

**STDF WORKING GROUP
30 JUNE – 1 JULY 2026, WTO (ROOM E AND S2)
SUMMARY REPORT**

1 OPENING

1.1 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. The STDF Working Group met on June 30 and 1 July 2026 at the WTO. The meeting was chaired by Eleonora Dupouy, Agrifood Systems and Food Safety Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

2. Following introductions, members adopted the agenda. The meeting was attended by 56 participants, mainly in-person and several online, representing STDF founding partners, donors, Developing Country Experts and other organizations, and the STDF Secretariat (see Annex 1).

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

2.1 Staffing and financial situation

3. The Secretariat updated members on the STDF's staffing situation, noting the valuable contribution of Adeline Masson who joined as Communications and Outreach Officer in March 2026 and two new interns (Agata Villa and Estefania Fernandez Pokou).

4. The Secretariat thanked all STDF donors for their ongoing commitment and support, which underpins the STDF's delivery and results. The United Kingdom's re-engagement and contribution of £1 million in March 2026 was warmly recognized. Members also welcomed New Zealand as an STDF donor with its first ever contribution (NZD 300,000). The Secretariat updated members on resource mobilization efforts, following the donor breakfast meeting in November 2025, and noted that WTO DDG Paugam would be sending a letter to current and prospective donors with the STDF 2025 Annual Report. The Secretariat appreciated the valuable support of some STDF donor contacts on resource mobilization, highlighting the importance of communicating the benefits of investments in the STDF's mutually beneficial partnership for developing (and donor) countries, including governments, the private sector and consumers.

5. The Secretariat informed members about its work to explore options for an innovative financing mechanism to complement ODA funding to the Facility, aimed at providing more secure and sustainable funding. Further information will be shared in due course following discussions with donors and the WTO Trust Fund Management Unit to ensure alignment with WTO rules.

6. The Secretariat briefed members on the financial situation of the STDF Trust Fund. From 1 January to 10 June 2026, contributions amounting to CHF 1.3 million (approximately US\$1.7 million) were received from Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. The Secretariat noted contributions received previously from Germany and Sweden for 2026. Expenditures from 1 January to 10 June 2026 amounted to CHF 3.5 million (US\$4.5 million), while contracted commitments, including projects, PPGs and staffing costs until the end of 2026, amounted to CHF 10.5 million (US\$13.4 million). The Secretariat noted that work is underway to contract two projects and two PPGs approved in 2025.

7. As of 10 June 2026, the Trust Fund had a balance of CHF 2.2 million (US\$2.8 million), after accounting for contracted and uncontracted commitments and staffing costs through the end of the year, which may be used for new projects and PPGs. The Secretariat further noted that the 2026 Work Plan included a budget estimate of US\$7.1 million. With US\$2.8 million currently available in the Trust Fund and US\$2.4 million expected through existing multi-annual pledges, a funding gap of approximately US\$1.9 million remained to deliver the 2026 work plan.

2.2 Update on Implementation of the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030

8. The Secretariat provided a short update on implementation of the 2026 Work Plan under the STDF Strategy for 2025–2030. Members were referred to the document showing progress to date and planned activities for the second half of 2026. The Secretariat noted that implementation was on track and invited members to follow up in case of interest in specific upcoming activities.

2.3 STDF Annual Report

9. The Secretariat presented the [STDF 2025 Annual Report](#), describing it as both an accountability and strategic communications product. The report strengthens results reporting and strategic messaging, including through a new investment case section highlighting the STDF's value proposition, track record and impact. It compiles results based on the theory of change in the STDF Strategy, using project stories and stakeholder voices to illustrate results. A webinar to present highlights from the Annual Report is planned on 15 July 2026.

10. Members welcomed the Annual Report. France highlighted the importance of promoting STDF-supported SPS capacity development in developing countries and least developed countries. DCE MaryLucy Oronje welcomed the focus on results from completed projects and the inclusion of DCE perspectives. The WTO congratulated the STDF Secretariat on the report and planned outreach. The Working Group approved the STDF 2025 Annual Report.

