

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

STDF WG Meeting, [October 2024](#)

(Period covered: [June 2024 – September 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 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).

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.

A series of coordination meetings with key SPS-related institutions, such as the Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service (NAQS), the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), and association representatives from the sesame and cowpea value chains, were organized in collaboration with the NEPC, calling for an efficient inter-agency collaboration and active participation in the baseline research study of the selected two value chains.

Three baseline studies were launched successfully in August 2024 focusing on: (i) regulatory and institutional aspects of Nigeria's monitoring system for pesticides and pathogenic micro-organisms and coordination of public sector entities; (ii) analysis of the cowpea value chain; and (iii) analysis of the sesame value chain. Baseline data collection was done with the aid of questionnaires for target audiences along the value chains – private and public sectors (i.e. farmers, producers, processors, exporters, domestic distributors of pesticides, regulatory authorities, consumers, associations). Reports are being finalized following collection of relevant data, information, reports, and analytical studies to assess the current state of import, distribution, storage, use, sales and the controls of pesticides in Nigeria, as well as to analyze the sources and extent of Salmonella contamination in the selected value chains.

In June ITC conducted a mission to Nigeria to develop a parallel project (likely to be funded by the Japanese government). This new project will focus on digitalization of the agri-food sector with links envisaged with the STDF project in relation to traceability in the sesame value chain.

❖ **Eswatini: Promoting Growth through Competitive Alliances III**

(May 2023-May 2027 / Donor EU)

The overall objective of this programme is to contribute to economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction. With a major focus on the development of agriculture and agri-business value chains, the programme aims to unlock the key constraints to competitiveness in Eswatini by improving the policy and regulatory framework for private sector development and through the development of selected value chains.

A situation assessment was carried out during an ITC mission to Eswatini through meetings held from 9 to 10 September 2024 with the Eswatini Standards Authority (SWASA), National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBoard), National Plant Health Inspectorate Service, Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services, Eswatini Dairy Board (EDB), and the Environmental Health Unit of the Ministry of Health (MoH), as well through visits of the food testing, and veterinary laboratories.

A workshop was held from 11 to 13 September 2024 to acquaint two sectors – fresh fruits and vegetables, and livestock and meat - with technical market requirements and key standards applicable to participate in international trade. 50 participants from 18 governmental institutions including the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Health and five private companies attended. Sessions covered basic concepts in food safety, followed by an overview of Good Agricultural Practices, Good Farming Practices, Codex Principles of Good Hygiene, relevant Codes of Practice, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, and ISO 22000: Food Safety Management Systems, as well as SDGs, green transition, and circular economy as related to the said sectors. Group sessions were held to identify key challenges faced by the sectors to improve quality and food safety and by national quality infrastructure institutions to enhance their support. The challenges identified and actions recommended will form the basis of further activities implemented under the project.

❖ **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 technical assistance to enhance Iraq's trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process.

Through an expert trained under the Quality Champions component, SAAVI supported a leading food processing company "Taj Al-Mazraa" in Baghdad to implement HACCP, and ISO 22000: Food

Safety Management Systems. In August 2024, the company successfully achieved certification to both food safety schemes.

A training workshop for Ministry of Health inspectors 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 13 -17 October 2024.

A third and final workshop for the dates sector (farmers, producers, processors, exporters) was conducted from 23 to 24 September 2024. This two-day workshop held in Baghdad 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. A session on the status of Iraq's WTO accession process was also part of the workshop.

Research was completed on SPS and TBT requirements for Dates, Fresh or Dried for the markets of Turkey and UAE. This information has been uploaded to the Iraq Quality for Trade Platform and made publicly available. Additional products have been identified for future mappings. A launch event for the Iraq Quality for Trade Platform was held on 26 September in Baghdad, where stakeholders were introduced to the platform and shown how they can access information and detailed guidance on SPS and TBT measures, specifically for Dates.

❖ **Nepal: Trade-Related Assistance**

(January 2020- November 2024 /Donor EU)

As part of the support being provided to the Plant Quarantine and Pest Management Centre (PQPMC) for development of pest survey and surveillance in the coffee sector, a final report on findings of 12 months of field work including inception report, survey protocols for pests, and diseases will be presented at the project closure event to be held at the end of October 2024.

A team of Quality Champions trained SMEs and value chain actors in the coffee sector on quality and food safety through three workshops implemented in different locations. Similar training had earlier been offered with excellent results that were captured and uploaded on the Nepal Quality for Trade platform.

❖ **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.

