

STDF WORK PLAN – 2025¹

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This provisional work plan sets out how the STDF will deliver on the first year of the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030. It includes planned activities and outputs that contribute to the STDF's two expected outcomes and programme goal. It aims to ensure continuity from the [STDF Strategy for 2025-2030](#), while enabling the STDF's work to further evolve for increased impacts based on the revised STDF theory of change and any new elements of the next Strategy.

1.2. The work plan is accompanied by a budget estimate for 2025 (**Annex 1**). The budget estimate for 2025 is similar to the budget in the 2024 workplan, pending discussion and agreement by the Working Group on any change to the target level of annual funding for the STDF in the next strategy period (and approval by the STDF Policy Committee).

1.3. The work plan is organized by STDF's three workstreams: (i) STDF's global platform; (ii) STDF knowledge work; and (iii) STDF's funding mechanism. The workplan includes creation of an Alumni Network of Developing Country Experts, as included in the draft STDF Strategy for 2025-2030, as well as new knowledge work on SPS innovations and scaling. Subject to approval of the Strategy for 2025-2030, further discussions may take place in the first half of 2025 to prepare any possible new virtual meetings/networks (e.g. Regional Hub, Private Sector Roundtable) that may be piloted in the next Strategy period.

1.4. A sizeable share of STDF's work (including meetings, knowledge work and projects/PPGs) will continue to take place virtually, resulting in cost savings overall but also requiring ongoing spending on IT tools and platforms.

1.5. Following approval of the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030 (including the theory of change), work will be carried out in 2025, in consultation with Working Group members, to update and revise the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework and the Communications Plan (both approved in 2020), so that MEL and Comms activities can effectively support the new Strategy.

2 STDF GLOBAL PLATFORM²

2.1. The STDF's Global Platform convenes and connects diverse public and private sector organizations across agriculture, health, trade and development to exchange experiences, identify opportunities for collaboration, and promote a more coherent approach to SPS capacity development.

2.1 STDF Working Group

2.2. The Working Group allows members and other relevant organizations to share information about past, ongoing and planned SPS activities and initiatives and to learn from each other's work, helping to disseminate, influence and scale up good practices more widely. The Working Group will include targeted presentations sharing the results and lessons from STDF knowledge work and projects or PPGs, as well as relevant work by STDF founding partners, donors and/or other partners.

¹ Approved as a provisional work plan by the STDF Working Group meeting on 6-7 November 2024, pending finalization and approval of the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030. Based on the approved Strategy for 2025-2030, the STDF Working Group may consider revisions to this work plan, as relevant, during its meeting in June 2025.

² Travel expenditure of STDF developing country experts to in-person Working Group and Policy Committee meetings (round trip, economy class) will be covered by the STDF Trust Fund, as well as coffee breaks, lunches, and evening networking events. The Trust Fund may also cover travel expenditure of presenters from developing countries and evaluators of STDF projects, where appropriate.

2.3. The Secretariat will organize two regular in-person meetings of the STDF Working Group in 2025, in June and November (dates to be confirmed).³ The meetings will be held in Geneva, at WTO headquarters. Those who are unable to travel to Geneva and attend the meetings in person will be able to participate virtually.

2.2 STDF Policy Committee

2.4. The Policy Committee comprises high-level representatives of STDF's founding partners and selected donor members and developing country experts. It sets policy guidelines, provides oversight on the overall direction of the STDF, and oversees efforts by the Working Group in the coordination of SPS-related technical cooperation and dissemination of good practices.

2.5. One meeting of the Policy Committee will be planned in 2025 to discuss and provide high-level support for the implementation of the next STDF Strategy⁴ and to consider and approve any recommendations from the Working Group on follow-up to the external programme evaluation (PEC, 2024). The Policy Committee meeting will be held virtually, unless an opportunity arises for an in-person meeting, back-to-back with another high-level event involving STDF's founding partners.