2.4 Communications

11. The Secretariat updated members on communications activities since the last meeting, highlighting STDF-led and other events. Examples included: an event in Nairobi, led by the WTO and the Gates Foundation, to launch the STDF ePing project; a side event co-organized with CropLife International during the WTO SPS Committee in March; a webinar on safe and inclusive trade with COLEAD and CABI; and a side event with SSAFE at the WOA General Assembly. The Secretariat drew attention to participation in over 10 external meetings to showcase STDF results and engage with policymakers, development partners, donors and practitioners.

12. Members were updated on new project stories and publications on the STDF website, including the MEL Framework, Environment Action Plan and Communications Plan. The Secretariat highlighted the e-newsletter, which now reaches over 3,600 subscribers. The growing importance of LinkedIn to support outreach was recognized, with engagement on project results, innovation and knowledge products. Since the Working Group meeting in November 2025, STDF's followers on LinkedIn have increased by almost 93% (an increase of 572 followers). The Secretariat thanked France for its support to repost the STDF Annual Report via LinkedIn and encouraged members to amplify STDF content through their own communications channels.

13. Members welcomed the communications update. IPPC expressed interest in continued collaboration on joint communications activities. DCE Saliou Niassy commended the quality and accessibility of STDF communications. APAARI suggested highlighting lessons about what has worked less well in addition to successes, which was supported by CABI.

2.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, including risk management

14. The Secretariat updated members on follow-up to the recommendations of the 2024 external programme evaluation. It noted that minor revisions to the Operational Rules were needed to align paragraphs 104 to 107 on ex-post impact evaluations with the updated MEL Framework. The Secretariat recalled that the two outstanding recommendations on co-financing and secondments would require further discussion by the Working Group in due course.

15. The Working Group approved proposed amendments to paragraphs 104 and 107 of the Operational Rules. Some members requested further clarifications to paragraph 105. The Secretariat agreed to circulate a revised text for final approval via email.

16. The Secretariat presented updates on MEL and risk management, including the work of the MEL Group and implementation of a new STDF risk management system aligned with the WTO's risk management approach. Members were also updated on safeguarding measures and the recent

portfolio review, which identified risks in some projects and PPGs that require closer monitoring and mitigation measures. Members welcomed the MEL update. IPPC emphasized the importance of MEL and welcomed opportunities to strengthen learning across the STDF portfolio.

17. The Secretariat presented a proposal to conduct two new ex-post impact evaluations, based on the guidance of the MEL Group, which was broadly supported. In response to a question, the Secretariat noted that the MEL Framework indicates that 50% of completed projects will be subject to an ex-post evaluation, where possible. The Working Group approved the selection of the following projects for ex-post impact evaluation: (i) a joint evaluation of two regional biopesticides projects ([STDF/PG/694](#) in Southern Africa and [STDF/PG/634](#) in Asia) to enable cross-regional learning and efficiencies; and (ii) an evaluation of a project to strengthen the horticulture sector in Uganda ([STDF/PG/543](#)). The Secretariat was requested to develop Terms of Reference to initiate these evaluations.

2.6 Use of Online Opinion Polling to Help Prioritize Applications for STDF Funding

18. The Secretariat introduced the use of online opinion polling (Mentimeter) as a tool to help inform a consensus-based decision on the prioritization of applications for STDF funding, recognizing the number of high-quality proposals and increased competition for funds. In this context, online opinion polling offers a transparent and time-efficient method to reflect the collective preferences of STDF's five founding partners (including Codex and IPPC), donors and developing country experts and help inform decision-making, with the Chair ultimately responsible to assess whether the poll findings reflect the views shared by the Working Group and ensure the final decision is based on consensus.

