: Accreditation



ARAC (Arab Accreditation Cooperation) was established with the support of the Regional cooperation project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), is being implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) for the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization [AIDMO].

The Arab Accreditation Cooperation (ARAC) held successfully its 5th Annual meetings and General Assembly in Dubai in 19-23 February 2017 with the participation of ARAC members and partners and in partnership with Emirates International Center for Accreditation. ARAC 2017 annual meetings are of utmost importance to ARAC recognition process as they were witnessed by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation [ILAC] and the International Accreditation Forum [IAF].

Significant decisions were made at these meetings mainly the increase in ARAC MLA signatories, namely the Jordanian Accreditation System [JAS], whereas Emirates International Center for Accreditation extended its MLA and became ARAC MLA Signatory in the field of Accreditation of Product Certification Bodies.

A number of resolutions were adopted by ARAC General Assembly members that converge towards starting the implementation of the ARAC Strategy 2016-2021, the approval of the ARAC new procedure related to conducting the joint peer evaluations with the other regional Cooperation Bodies, and the adoption of the ILAC & IAF Resolutions applicable for ARAC Peer evaluation process.

Title of the project: Strengthening the national quality infrastructure to facilitate trade and enhance consumer protection

Countries: Republic of Iraq

Donor: The Kingdom of Sweden

Thematic areas: Accreditation, WTO accession, quality infrastructure, food safety

In view of the upgrading of **five selected food testing laboratories**, which are associated to the testing of samples taken at border control points, further capacity building was provided through the conduct of 2 online training sessions, as well as two classroom trainings inside Iraq. The trainings were grouped along relevant clauses of **ISO 17025**, and additional technical assistance was provided in the review of sample analysis, the implementation of the developed QMS, as well as that the validation protocols were theoretically and practically explained to concerned lab staff.



To strengthen the Iraqi private sector and to ultimately thereby also enhance consumer protection in the country, the project has provided further assistance in upgrading **eight selected food-processing enterprises towards HACCP certification**. All supported companies benefitted from additional in-house trainings on HACCP, as well as that the HACCP teams and the status of the testing labs were reviewed, the scope of the targeted HACCP system was finalized, and the experts followed-up on the system development and the implementation stage.

Title of the Project: Strengthening the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) for trade in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Country: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Donor: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

Thematic areas: food safety standards in industrial sector, institutional capacity building, food control system, standards and conformity assessment.

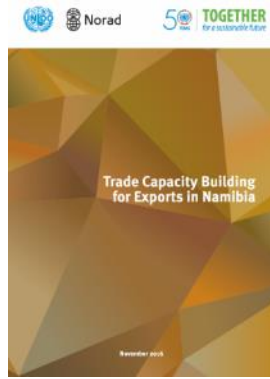
The Project has assisted in setting up the Myanmar Accreditation Body and recruiting and qualifying a core of **20 laboratory assessors**. In parallel, the National Quality Policy was drafted and discussed; it is now in final approval stages. The Project has provided assistance, training and support to seven food testing laboratories, in the form of analytical equipment, access to proficiency testing services, and capacity building for staff.



UNIDO continued its close collaboration with Myanmar Food Processors and Exporters Association and Food and Science Technology Association to develop the training services in food safety. Furthermore, a group of national experts is being trained through **CIEH training and qualification** in December 2016. The experts have been capacitated to advise, assist and train exporters and stakeholders on quality and compliance with requirements for hygiene and safety of agri-food products.

The Project expanded its support to **24 food processing** addition to its assistance to a major local retail chain, City Mart, adoption of international standards under the GFSI's Global framework. By the end of the project, 20 companies will be voluntary selected certification scheme, such as GMP, HACCP, or

Support was continued to the Department of Food and Drug (FDA), Ministry of Health in order to strengthen the country's control system. In November 2016, **40 food inspectors** were integrated Risk-Based Approaches (RBA), food safety risk establishments profiling, and on the preparation of a national



companies, in thus allowing the Markets Program guided to a FSSC22000.