2.2 Practitioner Groups

2.1. Practitioner Groups, targeted at STDF Working Group members and SPS practitioners globally, will continue to meet virtually to encourage dialogue, promote learning, share experiences and support increased uptake of SPS good practices in support of STDF's programme goal. They will enable members and other relevant stakeholders (including project stakeholders) to share experiences and lessons, supporting increased dialogue and outreach on SPS good practices and innovation, that helps to promote uptake and drive catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries.

2.2. The Secretariat will convene Practitioner Group meetings and share information on the STDF website. STDF founding partners, donors, developing country experts (current and former), other partners and relevant stakeholders will be encouraged to participate actively. Synergies will be made between the Practitioner Groups and the new Developing Country Expert Alumni Network. Subject to finalization and approval of the 2025-2030 Strategy, there may be opportunities for synergies between the Practitioner Groups and other elements of the 2025-2030 Strategy (e.g. proposed Regional Hub and proposed Private Sector Roundtable) if approved by the Working Group.

2.3. Three Practitioner Groups will be convened in 2025. This will include a new Practitioner Group to support knowledge work on innovation and scaling. The scope of the Practitioner Group on e-certification will be expanded to focus on digitalization more broadly, as well as artificial intelligence and other new technologies. The Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Practitioner Group will be maintained. Subject to possible inclusion of a Private Sector Roundtable as part of the next Strategy, the PPP Practitioner Group may support the planning and organization of one Private Sector Roundtable meeting (virtual) in 2025. The P-IMA Practitioner Group will be suspended⁵.

2.4. In 2025, at least 9 meetings (in total) of the following three Practitioner Groups will be organized. Some of these meetings will focus on aspects related to cross-cutting issues on gender and environment:

- SPS innovations and scaling: The Practitioner Group will convene Working Group members and others (e.g. research, the private sector, development partners, national governments) that play a role in using and scaling SPS innovations to exchange knowledge and learning on innovation, financing and scaling methodologies, including related challenges and opportunities. It will actively support development of

³ In 2025, meetings of the WTO SPS Committee are scheduled on 19-21 March, 18-20 June and 5-7 November, allowing for potential synergies and resource efficiencies with STDF Working Group travel.

⁴ The Policy Committee will be requested to approve the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030 via email in December 2024, following approval by the STDF Working Group.

⁵ The Practitioner Group on evidence-based approaches (P-IMA) will not be continued in 2025. Outreach and sharing on P-IMA will take place within other Practitioner Groups, the Working Group and other relevant global and regional events.

new knowledge on SPS innovations and scaling, ultimately informing future STDF work, as well as other initiatives and policies more broadly.

- SPS-related Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): The PPP Practitioner Group will continue to profile and share experiences and lessons from relevant PPPs at the country/regional level to address SPS challenges and facilitate safe trade. Ongoing efforts will be made to engage representatives of national governments and private sector stakeholders in dialogues and webinars to understand different insights and perspectives on PPPs, including opportunities for up-scaling.
- SPS digitalization / [Electronic SPS certificates](#) (including SPS e-Cert, AI and other new technologies): The Practitioner Group will continue to promote dialogue and learning on SPS eCert (building on STDF e-certification projects⁶) while also promoting dialogue and learning on other relevant digitalization initiatives including AI. Linked to work on innovation and scaling, attention will focus on opportunities to scale up and integrate eCert into broader whole-of-government trade facilitation programmes.

3 STDF KNOWLEDGE WORK

3.1. Knowledge work promotes dialogue and learning among STDF members and with other stakeholders on cross-cutting thematic topics to improve SPS capacity development outcomes and facilitate safe trade.⁷ Further deepening interactions and synergies between knowledge work and STDF projects/PPGs will support delivery and improved results under STDF workstreams, while contributing to SPS synergies, collaboration and good practices in support of STDF's outcomes.