19. The Secretariat referred to the document distributed prior to the meeting, outlining the procedure used for online polling, noting that different approaches (iterative ranking or a single poll) may be employed. Members generally agreed on the need to find more efficient processes given the growing number of applications for consideration and supported the use of digital tools (including online opinion polls) to identify converging preferences and inform a consensus-based decision. Members expressed support for the iterative ranking approach, with the number of rounds being equal to the number of grants available for allocation, considering it the most effective option for managing a large number of applications while allowing for discussion between rounds and maintaining transparency in the decision-making process.

20. Several members emphasized that polling should not substitute the substantive discussion and consensus-based decision-making. One donor asked whether the Secretariat had considered conducting a preliminary poll prior to meetings to streamline discussions by the Working Group. Others raised concerns about the logistical and other challenges such as insufficient information with pre-meeting polling and expressed preference for deliberations complemented with opinion polling during meetings. Some donors stressed the importance of sufficient opportunities for discussion and consensus-building prior to decisions on funding for new applications. FAO raised questions regarding transparency, inclusiveness and conflict-of-interest management, particularly where founding partners are proposed to implement some of the proposals under consideration.

21. The Secretariat agreed to update the document outlining the procedure for the use of online opinion polling, based on the discussion and as refined in the meeting, for further review by founding partners, donors and Developing Country Experts.

2.7 Options to manage increased demand for STDF grants

22. The Secretariat presented the document outlining options to manage increased demand for STDF grants. Three main options were proposed: (i) tightening eligibility criteria for applicants; (ii) restricting countries with ongoing STDF-funded projects from submitting new nationally focused applications, while accepting their participation in regional initiatives; and (iii) limiting nationally focused applications from upper-middle-income countries (UMICs).

23. Members generally agreed on the need to improve the efficiency of the application process, while preserving equitable access to STDF funding for developing countries and ensuring that changes do not disadvantage countries with limited SPS capacity. On the first option, there was agreement that applications should be driven and owned by national competent authorities in collaboration with other relevant organizations with responsibility for SPS policy and implementation,

which may include the private sector. Some members noted the valuable role of NGOs as partners to support the development and delivery of demand-driven grants, in partnership with government institutions, versus acting as independent applicants.

24. The Working Group discussed ways to improve the distribution of STDF resources across countries. Overall, there was recognition that some countries have benefitted much more than others from nationally focused STDF projects, and that efforts would be welcome to enable countries that have benefitted less to date to receive more support. On the second option, some highlighted the need to ensure that LDCs could access STDF support and emphasized the need for flexibility to request grants focused on other SPS areas. The Secretariat noted that under the proposed changes, countries with ongoing nationally focused projects could still apply for regional projects (encouraged by the STDF) to address priority needs. The Chair recalled the availability of the P-IMA tool to help prioritize the focus of grant applications in the context of increased demand for STDF support.

25. Regarding option 3, some members supported focusing limited resources on lower-income countries. Others stressed that UMICs continue to face important SPS challenges and can generate innovative initiatives and public goods that also benefit lower-income countries. Several members suggested encouraging UMICs to participate through regional projects and to provide higher mandatory beneficiary contributions (including a monetary contribution and not only in-kind).

26. Some members highlighted the importance of complementary measures, including capacity building, outreach and further improvements to the grant mechanism (including application process). Suggestions included the use of digital tools for screening applications, stronger technical support for project preparation in low-capacity countries, introduction of requirements for co-financing in projects (in addition to in-kind contributions), and consideration of SPS thematic calls for proposals in different rounds.

27. The Secretariat noted that there appeared to be emerging convergence among members on options 1 and 2 to tighten the applicant eligibility criteria, which would require changes to the Operational Rules, as well as updates to the website and other documents. There was agreement for the Secretariat to: (i) send an email to the Working Group with proposed revisions to the Operational Rules for consideration and silent approval; and (ii) share an updated paper proposing additional changes to the grant mechanism (e.g. related to financial contributions, co-financing leveraging, scaling potential, etc.); and (iii) organize online consultations with founding partners, donors and Developing Country Experts to advance these discussions prior to the next Working Group meeting.

