

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

STDF WG Meeting, [June 2024](#)

(Period covered: [November 2023 – May 2024](#))

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

PROJECTS

❖ **Nigeria: “Improving SPS compliance to boost export capacity”
(March 2024 – February 2027 / Donor STDF)**

Financed by the WTO-Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), the project seeks to reduce the number of rejections of Nigerian cowpea and sesame exports at international borders through better compliance with Maximum Residue Levels of pesticides and avoidance of Salmonella contamination in the targeted value chains. ITC is leading the implementation of the project with a national partner, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) which is the Federal Government of Nigeria’s apex institution for the promotion, development, and diversification of exports.

The overall project goal is to contribute to increased income generation through the supply of high quality and safe agricultural products for international and regional markets. Specifically, the project aims to enhance access to high value and regional markets for Nigerian agri-food producers, processors, and exporters by improving the management of pesticide residues as well as pathogenic-micro-organisms thus improving the quality and safety of agrifood supply. It is intended that compliance to food safety standards including Codex Alimentarius standards, institutional support and capacity building will also lead to reduced trade costs and fewer border rejections.

To achieve its goals, the project will implement activities along the following three Outputs:

1. Regulatory, quality control and traceability system for pesticides strengthened for the two selected agricultural value chains;
2. Enhanced capacity of project beneficiaries regarding management of pathogenic micro-organisms, pesticide residue management and compliance with international and regional quality and food safety requirements; and
3. An effective public-private dialogue has been established and is used to share and discuss information on pesticide management and microbiological contamination for cowpeas and sesame

The project was launched in Abuja on 11 March 2024.

❖ **Uzbekistan: Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO
(February 2020 – October 2024 / 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 project 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).

The project continues to support the relevant agencies of Uzbekistan, closely aligning with their commitment set out in the Action Plan for Implementation of the SPS Agreement, submitted at the Working Party Meeting on the Accession of Uzbekistan to the WTO.

To help national SPS-related agencies gain insights into the SPS Committee's work, enhance understanding on the implementation of the SPS Agreement, and gather best practices in practical application of the SPS measures by WTO member countries, the project supported the participation of two delegates from the Agency of Plant Protection and Quarantine (NPPO) under the Ministry of Agriculture and the Committee of Sanitary-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health (San-Epid Committee) under the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan to attend the thematic workshop of the WTO Committee on SPS Transparency Measures between March 18 and 19, 2024, and the WTO SPS Committee Meeting between March 20 and 22, 2024.

In the area of food safety, the project supported the preparation of a 'Strategic Plan on Modernizing the Sanitary Rules and Norms (SanPiNs)' for the competent authority, Sanitary-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health Committee (San-Epid Committee) and which is currently being reviewed. A Food Safety Handbook for food operators and SMEs in Uzbekistan has been developed and is currently being translated into Uzbek.

Technical assistance was provided from 2 to 7 March 2024 to build the capacity of the Agency for Plant Protection and Quarantine (NPPO) to undertake risk-based official controls. The assistance included support to the development of draft legislation on the implementation of a risk management system and a review of the phytosanitary import control policy and procedures, covering pest risk analysis for high- and medium-risk imports, enhanced by field training workshops engaging 8 officials and regional inspectors.

A capacity-building training workshop was held from 28 to 29 March 2024 on risk-based official controls related to food safety for relevant authorities. 18 participants attended the training which covered key elements of official controls, including identification of risk-based criteria, risk categorization of food facilities and their registration, risk analysis in food safety, planning of risk-based food control activities, risk-based inspection, food traceability, and emergency measures, among others.

29 participants, food value-chain operators, processors, and officials from the competent authority including official control inspectors were provided an overview of HACCP, GHP, and GMP between from 25 to 27 March 2024.

**❖ EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II)
(01/08/2023 – 31/07/2027 - Donor EU)**

The second phase of the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II) is a regional initiative funded by the European Union (EU) to unlock the full potential of agribusinesses within the EAC region; implemented by ITC working in partnership with the EU regional Delegation, the EAC Secretariat and the governments of six EAC member states.

The quality and SPS component of MARK UP II aims at strengthening quality and food safety compliance and standards, including the development of quality awards, training and coaching of enterprises and awareness raising regarding quality and food safety requirements of export markets. Value chains selected for support are avocado, cocoa, coffee, essential oils, French beans, gum Arabic, horticulture, leather, packaging, spices and tea.

A joint EAC Secretariat/ITC regional consultative workshop on quality and standards compliance, from 12-13 February in Nairobi, Kenya, engaged 47 representatives of the six EAC Partner States, EAC Secretariat, EU Delegation to Kenya, East African Business Council (EABC) and ITC. The workshop aligned and integrated MARKUP II Quality Compliance and Standards workplan with the roadmaps of the East Africa Standards Committee, Technical Subcommittees and Taskforces. ITC conducted working sessions and visits to quality-related counterparts in Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan from 14 to 21 February and agreed on modality of implementation of activities at country level. The 1st Regional Steering Committee meeting was held from 18th to 20th March 2024, in Arusha where the activities at regional and national level of the workplan for year 1 (March 2024-February 2025) were validated.