3.2. In 2025, the STDF will begin new knowledge work on SPS innovations and scaling to support the increased focus on scaling and leveraging investments in the draft STDF Strategy for 2025-2030. This work will identify and compile SPS innovations piloted through STDF grants, while also defining tailored methodologies for scaling these innovations. It will include research and consultations to understand and unpack SPS innovations and a publication on scalable SPS innovations. The research will be complemented by a study to identify potential sources of financing for SPS capacity with a focus on the private sector (financial institutions including private banks, regional development banks, angel investors, industry, etc.), as well as funding sources within the public sector in developing countries.

3.3. In parallel, the STDF will expand the reach and use of existing knowledge work ([Public Private Partnerships \(PPPs\)](#)), evidence-based approaches (including capacity evaluation tools and P-IMA), digitalization/e-Cert, GRPs, mainstreaming gender and environment.

3.4. Opportunities will be sought to promote collaboration and outreach on knowledge work with STDF founding partners, donors, developing country experts and other partners. Ongoing efforts will be made to share knowledge work with the SPS Committee, the Aid for Trade Committee and other relevant WTO committees, as well as with meetings organized by STDF founding partners (including meetings organized by the ISSBs).

3.2 Good practice briefing notes and knowledge products

3.5. Through its knowledge work, the STDF will develop, and disseminate good practices and user-friendly knowledge products to support SPS capacity development and influence change. These products will draw on and leverage the expertise of STDF founding partners and other members, as well as discussions in the Practitioner Groups. They will promote increased uptake of the guidance and tools developed by members of STDF's global partnership, supporting their wider use at global, regional and national level.

3.6. In 2025, up to nine good practice briefing notes and/or knowledge products are planned. These include: (i) publication (including case stories) on scalable SPS innovations derived from work carried out under STDF projects; (ii) four case stories of PPPs and GRPs; (iii) three Briefing Notes that

⁶ ePhyto and eVet

⁷ STDF members select topics for knowledge work, and may request the Secretariat, in collaboration with members, to develop concept notes for new work for consideration.

compile and analyse lessons on thematic topics related to STDF work; and (iv) a study on private sector financing opportunities.

3.7. Some knowledge work will continue to follow-up on the external assessment on [Prioritization of SPS Investment Options for Market Access \(P-IMA\)](#), including potential linkages with SPS capacity evaluation tools. The Secretariat will draft a proposed action plan to guide future work on P-IMA, drawing on insights gathered from meetings with selected partners to collect insights on the recommendations of the P-IMA external assessment. Subject to interest, a workshop or virtual meetings may be organized to discuss the proposed plan with relevant stakeholders in the second half of 2025.

3.8. [Good Regulatory Practices \(GRPs\)](#): Work will continue to disseminate the STDF GRP Guide (issued in 2021) and build awareness to encourage the use of GRPs. This will take place mainly through participation in events and webinars organized by STDF partners and others, including synergies to the new STDF regional ePing project. The Secretariat will compile and disseminate new case stories on the use of GRPs at country/regional level to support outreach and capacity development on GRPs.

3.9. [Gender mainstreaming](#): Work will continue to raise awareness about the importance of mainstreaming gender in SPS projects and initiatives to improve results and sustainability, including by drawing attention to STDF's Gender Action Plan through participation in relevant events and webinars. The STDF will develop a practical training guide on the gender dimensions of SPS capacity building targeted at project beneficiaries and other stakeholders in developing countries (such as government officers, private sector, NPPOs, animal and food safety authorities in beneficiary countries).

3.10. Environment mainstreaming: Following the external assessment, a simple Action Plan will be developed, in consultation with Working Group members and STDF project implementors, to support environment mainstreaming in STDF's work. Subject to further discussions, this may include, for instance, a checklist with guiding questions to support mainstreaming throughout the lifecycle of STDF projects based on needs, opportunities and challenges.

3.11. In case of interest, and subject to discussions and resources, the Working Group may decide to add additional knowledge outputs on new or previously considered topics.

3.3 Global and/or regional events

3.12. Global and regional (virtual) client-facing events will be organized to disseminate and promote the use of STDF knowledge products and SPS good practices and promote their wider uptake and use at a global, regional, and national level. These events will be targeted primarily at SPS practitioners in developing countries.