3 PROJECT PREPARATION GRANTS (PPGS) AND PROJECT GRANTS (PGS)

3.1 Overview of ongoing and completed Project Grants (PGs) and Project Preparation Grants (PPGs)

28. The Secretariat briefly presented the document STDF/WG/Jun26/Overview, which provides an overview of all ongoing, completed, and pending STDF projects and PPGs. The Secretariat noted that 27 projects and 14 PPGs are currently ongoing as of June 2026.

3.2 Overview of new PG and PPG applications not tabled for consideration

29. A record number of 398 PG and PPG applications were received since the Working Group meeting in November 2025. A total of 48 were deemed eligible or potentially eligible after detailed review. Of these, 15 (5 PPGs and 10 PGs) were tabled for funding consideration by the Working Group. The remaining 33 require further clarification or revisions prior to consideration. All non-tabled applications and reasons for non-consideration are listed in Annex 1 of the Secretariat's Review document. The Secretariat invited members to engage with applicants to improve proposals and provide feedback to manage the growing number of applications and pipeline for future meetings.

3.3 Consideration of new PPG applications

30. The Working Group discussed five PPG applications. The Chairperson requested members proposed to implement the PPG to refrain from intervening in the discussion, unless requested to provide comments or clarifications.

31. The Secretariat recalled that the 2026 Work Plan set a target for the approval of six PPGs per year, subject to adequate resources. Up to four PPGs could be approved at the June meeting, subject to views of the Working Group. The Working Group discussed each PPG individually, prior to applying the Mentimeter-assisted opinion polling followed by a final discussion on prioritization for funding.

STDF/PPG/1108: Reducing Pesticide Residue Risks in African Horticulture through Data-Driven Prioritisation of Biopesticide Strategies (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia)

32. The Working Group **approved** this PPG, subject to revisions. Overall, members welcomed the relevance of this evidence-based, innovative and demand-driven application, including the strong support expressed by public and private stakeholders. Members also highlighted the potential for scaling, given the regional scope of the PPG across six countries.

33. Members provided recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the PPG and enhance the quality of the resulting project proposal. These included the need to: (i) clarify governance arrangements and ensure long-term public ownership of the proposed platform as a global public good; (ii) strengthen coordination with ongoing initiatives in the participating countries, including those supported by the World Bank and COLEAD; (iii) explore synergies with relevant continental initiatives, including the African Union's Food Safety Data Hub; (iv) clarify the role of private sector partners in project implementation, including development and use of the proposed tools; (v) develop a clear sustainability strategy for the maintenance, governance and continued use of the platform beyond the PPG; and (vi) further refine the criteria for selection of pesticides and biopesticides. The Secretariat acknowledged these recommendations and indicated that they would be reflected in the Terms of Reference prior to contracting.

STDF/PPG/1110: Building regional SPS capacity to enhance safe trade in roots, tubers and bananas in East Africa

34. The Working Group **approved** this PPG, subject to recommendations to improve delivery and strengthen the quality of the resulting proposal. Members welcomed the regional approach and its strong institutional support and recognized the importance of improving SPS capacity for the safe movement of planting materials across East Africa.

35. Members recommended: (i) strengthening coordination with complementary regional initiatives and previous STDF projects; (ii) ensuring lessons learned from related programmes are systematically incorporated; (iii) further clarifying links between SPS improvements and trade outcomes; (iv) strengthening private sector participation throughout the project development process; and (v) incorporating social science and communications aspects to improve stakeholder understanding and uptake of tools and approaches included in the resulting project. DCE Rommel Betancourt highlighted the substantial in-kind contribution (US\$40,000). Several members suggested refining the title and scope of the future project to better reflect its trade-related objectives. The Secretariat confirmed that these comments would be addressed during implementation of the PPG.