Planning and implementation of the different project activities at regional and national level according to the agreed workplan for year 1 is ongoing. Coordination and synergies are being built with development partners such as TradeMark Africa (TMA) and the Germany's National Metrology Institute (PTB).

With a view to supporting EAC to develop and implement a roadmap to address laboratories' challenges in accessing maintenance and repair services, ITC conducted two online surveys between 5 April and 12 May 2024. Survey I targeted public and private laboratories that provide food testing services in the EAC and gathered 41 responses. Survey I was complemented by 12 bilateral follow-up interviews. Further, ITC conducted a quick Survey II aiming at repair and maintenance service providers in the region, gathering 16 responses. The survey report will be distributed in June, followed by relevant restitution and validation events.

The EAC Quality for Trade Platform, which provides information on SPS requirements for select priority products, is undergoing a process of updating and expansion to include South Sudan as the 6th country with a national access point. Information on SPS requirements for coffee, tea and avocado in the EU market have been updated.

MARKUP II will support regional Codex Forum meetings for the preparation of EAC common positions and the participation of EAC Secretariat staff at the CCFICS27 Codex

Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems, 16-20 September, Australia, and at the CAC47 meeting, 25-30 November 2024, in Geneva, Switzerland.

MARKUP II continues to build on and sustain the achievements of MARK UP I, such as on the recently completed previous phase in Burundi where in addition to the two testing laboratories (the Laboratory for Soil Analysis and Food Products – LASPA of the Institute of Agriculture Science of Burundi (ISABU) and the Chemistry Laboratory of Burundi Bureau of Standards and Quality Control (BBN)) and two inspection bodies (BBN and DPV), the product certification service of BBN recently obtained international Accreditation. This historic milestone for Burundi has been celebrated by ITC at the Africa Day and a related video is accessible [here](#).

**❖ Iraq: Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy (SAAVI)
(September 2020-April 2025 / Donor EU)**

This project aims to support stabilization and governance through building the capacities of key Iraqi institutions to deliver public services, as well as sustainable job creation through the development of human capital and the enhancement of private sector's competitiveness. The project focuses on the development and implementation of sector strategies for high-potential products, as well as on defining more market-oriented policies to improve predictability and efficiency in the business environment. SAAVI also provides assistance to enhance Iraq's trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process.

Following a request from the Ministry of Health, a workshop on the main provisions of the WTO Agreements on SPS and TBT was held in Baghdad on the 26 and 27 May 2024 for 28 participants. Representatives of the Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Agriculture including the latter's Plant Protection and Veterinary Services departments attended the workshop.

A training for inspectors from the Ministry of Health on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles and guidelines, ISO 9011:2018 - Guidelines for auditing management systems, and risk-based inspection is scheduled to take place from 28 July to 5 August 2024.

A workshop for the dates sector (farmers, producers, processors) was conducted from 28 to 29 April 2024. This two-day workshop held in Karbala saw 22 participants from both the public and the private sectors. The sessions included market expectations for date exports according to relevant codex standards, sharing of trade experience, and international and regional technical requirements for the product.

Research has begun on SPS and TBT requirements for Dates, Fresh or Dried for the markets of Turkey and UAE. This information will be uploaded to the Iraq Quality for Trade Platform and made publicly available. Additional products have been identified for future mappings.

❖ **Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (ARISE Plus – Myanmar)**
(July 2019 – May 2024 / Donor EU)

The project aims at building inclusive and sustainable trade growth in Myanmar through support to micro, small and medium-sized (MSMEs) in selected value chains enhancing food safety and SPS compliance (targeting tea, coffee, honey, horticulture products) and trade policy formulation and implementation. Myanmar Platform on Quality and Food Safety continues to grow in scale and scope. The site now features SPS requirements for mango puree and canned pineapple for the EU market. A launch event for the platform took place on 15 May 2024. (Website: qualityfortrade.intracen.org/Myanmar)

As the project was fully focused on private sector development, several companies of the project target product groups (honey, coffee, tea, fruit and vegetables, beans and pulses) were assisted to introduce HACCP system and FSSC 22000-Food Safety System Certification Scheme. Twelve companies were certified.

The project ended on 23 May 2024.

❖ **Pakistan: Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP)**
(June 2019 to December 2024 / Donor EU)

ITC is engaged with government agencies handling sanitary and phytosanitary measures in Sindh and Balochistan provinces in Pakistan with a view to improving their technical functions, equipment, and capacities. The departments include the food safety authorities in both provinces, agriculture extension departments, livestock departments, plant protection departments, and animal health institutes.

In order to develop the capacity of the university undergraduates on SPS, the existing curriculum on SPS has been reviewed and a new course content has been outlined. A letter of intent has been signed between GRASP and Sindh Agriculture University in Sindh province to enhance capacity of the students in this important field of study through introduction of new SPS courses.