3.13. Wherever possible, collaborative events in partnership with other relevant organizations will be encouraged to make the best use of available resources. Efforts will be made to engage STDF developing country experts in these events where relevant. Some events will take place virtually to expand access, some will be organized in person to enable deeper interactions and exchange.

3.14. In 2025, the following global and/or regional STDF events are planned to share STDF knowledge and learning (in addition to events organized as part of MEL and communications work). These events may be co-organized with STDF founding partners and others subject to further discussions and identification of opportunities for collaboration linked to other planned events:

- Up to two events in Geneva linked to STDF knowledge work, including one event with a focus on gender mainstreaming, and one event on the margins of an SPS Committee meeting.
- One global/regional event (linked to other events organized by STDF partners or other members) such as the Vienna Food Safety Forum.

4 STDF FUNDING MECHANISM

4.1. STDF project and project preparation grants (PPGs) convene and connect public, private and other stakeholders at global, regional and country level to pilot innovative and collaborative approaches, leverage expertise and resources, and deliver results, including in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Projects and PPGs link to STDF's knowledge work, allowing all those involved to learn about what works well and less well. Sharing the experiences helps to influence and catalyse SPS improvements more widely. The Secretariat will continue to make the linkages between knowledge and project work and identify synergies, where possible.

4.2. Based on trends regarding the number of applications received, it is anticipated that a large number of project and PPG applications (at various stages of development) will be received in 2025 for initial review by the Secretariat.⁸ The Secretariat will continue to provide advice and support to applicants, in close consultation with relevant STDF partners, in terms of SPS needs assessments, priority setting and proposal development. This "helpdesk" function of the Secretariat will continue to absorb a relatively large portion of staff time. The STDF will ensure that at least 40% of PPG and project resources benefit eligible organizations in LDCs.⁹

4.1 Project development

4.3. Project preparation grants (PPGs) assist beneficiaries to articulate and prioritize SPS needs and develop projects. Predicting the number of PPG applications to be approved and funded through the STDF in 2025 is difficult, given that the quality of applications received is beyond the Secretariat's control. Based on experiences in previous years, and in view of STDF's annual target level of funding, the Working Group will aim to approve at least six project preparation grants (PPGs) for STDF funding per year, corresponding to an average of three PPGs approved at each meeting. Normally up to US\$50,000 is available to eligible organizations under a PPG.

4.4. The Secretariat will continue to play a pro-active role in the implementation of PPGs and resource mobilization for the resulting projects, as far as possible. Given the limited resources available in the STDF trust fund, the Secretariat will continue to emphasize the use of PPGs as a vehicle for mobilizing funds (including "co-funding" options) outside the STDF, where appropriate. The Secretariat may visit specific PPGs to accompany consultants on (parts of) their missions, support implementation, participate in validation workshops, monitor results, mobilize resources, and promote synergies with other relevant initiatives. Risks affecting the implementation and delivery of PPGs will be mitigated and managed on an ongoing basis.

4.2 Project implementation

4.5. New collaborative and innovative projects will be approved and initiated in 2025. As with PPGs, predicting the number of projects that will be approved for funding in 2025 is difficult, given that the quality of applications received is beyond the Secretariat's control. The overall level of funding available in the STDF Trust Fund may be another limiting factor. With these caveats in mind, the Working Group will aim to approve at least five project grants in 2025. This projection is based on the average STDF contribution to projects from 2020 to 2024, i.e., US\$789,000. The Working Group may approve additional projects if sufficient financial and human resources are available.

4.6. The Secretariat will monitor the implementation of ongoing projects with the support of STDF's LogAlto tool, including through progress reports and regular consultation with project implementing organizations, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Ongoing efforts will take place to proactively mitigate and manage risks affecting the delivery and/or sustainability of projects (including fiduciary or other issues that may arise in the course of implementation), with specific attention to risks identified in project logical frameworks. The Secretariat may visit specific projects to facilitate implementation, monitor results, collect beneficiary stories and images, promote synergies with other relevant initiatives, and support longer term-sustainability.