STDF/PPG/1111: Implementation of international SPS standards and best practices along the agriculture value chains in the Kyrgyz Republic

36. The Working Group **did not approve** this application. Members acknowledged the importance of strengthening SPS capacity in the berry sector and improving compliance with export market requirements. Some Members requested further clarification on some aspects of the proposal, including whether plant viruses are a significant issue for the commodities covered, as well as on complementarity with Asian Development Bank (ADB) programmes, including opportunities for the ADB to finance the proposed assessment. Most members considered that the applicant may take

into account the comments to improve the application and re-submit, if wished, while noting that alternative funding sources could also be explored.

STDF/PPG/1117: SPS Systems Strengthening for Climate-Resilient and Competitive Agricultural Value Chains in Namibia

37. The Working Group **approved** this application, subject to revisions. DCEs Rommel Betancourt and MaryLucy Oranje highlighted the proposal's multisectoral approach and the clear link between climate and trade. Members appreciated the scalability potential of the application, specifically across the SADC Region. The Secretariat specified that this proposal could be an example of the STDF's catalytic role in leveraging investments linked to the new STDF financing study.

38. Members recommended: (i) refining and prioritizing key SPS risks to ensure an achievable scope; (ii) further clarifying the linkages with climate change, One Health and regional SPS systems; (iii) ensuring complementarity with planned World Bank initiatives and other donor-supported programmes in the country; and (iv) identifying practical pathways for regional replication and scaling. The Secretariat confirmed that these recommendations would be addressed in the Terms of Reference for the PPG and subsequent project proposal.

STDF/PPG/1119: Assessment of SPS requirements for the export of stingless bee honey from the Amazon (Bolivia, Peru)

39. The Working Group **approved this application**, subject to some revisions. Members welcomed the proposal's innovative nature and its potential to address SPS and other non-tariff barriers constraining trade of stingless bee honey. The Working Group noted the proposal's potential contribution to biodiversity conservation, livelihoods of highly vulnerable indigenous communities and the development of standards and scientific evidence relevant to Codex work, which could be applicable worldwide. Members acknowledged the niche nature of the product and its potential to capture a premium market segment.

40. Members recommended: (i) refining the scope of the PPG to focus on the most critical regulatory and SPS constraints; (ii) building on existing standards and experiences from other countries, including Malaysia; and (iii) clarifying how the proposed activities complement ongoing initiatives in the region. The Secretariat noted that these recommendations would be addressed in the PPG Terms of Reference and delivery.

3.4 Consideration of new Project applications

41. Ten project applications were tabled for consideration by the Working Group, as outlined in the Secretariat's Review Document. The Chairperson requested members proposed to implement projects to refrain from intervening in the discussion, unless requested to provide comments or clarifications. The Chairperson further noted that resources may be available to approve three projects for funding (subject to the individual project budgets).

42. The Secretariat briefly introduced each application based on the criteria in the review template (including relevance, logical framework, cross-cutting issues, complementarity, project development, implementation, sustainability, budget), with additional attention to OECD/DAC classification, regional/national scope and whether there was an ongoing STDF project in the country. Members discussed each application individually, before applying the Mentimeter-assisted opinion polling followed by final consideration of which applications to prioritize for STDF funding.

STDF/PG/847: Mitigating Aflatoxin Contamination in Uganda Maize Grain Using a Risk-Based Systems Approach

43. The Working Group **did not approve** this application which resulted from a PPG. While recognizing the importance of aflatoxin-related SPS challenges in Uganda and the potential benefits of the project for regional trade and food safety, members shared a number of comments and recommendations. These included: (i) clarifying alignment with relevant Codex standards; (ii) strengthening the sustainability strategy and clarifying institutional ownership of project outputs; (iii) refining the logical framework, including results; (iv) clarifying how the proposed systems approach integrates with border control agencies of Uganda and Kenya and existing regulatory

structures (including automated and digital systems); (v) strengthening coordination with ongoing initiatives addressing aflatoxin management in the region and linking the project with the One Health approach; (vi) providing greater detail on traceability mechanisms and long-term monitoring arrangements. Most members considered that the applicant may take into account the comments to improve the application and re-submit, if wished, while noting that alternative funding sources could also be explored.

