

**STDF POLICY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY REPORT**

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE 2024
VIRTUAL MEETING

1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The meeting was chaired by Jean-Marie Paugam, Deputy Director General of the WTO. He welcomed participants, recalled the establishment of the STDF 20 years ago, and how it has grown from a small collection of SPS projects to a global partnership that is recognized for its convening power, good practices and knowledge work, and results on the ground. He also welcomed Mr Neil Pogorelsky and Mr Petteri Lammi from Project Economics Consulting (PEC), the company which delivered the STDF external evaluation. Members adopted the agenda without any amendments. A list of all participants (including observers) is provided in **Annex 1**.

2 EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE STDF

2. Mr Pogorelsky made a short presentation highlighting the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation, followed by feedback from members. Members thanked PEC for the comprehensive evaluation report. Some members requested clarifications on certain recommendations. In particular, Francesco Branca (WHO) and Montserrat Arroyo (WOAH) asked about which other partners to engage in the STDF, and potential conflicts of interest in this regard. Another question from Ms Arroyo related to the creation of STDF sub-networks to enhance the impact of the partnership. After answering all questions, Mr Pogorelsky and Mr Lammi left the meeting.

3. The meeting continued by discussing each of the evaluation's six recommendations, as follows:

1	As a component of the development of the next strategy, engage the partnership in a moderated discussion about the mandate of the STDF and whether or not to widen the scope of STDF’s work to "SPS+".
<p>There was no consensus among members to have a moderated discussion on the STDF's mandate, including possibly extending STDF support to help developing countries meet other (mostly TBT) standards and requirements to gain and maintain market access for their food and agriculture exports. This recommendation was not accepted. While supported by the WTO and the World Bank Group, which noted the importance of ensuring that the STDF remains agile and fit-for-purpose linked to emerging trends, opportunities and challenges affecting safe trade facilitation in developing countries, most Policy Committee members were against this discussion given the scale of SPS challenges and risk of diluting the STDF's focus.</p>	
2	Increase the impact of the global platform by strengthening, expanding and servicing the partnership further.
<p>There was no consensus in the Policy Committee on changing the current structure of membership as stated in the Operational Rules. However, the Committee did not oppose exploring avenues for outreach cases or expansion of the partnership .</p> <p>Members welcomed additional opportunities for awareness raising and outreach, and considered that a discussion in the Working Group on how to further engage and involve other organizations with an SPS mandate (regional economic communities, technical bodies, regional development banks, private sector) would be useful. They also welcomed further consideration of options to expand STDF's sub-network model (including practitioner groups) as part of the development of STDF's next Strategy. Some unease was expressed related to the proposed expansion of the role of representative private sector organizations in the Working Group. Members agreed that further discussion in the Working Group would be needed to analyse how to take forward this</p>	

recommendation, including to understand the implications of an increased role for private sector bodies.	
3	Improve co-financing of project activities via a strategy-wide target for project finance leverage.
The evaluation highlighted that the STDF has been successful at leveraging external finance support for projects, with over 30% of project funds under the current strategy coming from a mix of financial and in-kind contributions. Members generally agreed with the concept of co-financing but did not agree to set a specific, ambitious strategy-wide target or requirement for leveraging. Donor members in particular felt this would be complex for them to put into practice. That said, members welcomed a further discussion on co-financing in the Working Group to take forward aspects of this recommendation.	
4	STDF should consider improving its results-based management culture to match growth in scale.
Members generally agreed on the recommendation to further improve implementation of STDF's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework, though cautioned against the additional burden this may have on the Secretariat and project implementing organizations. The MEL framework will be revised, soon after the development of the new STDF strategy.	
5	STDF should consider strengthening the role of the Developing Country Expert and finding avenues for post-role engagement
Members agreed to strengthening the participation of developing country experts in the STDF to further support regional outreach and dissemination of STDF's knowledge and other work. They welcomed aspects of this recommendation, for instance, related to creation of an alumni group of previous experts. Some members cautioned against "institutionalizing" the role of developing country experts linked to regional organizations, as recommended by this evaluation (as well as the 2019 external STDF evaluation). The Policy Committee agreed that the Working Group should further discuss the role and selection criteria for developing country experts to take forward this recommendation.	
6	The Policy Committee should add either one additional Secretariat staff member OR support a secondment programme to supplement the existing capacity of the Secretariat.
Members generally supported this recommendation. Some (FAO) also pointed to opportunities to further improve processes for increased efficiencies. To avoid that additional staffing reduces funding available for projects, consideration may be given to slightly increase STDF's annual target level of funding under the new STDF strategy. There was agreement that in the medium to long-term, secondment programmes (including from STDF donors or academic organizations) could also be considered, recognizing that time would be required to set up such programmes.	