⁸ From 2020 to 2024, the Secretariat received on average 114 requests for funding per year.

⁹ See para. 31 of the STDF Operational Rules

5 DELIVERING THE WORK PLAN

5.1 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

5.1. The [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\) Framework](#) will be revised and updated in 2025 to reflect changes to the theory of change in the final Strategy for 2025-2030, and introduce other improvements (drawing where possible on the recommendations of the 2024 external programme evaluation). Interested Working Group members will be involved through the MEL Group.

5.2. Ongoing efforts will be made to manage risks affecting the delivery and sustainability of work across all workstreams, and to proactively identify any new or emerging risks faced.

5.3. As part of the Secretariat's results-based management approach, progress, results and lessons of projects and PPGs will be monitored in close cooperation with implementing organizations. Monitoring will take place via regular consultations on ongoing work and reports, as well as learning sessions with stakeholders of completed projects and PPGs. Staff of project implementing organizations will be supported to make effective use of the STDF MEL tool (LogAlto). Virtual meetings may be organized to enable implementing organizations to share their MEL and LogAlto experiences with each other. Good practices from projects will be identified, compiled and disseminated through STDF and other channels.

5.4. End-of-project assessments and external ex-post project impact evaluations will be carried out in accordance with the STDF Operational Rules. Findings, recommendations, and learnings will be shared through targeted events, including the STDF Working Group.

5.5. Progress and results of STDF's work in 2025 will be captured and communicated through the 2025 Annual Report. In addition, the following MEL activities and outputs are planned in 2025:

- Targeted support to onboard new projects on LogAlto and promote its use for improved project monitoring and reporting. This will include webinars, onboarding and coaching sessions, and the preparation of simple MEL good practice resources (guidance notes, video capsules, etc.) on specific topics based on identified needs.
- Two learning events (hybrid/virtual) linked to specific STDF projects/PPGs, in cooperation with project implementing organizations. This may include learnings from ex post project impact evaluations included in the 2024 programme evaluation.

5.2 Communications

5.6. The [STDF Communications Plan](#) will be updated in 2025 to accompany the STDF Strategy for 2025 to 2030. The STDF new website will continue to be the main media to disseminate information about the STDF's work, including the next Strategy.

5.7. The informal STDF COMMS group may be revived to support communications and advocacy, including to share upcoming initiatives and identify opportunities for joint campaigns.

5.8. The alumni network of developing country experts will support STDF's outreach and dissemination role. Support will be provided to current and former STDF developing country experts to allow them to become STDF Champions/Ambassadors and to proactively share STDF's work through their regional networks.

5.9. The following communications outputs and activities are foreseen in 2025:

- STDF 2024 Annual Report.
- Up to two user-friendly communication products (e.g. on an STDF knowledge work topic, audio-visual material, etc.).
- Regular monthly newsletters and use of WTO social media to raise awareness about STDF and other relevant work.

- Regular updates to the STDF website and maintenance of IT tools and other platforms (e.g. SurveyMonkey, Zoom, MailChimp, Flickr, etc.) to support STDF's work.

5.3 STDF Secretariat

5.10. The Secretariat is housed in the WTO (Agriculture and Commodities Division). The Secretariat delivers on the STDF's workplan and Strategy. Except for the Head of the STDF Secretariat (covered by WTO), Secretariat staffing costs are covered by the Trust Fund.¹⁰ Indicative staffing needs to implement the activities in the 2025 Work Plan are integrated into the budget across the different work areas (see **Annex 1**).¹¹ Provision is also made for the recruitment of two STDF interns in 2025.

5.4 Budget estimate

5.11. **Annex 1** sets out an estimated budget for the STDF in 2025 (**US\$7,225,220**).