STDF/PG/941: Promoting Safe Animal Feedlot-based Trade and Exports in Eastern Africa (SAFE-TRADE-EA) (Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia)

44. The Working Group **did not approve** this application. While Members recognized the importance of improving animal health systems and facilitating regional livestock trade, several concerns were expressed. These included: (i) the project's scope being overly broad and ambitious given the diversity of participating countries and their differing levels of SPS capacity and readiness; (ii) insufficient clarity regarding the sequencing of activities and how proposed outputs would be translated into practical and sustainable improvements in livestock trade; (iii) limited information on the operationalization and sustainability of key outputs, including harmonization, traceability and compartmentalization measures; (iv) insufficient clarity regarding the role of private sector actors, farmer organizations and other stakeholders in implementation; (v) risk of duplication with existing initiatives; (vi) consideration of other potential export destinations beyond those identified in the proposal. Most members considered that the applicant may take into account the comments to improve the application and re-submit, if wished, while noting that alternative funding sources could also be explored.

STDF/PG/1124: Developing a modern, risk-based import inspection system for food safety in Djibouti

45. The Working Group **approved** this application. Members highlighted the proposal's strong relevance to Djibouti's role as a regional trade and logistics hub, and considered the project highly aligned with national SPS priorities, with potential spillover impacts in the Horn of Africa. Members recognized and appreciated that the proposal responds directly to gaps identified through the FAO/WHO food control system assessment tool, and that this is the first project application from Djibouti. The proposal was also seen as offering important opportunities for regional learning and replication.

46. Members made a number of recommendations to strengthen the project delivery and outcomes. These included: (i) strengthening coordination with customs and other border control agencies to ensure an integrated approach to import controls; (ii) clarifying linkages with implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and related trade facilitation reforms; (iii) providing additional information on the proposed digitalization components, including interoperability, data management and long-term sustainability of information systems; (iv) identifying opportunities to share experiences and scale lessons learned with neighbouring countries; (v) clarifying institutional roles and responsibilities among national authorities involved in implementation; and (vi) identifying complementarities with ongoing initiatives supported by the World Bank and other development partners in the Horn of Africa. The Secretariat indicated that these comments would be addressed prior to contracting of the project.

STDF/PG/1130: Promoting SPS-Compliant Fruit Fly Management in Sub-Saharan Africa (PRO-SPS) (Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal)

47. The Working Group **approved** this application, subject to recommendations to strengthen the evidence base and sustainability strategy. Members considered the project innovative and timely, given the significant trade impacts associated with fruit fly infestations in Africa. The proposal was recognized for its potential contribution to export competitiveness, livelihoods, gender outcomes, regional SPS cooperation and scalability. DCE Saliou Niassy stressed the relevance and value of this project for Africa and continental institutions.

48. Members recommended: (i) strengthening the evidence base supporting the proposed approach, including field-testing results, specifically regarding the characteristics of the *Ocimum basilicum* plants in the areas considered; (ii) clarifying the commercial viability of local production of pest-control products, especially related to exports to the EU and the acceptance level for low-pest zones; (iii) strengthening linkages with existing fruit fly programmes and other STDF-funded

initiatives (STDF/PG/255); (iv) clarifying sustainability and scaling strategies across the African continent; (v) strengthening the business-case analysis and market uptake pathways in the early phases of the project; and (vi) identifying opportunities to learn from relevant initiatives in Asia and other regions. The Secretariat acknowledged these recommendations and indicated that they would be addressed prior to contracting.