7 NEW STDF STRATEGY (2025 AND BEYOND)

4. The chairperson reminded members that the current five-year STDF Strategy runs until the end of 2024. A new strategy for the STDF will be developed during the second half of 2024, building on and updating the existing Strategy, while enabling the global partnership to position itself to address future needs, challenges and opportunities. The next strategy will be informed by the findings, lessons and (accepted) recommendations of the STDF external evaluation report. This process will start with an external retreat for STDF founding partners in Geneva on 18 June 2024 to be followed by a strategy workshop on 19 June, involving the entire STDF partnership.

5. The chairperson opened the floor for Policy Committee members to reflect and provide guidance related to the next STDF strategy.

6. Francesco Branca (WHO) noted that while the WHO does not support expanding STDF's mandate, during development of the next strategy, members should consider the connections between SPS challenges and opportunities linked to broader trends and related initiatives. A discussion on private sector involvement in the STDF (guided by an understanding of its implications) was also opportune. He suggested that the STDF may consider establishing a community of practice on topics related to innovation, good practices and scaling in project development and implementation. Finally, the WHO proposed to strengthen the interaction between the STDF and the Codex Trust Fund.
7. Montserrat Arroyo (WOAH) noted that the evaluation demonstrates that the STDF is working well, while pointing to opportunities for further strengthening the partnership. She recommended that the STDF should continue sharing know-how, tools and good practice, and this should be the basis of the new STDF strategy. The STDF should continue its focus on lower-middle income countries.
8. Sarah Cahill (FAO) concurred that the evaluation provides an excellent basis on which to build a new strategy. While FAO does not support extending STDF's mandate, FAO recognizes that SPS risks and challenges are evolving, and the new strategy should enable the STDF to remain responsive to address these issues in today's changing environment. She recommended that the new strategy should explore ways to achieve further efficiencies in delivery.
9. Betsy Baysinger (USDA) highlighted that the discussions in 2019 to develop the current strategy were well structured and a similar process could be used again in 2024. She recalled that the STDF is working well and that members should keep the strategy discussions focused and targeted.
10. Edwini Kessie (WTO) mentioned that the upcoming strategy development meetings will provide a good first opportunity to have a frank and open discussion among STDF members. Moving forward, he said that it is important that the STDF is "fit-for purpose".
11. Bill Gain (World Bank) agreed that the STDF should remain fit-for-purpose, noting that the STDF Secretariat should remain agile to respond to emerging issues in the next strategy period. He noted that the next strategy provides an opportunity to consider the role of regional sub-networks in strengthening the STDF's operating model, as well as possible updates to refresh the Operational Rules.

4 OTHER BUSINESS

12. No items were raised under other business.
13. In concluding the meeting, the chairperson thanked all participants for their active participation and proposed that the Policy Committee will meet again – ideally in person – towards the end of 2024 or early 2025 to endorse the new STDF strategy.
14. The meeting was adjourned at 16:15.

ANNEX 1**STDF POLICY COMMITTEE****12 JUNE 2024**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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