5.12. General provision is made in the budget for miscellaneous expenses that may be required to deliver on the planned STDF work above (e.g. short-term needs related to writing/editing, graphic design, photography, interpretation services or other minor expenses). A budget is also included to cover travel of the STDF Secretariat to liaise with other Aid for Trade programmes, partnerships, networks, and initiatives, and participate in selected external events to provide information about the STDF, raise funds, monitor developments, and foster synergies and promote coherence and coordination in SPS technical cooperation.

5.13. In the event of a shortfall in the total amount of contributions received, some activities may need to be scaled back or dropped. In practical terms, given the priority-setting established in the STDF Operational Rules, any scaling back will most affect the ability of the STDF to approve project grants. In the event the financial resources of the STDF are insufficient to fund all the projects approved, priority will be given to staffing requirements necessary to fulfil existing commitments, then to activities under knowledge work, then to funding PPGs, and lastly to project grants.

5.14. Expenditure related to project development and project funding will be subject to approval by the Working Group, based on requests for funding. Other activities will be implemented, based on the Working Group's approval of this Work Plan.

5.15. The Secretariat will continue to follow up proactively with existing and new donors to reach the annual target level of funding included in the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030. This includes preparation of funding proposals and presentations, and meetings with donors.

¹⁰ In 2024, the Secretariat includes eight staff members, in addition to the Head of the STDF, which the WTO provides from its regular budget.

¹¹ The information in the budget is an approximate projection of the staffing costs. The actual costs will depend on the individual circumstances of staff members. Staff members can be promoted in accordance with WTO rules and procedures. The WTO may hire additional temporary staff in the event of specific activities or a sudden increase in the Secretariat's workload. Following staffing changes in 2024, some positions (e.g. communications officer) will be filled in 2025.

Annex 1: Budget estimate for 2025

Activity/output	Budget (US\$)
GLOBAL PLATFORM	245,000
Two STDF Working Group meetings (in-person)	60,000
One (virtual) STDF Policy Committee meeting	
At least 9 virtual Practitioner Group meetings	
Staffing (1) to support Global Platform	185,000
KNOWLEDGE WORK	415,000
Two good practice briefing notes	
Work on innovation and scaling (including regional research on scalable SPS innovations)	80,000
Publication on SPS innovations	20,000
Study on private sector and other financing for SPS capacity development	20,000
Development of simple action plan to mainstream environment in STDF workstreams	
Gender training guide	30,000
Two events in Geneva on the margins of SPS Committee	40,000
One global/regional event on knowledge work (possibly Vienna Food Safety Forum)	40,000
Staffing (1) to support Knowledge Work	185,000
FUNDING MECHANISM	4,860,000
Approve at least six PPGs	300,000
Approve at least five PGs	3,945,000
Undertake (approx. 15) PPG and PG missions	60,000
Staffing (3) to support Funding Mechanism (incl. review of applications)	555,000
DELIVERING THE WORK PLAN	513,000
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)	240,000
Ongoing roll out and use of the STDF MEL Tool (LogAlto)	55,000
Revision and update of the MEL Framework	
Two learning events (hybrid/virtual) linked to specific STDF projects/PPGs	
Staffing (1) to support MEL	185,000
Communications	273,000
Outreach event and/or reception with key stakeholders linked to STDF Strategy for 2025-2030	8,000
Revision and update of the STDF Communications Plan	
Preparation of STDF 2024 Annual Report	30,000
Two communication products (e.g. short video, other audio-visual material)	30,000
Maintain website and other IT tools (SurveyMonkey, Zoom, MailChimp, Flickr, etc.)	20,000
Staffing (1) to support Communications	185,000
Other operational costs	319,000
Other expenses to deliver work plan (e.g. short-term needs, photography, etc.)	50,000
Travel of Secretariat to participate in selected events (approx. 15 missions)	60,000
Two interns to support STDF work	24,000
Staffing (1) to support Operations/Logistics/Administration	185,000
TOTAL	6,352,000
Overhead (13%)	825,760
TOTAL	7,177,760