Administration official food safety trained on analysis, control plan.

With UNIDO support, the Chairwomen of Anawa Davi Fishing Cooperative gave a speech during a Breakout Session called *Global Markets – Capacity Building Agenda* as part of the the **Global Food Safety Conference (GFSC)** in Houston. The Chairwoman also testified on her experience with the UNIDO/GFSI support about which GFSI also developed a video ([link](#)).

Global Food Safety Partnership

Country: Global

As a member of the GFSP Governing Council, UNIDO has participated on the Governing Council (GC) meeting of the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP), taking place on 22 February 2017 in India. The members of the GC had further discussions with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on food safety capacity building possibilities within the country.



GFSP is in the process of initiating food safety capacity building initiatives in Ethiopia, Africa and China.

Title of the Project: Trade capacity building for exports in Namibia
Country: The Republic of Namibia
Donor: NORAD
Thematic areas: Upgrading national quality infrastructure, SPS

The project has reached its conclusion at the end of December 2016. Thus, the final few months were used to ensure all activities were wrapped up and maximizing delivery towards the overall objective.

Of particular note, the 1999 National Quality Policy (NQP) was reviewed through extensive consultations with both public and private sector stakeholders. The **revised NQP** which includes a technical regulation framework and high level implementation plan was presented to the Office of the Minister of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development (MITSMED) in December 2016. This revised policy is now being prepared by the Ministry for submission to the Cabinet for approval.



By the end of the Project, the MITSMED, together with the Namibia Standards Institution (NSI), acquired knowledge to maintain and further develop the quality infrastructure and concomitant technical regulation regime, while NSI, the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) and the Meat Corporation of Namibia (MEATCO) are able to further broaden the scope of accredited calibration and testing services.

A **project brochure** was produced which summarizes the objectives, approach and achievements of the Project, which was handed over along with equipment during a closure ceremony in Namibia in November. It was keenly felt by all parties that a strong contribution has been made to strengthen capacity.

Title of the Project: Trade capacity building for Zambia – Phase II

Country: The Republic of Zambia

Donor: NORAD

Thematic areas: National quality infrastructure upgrading.



Project Brochure



Gender Brochure



Curriculums



The Project ended in January 2017 and the final few months were used to conclude activities and ensure maximum delivery of its objective.

A key achievement in the closing months was the coming to fruition of the Project's support to establish a **private-public partnership between tertiary institutions, and quality infrastructure institutions**, through the development of curricula for professional qualifications in general quality management and specifically for legal and industrial metrologists.

The Zambia Weights and Measures Agency (ZWMA) and Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) led **curriculum development process** for a Diploma in Legal and Industrial Metrology caters for the identified need for a professional qualification for Legal and Industrial Metrologists.

The Quality Management document follows the NQP's key objective to incorporate Standards, Quality, Accreditation and Metrology (SQAM) in the education curriculum and was thus developed to provide graduate students with a relevant qualification needed by industry and aligned to the NQP, which seeks to raise the level of competitiveness of industry and the ability to compete on international markets. The curricula and their development process have the potential to be utilized by other countries and Projects.

On the occasion of International Woman's Day, UNIDO also highlighted the case of the Zambia Project and publication entitled [Promoting Gender Equality in Trade Capacity Building: The Case of Zambia](#).

This showcases inspiring profiles of female quality professionals, highlighting how the Project has significantly contributed to Zambia's efforts in relation to gender mainstreaming and creating equal opportunities.

Title of the Project: Swaziland - Market access & trade

Country: The Kingdom of Swaziland

Donor: NORAD

Thematic areas: National quality infrastructure upgrading

The most notable activities for the UNIDO Project in the reporting period are progress towards preparing five industries, including food related sectors, for ISO 9001 certification, coaching and mentoring ISO 9001 trainee auditors. UNIDO also assists a selected group of laboratories, including food testing, to prepare for accreditation against ISO/IEC 17025.