As part of ongoing activities to develop the capacity of the university undergraduates on SPS, The Department of Food Science and Technology at the University of Karachi has revised its syllabus to incorporate SPS related content in its current curriculum. GRASP is in process to strengthen the capacity of departments on SPS curriculum teaching by trainings of faculty members and provision of equipment and tools.

Arrangements are underway to conduct a series of 3 trainings on HACCP for Sindh Food Authority (SFA) staff at Sukkur, Hyderabad, and Karachi.

Tools, furniture, and multimedia resources have been procured for the establishment of Balochistan Food Authority Training School in Quetta. Equipment for pest surveillance and tools to strengthen the mechanism for collection of pesticide samples have also been provided to Agriculture Extension Department, Quetta. Training to build the capacities of inspectors in collection of pesticide samples is being planned. The project has upgraded regional pesticide quality control and research laboratory at Quetta through technical support for method verification for pesticide assay and has activated its Ultra Performance Liquid Chromatography (UPLC) equipment. AOAC 2023 manuals have been procured and handed over to food authorities of Sindh and Balochistan as the reference material for their technical wing's analytical activity.

Ongoing support to prepare selected laboratories involved in SPS functions for accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation saw the completion of development and implementation of related quality management system and its documentation. Quality assurance tools and minor equipment necessary for accreditation are being procured, after which the laboratories will be audited by PNAC, which is a signatory to the ILAC MRA including ISO/IEC 17025 in its accreditation scope.

❖ **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 Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and co-implemented with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (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.

An EU Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission was completed in June 2024.

IOM led the development of the value chain assessment and ITC contributed to a series of value chains workshops aimed at collecting feedback from stakeholders between 22 August and 11 September in coffee, seaweeds, rubber, and regional finalization of the value chain assessment reports. The ITC food safety component commenced on 10 September with an awareness session on "Why food safety matters" and the launch of the BARMM Food Safety Ambassador Programme on 11 September held in Cotabato. Sixteen stakeholders from government, academia and private sector and from Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, were trained as potential candidates to become BARMM Food Safety Ambassadors on "implementing food safety systems" with industry exposure from 23 to 27 September in Zamboanga. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Western Mindanao Cluster-Pagadian City officials joined the training and explained the regulatory requirements for licences and registration.

❖ **Philippines ARISE Plus**

(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.

In continuation of the technical assistance, quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations were made live on the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform, now 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) An online interactive tool: [Introduction to food safety measures for MSMEs in the Philippines will be added to the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform.](#)

Moreover, a team of 20 Quality Champions qualified under the project continued 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.

❖ **Tanzania: Developing the Beekeeping Value Chain**

(September 2021 – February 2026, Donor EU)

This project seeks to improve the beekeeping value chain through enhanced quality production, value addition of bee products and enhanced trade and access to local, regional and international markets, while operating in a non-discriminatory and participative way through better provision of extension services to smallholder producers on best practices and access to production inputs. The project improves links between production and marketing, while focusing on groups living in vulnerable situations, providing them with employment opportunities to participate in the value chain.

The project specifically supports quality assurance, standards and certification of bee products, facilitating the regulatory procedures related to trade and hence increases penetration of regional and international markets. By targeting activities to strengthen women's role, the project will contribute to a more gender sensitive sector, through integration of gender sensitive criteria in the certification process as well as in the delivery of export capacity building services throughout ITC's intervention.

Under the food safety component, six processing centres were supported to comply with Good Hygiene Principles as this is a regulatory requirement in the Tanzanian honey processing sector. One international exporter of honey was certified to HACCP and is now selling honey to Saudi-Arabia. Nine more companies will receive support for HACCP certification under the project.

❖ **Turkmenistan: Enhancing capacities of policymakers for WTO accession**

(December 2023 – February 2028 / Donor EU)

The project aims at contributing to economic development in Turkmenistan by improving the country's business climate and competitiveness of SMEs while promoting Turkmenistan's international economic engagement and participation in regional and global trade. The project will also assist the Government of Turkmenistan in the process of accession to the WTO as well as in initiating trade facilitation reforms, increasing the country's investment attractiveness and creating a conducive e-commerce environment.

The project is currently supporting the Government of Turkmenistan to review consistency of relevant domestic legislation with the SPS Agreement. The reviewed legislation includes Sanitary Code of Turkmenistan (Law No.74-IV); Law of Turkmenistan on Safety and Quality of Food Products (Law No.105-V); Law on Plant Quarantine (Law No.54-IV); and Law on Veterinary Medicine (Law No.143-V). Under this project, ITC will deliver a workshop on the WTO TBT and SPS Agreements between 8 and 10 October 2024 in Ashgabat, targeting relevant ministries as well as their specialised agencies. The workshop is to be followed by technical meetings focusing on the reviewed legislation.