A number of trainings have been held for staff of provincial departments to enhance their capacity to implement SPS measures. These include food safety analysis training for staff of Balochistan Food Authority, pesticide analysis and good laboratory practices trainings for Pesticide Quality Control and Research Lab (PQRL) staff, a hands-on training of PQRL staff on analysis of pesticide using ultra-performance liquid chromatography (UPLC), aflatoxin analysis training for the staff of agriculture extension department and food authorities of both provinces. Under the project, the Director, Agriculture Extension, Balochistan visited spice processing and export companies in Karachi to apprise himself of food safety requirements in chillies. More technical assistance activities are currently being planned for the said institutions.

The provincial departments performing SPS functions in Balochistan and Sindh provinces were assessed for their capacity and from the point of view of available resources. GRASP has initiated the process of procurement of tools, furniture, and allied resources for establishment of Balochistan Food Authority Training School at Quetta in Balochistan. Food

testing kits procurement is also in the way for provincial food authorities of Sindh and Balochistan. Moreover modern equipment for Sindh Institute of Animal Health has been ordered for oxytocin testing in milk. The analytical facility for this injectable banned hormone will be the first of its kind in the province. Equipment for pest surveillance and tools to strengthen the mechanism for collection of pesticide samples have also been ordered. The project is in the process to upgrade regional pesticide quality control and a research laboratory at Quetta through technical support for activating its equipment. The equipment procurement process for establishing an advanced virology laboratory is also expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

To strengthen testing at provincial level, laboratories involved in SPS functions have been selected for support to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation with related gap analyses conducted for seven laboratories. Three training workshops have been conducted at Karachi and Quetta for the staff of these labs to improve their awareness and enhance their capacity to implement the standard ISO/IEC 17025 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories. Development and implementation of related quality management system and its documentation at these labs is under way whereas the process of provision of minor equipment necessary for accreditation has also been initiated.

❖ **The Philippines: Bangsamoro Agri-Enterprise Programme (BAEP) – FAIR VALUE Project**
(12/09/2023 - 11/09/2026, donor EU)

Part of a bigger programme (Farmers – Fisherfolks’ Advancement and Integration to Resilient Value Chains in BARMM) led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and co-implemented with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the Philippines - the project (FAIR VALUE) aims at improving quality, diversity, and consolidation of local agricultural/marine aqua products in response to market needs. ITC’s interventions specifically focus on implementing food safety systems and increasing the investment readiness of selected enterprises and cooperatives.

The Action is anchored on a partnership between IOM, FAO and ITC that maximizes the strengths of each partner in terms of field presence, existing community partnerships, technical expertise, and international value chain linkages respectively.

IOM/FAO/ITC ongoing activities are currently engaged in value chain assessment (seaweed, coffee, and rubber) and selection of beneficiaries. ITC joined a field mission to Sulu from 4 to 6 March 2024 to participate in a coffee value chain assessment session conducted by IOM in Zamboanga and connect with stakeholders. In April 2024 ITC completed the onboarding of the national food safety expert acting as National Project Coordinator based in Zamboanga city. ITC held a 2h webinar on its Trade Market Intelligence tools and on Quality for Trade Platform for IOM Value chain consultant and IOM/FAO project team to familiarise them with the tools and create insights for the value chain assessment. Three BARMM officials attended the training on EU food safety regulations (1-2 April) in Manila organised by ITC ARISE Plus Philippines project.

An EU Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission is scheduled from 31 May to 7 June 2024.

❖ **Philippines ARISE Plus Project**
(March 2021-February 2025/ Donor EU)

The project aims to foster inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the Philippines through improved trade performance and competitiveness and specifically by putting in place a National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that promotes export competitiveness, and a quality management and control systems for exported food products better aligned with international best practices.

A training of laboratories of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Common Services Laboratory (CSL) microbiology laboratory staff on principles and procedures of advanced methods for the enumeration of microorganisms and detection of food borne pathogens, viruses and toxins, and method validation was held from 4 to 8 March 2024. This training held in person in Manila was attended by 20 CSL staff from Manila, as well as Cebu and Davao regions. Participants were taken through an overview of common food borne pathogens, viruses, and toxins, their detection methods including Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) Techniques and its variants, Immunoassay Methods (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay - ELISA), Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) for Pathogen Detection, Loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP), Nucleic acid sequence-based amplification (NASBA) and biosensor-based methods. Emerging technologies, nanotechnology in food safety, and artificial intelligence in microbial analysis were also covered with regulatory compliance and international standards. A second training session on methods for the determination of tests in food and beverages (conventional and rapid methods) was held from 11 to 15 March 2024 to help participants prepare standards for the Philippines, including values and methods.

A refresher training course on EU TRAdE Control and Expert System (TRACES) for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Philippines will take place in Manila, from 28 to 30 May 2024.

Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations are now live on the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform, publicly available to all users. Priority sectors include Virgin Coconut Oil, Coconut Water, Coconut Flour. Additional products including dried mango, mango puree, dried pineapple and canned pineapple, coffee and cocoa have also been made available. website: qualityfortrade.intracen.org/philippines

Moreover, a team of 20 Quality Champions qualified under the project started to roll out a series of training and coaching for MSMEs in collaboration with national public institutions and private sector partners with the Philippines Society for Quality as lead partner to cascade knowledge on the importance of quality and food safety including Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) to meet technical market requirements.

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