An expert also undertook a mission for the first round of a Water Proficiency Testing scheme, which further demonstrates the multiple and parallel work being carried out through the Project towards its aims.



Equipment was purchased to establish a mass metrology industrial laboratory in the Swaziland Standards Authority (SWASA).

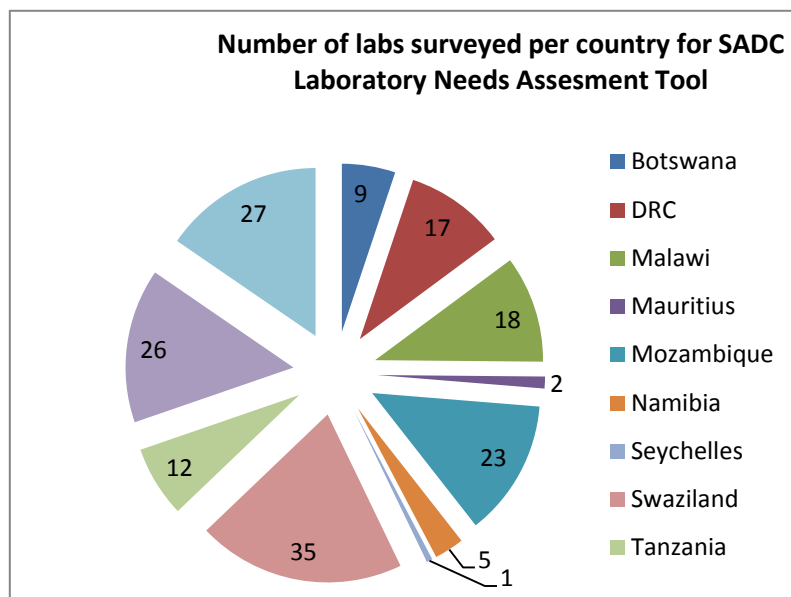
Title of the project: Sustainable Quality Infrastructure for SADC

Country: SADC region

Donor: Finland, UNIDO

Thematic areas: laboratory upgrade, accreditation of testing laboratories

The ultimate goal of the multi-component programme is to **contribute to the sustainability of key regional quality infrastructure institutions** that will support conformity assessment bodies. A first step towards this goal is to **support testing laboratories** in the region to improve their service offer by tackling common gaps in the region. For this purpose a Laboratory Assessment Tool has been developed in cooperation with SADC Regional Laboratories Association (SRLA) and National Laboratory Associations (NLAs) to assess the key needs of testing laboratories. The tool explores 4 key areas in the laboratories: quality of test methods, human capital, equipment, and quality management system. **175 laboratories**



from 11 countries in SADC participated in the survey and some of the key findings are as follows:

- 54% of the laboratories have equipment that is not functional
- 50% do not calibrate their equipment regularly
- 59% do not assess formally assess the training needs of the laboratory
- 61% of the laboratories/staff have insufficient expertise in test method validations
- 49% have insufficient expertise in intermediate verification checks
- 45% of the laboratories have insufficient expertise in PT/ILC or/and do not participate in PT/ILC
- 67% claim that the labs use laboratory management standard ISO/IEC17025, however 73% of those labs have not been appropriately trained to deploy these standards
- Finally, 79% of the labs have not been accredited.

As the key technical gaps in SADC testing laboratories have been identified, in order to overcome these efficiently, **UNIDO will strengthen directly laboratories, associations of laboratories at country level (NLAs) and regional level (SRLA)**. By strengthening the NLAs through a harmonized approach developed by the UNIDO-SRLA, the NLAs will be capable to disseminate knowledge and provide conformity assessment services to testing laboratories, thereby contribute to SADC region's quality infrastructure development and export performance. This will ultimately **strengthen laboratories in SADC region to provide high quality and reliable testing services for enterprises and regulators to facilitate trade**.