❖ **Uzbekistan: Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO**

(February 2020 – October 2024 / Donor EU)

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 project is to create a trade environment that is in conformity with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

During the reporting period, the project continued assistance to the Committee of Sanitary-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health (San-Epid Committee) in the development of the framework document for a strategic approach to modernize sanitary rules and norms (SanPiNs) and reviewed six (6) selected key SanPiNs on food additives, hygiene requirements, contaminants, pesticide residues in food, microbiological criteria, and veterinary medicine residues in food.

In response to a request by Uzbekistan's State Committee of Veterinary and Livestock Development (SVC), the project completed an English translation technical review of twenty-three (23) key legislative documents on animal health and veterinary sanitary requirements, contributing to Uzbekistan's transparency commitments under the SPS Agreement, as well as enhancing access to the legislative documents for a broader range of international stakeholders including researchers, private sector exporters, and importers. Furthermore, assistance to SVC continued with a technical review of the Law on Animal Health of Uzbekistan and the legislative document on Veterinary Import, Export, and Transit Requirements. Recommendations were submitted for alignment with the WOHAT Terrestrial Animal Health Code and compliance with the SPS Agreement requirements.

A series of training workshops covering theoretical and practical aspects of food safety, and veterinary, sanitary and hygiene requirements were delivered to a mixed target audience of

veterinary officials, specialists and food operators. These included a two-day training on National Residue Monitoring and Control Plan development and implementation, delivered to 39 veterinary officials and specialists from 12 to 13 June 2024. Following said training, 32 food value chain operators, processors, and officials from the competent authority, including official control inspectors, were trained on practical aspects of HACCP, GHP, and GMP in slaughterhouses from 1 to 3 July 2024. Finally, a two-day hybrid training on the fundamentals of the use of animal identification, registration, and veterinary traceability for animal health, food safety, and international trade was held from 4 to 5 July 2024, engaging 97 participants both online and onsite.

A training attachment of 4 officials from Uzbekistan's San-Epid Committee, the SVC, the National Plant Protection and Quarantine Agency (NPPO), and the Customs Committee, to the Latvian Food and Veterinary Service was organized between 23-27 September 2024, towards the participants gaining insights into practical application and implementation of the SPS Agreement provisions, scientific justification related aspects of SPS measures, and application of risk-based SPS controls.

❖ **EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II)**

(August 2023 – July 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 MARKUP II aims at strengthening compliance to quality and food safety 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.

In view of supporting EAC to improve coordination of and access to testing services ITC is finalizing a draft roadmap that sets out specific actions at regional and national levels to address challenges related to capacity to repair and maintain laboratory equipment in the EAC for food testing laboratories. ITC identified five root causes of the challenges through two technical surveys conducted between April and May 2024, which were subsequently validated by about 90 stakeholders (food testing laboratories, maintenance and repair service providers, and key testing equipment manufacturers) in the restitution events in July and September 2024. The final draft roadmap is expected to be reviewed and approved by the EAC's Technical Committee in December 2024

To support EAC to improve harmonization of standards, technical regulations and SPS measures, MARKUP II supported the 14th meeting of the EAC Codex Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 28 to 29 August 2024. This regional forum was attended by 27 delegates from eight Partner States, representatives from EAC Secretariat, ITC and TradeMark Africa (TMA) to develop EAC common positions on matters in the agenda of the 27th session of Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS27). After this forum, the project supported one EAC staff to attend the CCFICS27 held from 16 to 20 September in Cairns, Australia.

A Regional Codex Forum is scheduled in October in Nairobi for the preparation of EAC participation in the CAC47 meeting, 25-30 November 2024, in Geneva, Switzerland

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

At country level, MARKUP II completed a three-week training of 11 technicians (of which 3 women) on method for determination and quantification of pesticides residues, sample preparation, cleanup and running of samples and about the interpretation of results. The training held at the chemical laboratory of Rwanda's National Agricultural Export Development Board, included validation of analytical methods in pesticide residues determination, related EU DG SANTE legislation, and measurement uncertainty calculation. Standard operating procedure for performing the method describing the sample preparation, necessary solution preparation and quality control criteria as well as validation, and measurement uncertainty reports were developed for apple, tomato and maize.

Events to raise and improve awareness regarding quality and food safety were rolled out by teams of Quality Champions (trainers and advisors trained and qualified under ITC implemented export quality management projects) via national Quality Associations. The same teams are currently preparing to further train and coach SMEs.

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