Title of the project: Market Access and Trade Capacity Building Support for Agro-industrial Products" (MATCB) Project; & Development of a Robust Standardization, Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Metrology infrastructure for Malawi (SQAM) Project

Country: The Republic of Malawi

Donor: Norad (MATCB); EU/UNDP (SQAM)

Thematic areas: SQAM, SPS, SMEs development, accreditation of conformity assessment bodies

The main developments to overcome SPS and TBT barriers were:

(i) **Preparation of a strategy** aimed at creating “Better Regulation” in Malawi, following a risk-based approach in formulation of technical regulations into the regulatory framework of Malawi;

(ii) With the scope of improving the linkages of the Malawian SPS infrastructures, **participation by Malawian representatives to the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS/TBT committee** meetings to further enhance the understanding by and contribution to the international processes related to the work of these structures;

(iii) Strengthening the SPS regulatory landscape in Malawi through the **analysis performed in close collaboration with FAO on the Food Safety Legislation Framework** in Malawi;

(iv) Substantial **reduction of testing times on aflatoxin** (from approximately one month to a few days) as an impact from upgrading MBS testing laboratories and improving testing capacity.



Title of the project: Trade capacity-building in the Mekong Delta countries of Cambodia and Lao People’s Democratic Republic through strengthening institutional and national capacities related to standards, metrology, testing and quality (SMTQ) phase III

Countries: Kingdom of Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic

Donor: Norad

Thematic areas: Quality infrastructure development

The Microbiological Testing Laboratory of Food and Drug Quality Control Centre (FDQCC) of Lao PDR is being supported to obtain **accreditation against the ISO/IEC 17025:2005** standard. The Microbiology Testing Laboratory carries out tests on foods and potable water and the scope of accreditation for which the laboratory is applying includes total bacteria in food, total coliforms in water and food, *Escherichia Coli* in water and food, and yeasts and molds in food. In order to prepare for the accreditation, the laboratory followed a **road map proposed by UNIDO**. The roadmap included the **drafting of quality and technical manuals** in accordance to ISO/IEC 17025, the maintenance of records, modifications to the layout and conditions of the Microbiology Testing Laboratory premises in accordance with international criteria and requirements, the training of two microbiologists in **laboratory testing and the calibration of the existing equipment**. At the end of 2016, the Bureau of Accreditation Vietnam (BoA) was selected as the accreditation body and in January 2017 the first assessment of the laboratory was conducted. With the support of the **project the laboratory was positively** evaluated: the equipment was found to be periodically checked and properly operating to perform all tests needed for accreditation; the staff was identified as qualified and adequately trained; the amount of media and strain/ culture in the laboratory were said to be enough to perform application parameters; and the internal audits and management reviews carried out annually were considered to be an important factor in the decision to grant the accreditation. FDQCC is expected to obtain accreditation by the end of April 2017.

Title of the project: Quality Infrastructure Programme for Central Africa - Programme Infrastructure Qualité de l’Afrique Centrale (PIQAC)

Countries: Regional project in Central Africa: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Chad

Donor: European Union

Thematic areas: quality and food safety, standard development

PIQAC has three components including a **regional quality policy** component that aims to develop a regional quality policy model (that includes all the components of quality infrastructure such as: standardization, conformity assessment, metrology and accreditation, etc.). A major milestone was achieved under that component as ministers from the seven beneficiary countries in Central Africa voiced their determination to implement a regional strategy of norms standardization and quality policy, and create a regional quality award. During a meeting that took place in Douala in Cameroon on 29 November 2016, the ministers or their representatives signed a common declaration validating a set of documents that will help create a coordination mechanism regarding normalization activities and quality promotion in the region.

The documents were later approved on 16 February 2017 by 18 ministers representing the six member states of the Economic Union of Central Africa (UEA), namely Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The region can now move ahead with the implementation of a harmonized strategy of standardization and quality policy, as well as the organization of a Regional Quality Award competition to reward enterprises using good practices with regards to quality infrastructure.