STDF/PG/1131: Strengthening plant health capacity to promote exports of priority fruits (Mauritania, Tunisia)

49. The Working Group **did not approve** this application despite recognizing its strong potential to support phytosanitary capacity development through South-South cooperation and its large scalability possibilities. Members welcomed the proposal's focus on strengthening the newly established National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) in Mauritania, while drawing on Tunisia's experience and technical expertise and simultaneously strengthening Tunisia's digitalization process. The Working Group recognized that Tunisia has never benefited from STDF funding, while Mauritania has been part of some regional projects. Members agreed that additional work was needed to strengthen the project rationale, complementarities and implementation arrangements.

50. Members recommended: (i) clarifying and clearly showing the complementarity and respective benefits for Mauritania and Tunisia; (ii) strengthening coherence with previous and ongoing projects supported by STDF, FAO, IPPC, the European Union and other partners; (iii) further exploring linkages with existing pest surveillance, pest identification and digital phytosanitary systems, especially in Tunisia; (iv) avoiding duplication with support already provided in both countries; (v) strengthening the justification for the proposed South-South cooperation model; and (vi) incorporating stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising activities to support the uptake and sustainability of project results. Most members considered that the applicant may take into account the comments to improve the application and re-submit, if wished, while noting that alternative funding sources could also be explored.

3.5 Consideration of new project applications (continued)

51. The Working Group resumed on the morning of 1 July 2026 to continue consideration of Project Grant applications. The Chairperson recalled the agreed prioritization factors, including support for least developed countries, geographical balance and opportunities to extend STDF funding to new beneficiary countries. Members involved in any application were requested to refrain from intervening in the discussion unless invited to provide clarifications.

STDF/PG/817: Enhancing Nigeria's Phytosanitary System to Boost Exports of Leafy Vegetables and Capsicum Fruits

52. The Working Group **did not approve** this application, which resulted from a PPG. Members recognized the importance of strengthening Nigeria's phytosanitary system to support exports of leafy vegetables and capsicum fruits. They also acknowledged and appreciated that several of their previous recommendations had been addressed in the proposal, including clearer synergies with ongoing initiatives, stronger involvement of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, closer alignment with the PCE findings and use of the IPPC eCampus. In addition, some sought clarifications on: (i) the targeted export markets; (ii) the source of the co-financing and in-kind contributions provided (noting that these should come from national stakeholders, not from other donor-support programmes); and (iii) complementarity with other ongoing initiatives in the country.

53. While some members welcomed the proposal, others referred to STDF's ongoing project in Nigeria and the need to prioritize applications from countries not currently benefitting from STDF support. In view of the limited resources available for new projects, the Working Group did not prioritize this project for STDF funding at this meeting. The Secretariat acknowledged the comments provided.

STDF/PG/909: Improving Food Safety to Enhance International Market Access of Chili and Ginger from Ghana

54. The Working Group **did not approve** this application, which resulted from a PPG. Members recognized the importance of addressing food safety challenges in Ghana, and acknowledged the

project's focus on laboratory testing, risk-based inspection, digital monitoring and surveillance systems, regulatory improvements and capacity building for farmers, processors and exporters. They also appreciated the strong national ownership and stakeholder support, and potential to strengthen cross-cutting SPS functions. Some members requested clarifications on aspects of the proposal including: (i) links with ongoing initiatives in Ghana, including previous work on traceability and digital systems; (ii) the rationale for selection of chili and ginger; (iii) complementarity with other donor-supported activities; (iv) expected benefits of testing, inspection and transparency interventions for the private sector; and (v) regional spillover effects and learning opportunities for neighbouring countries.

55. While some members welcomed the proposal, others referred to STDF's ongoing project in Ghana, and the need to prioritize applications from countries not currently benefitting from STDF support. In view of the limited resources available for new projects, the Working Group did not prioritize this project for STDF funding at this meeting. The Secretariat acknowledged the comments provided.

STDF/PG/944: Enhancing the Phytosanitary Capacities of Uzbekistan

56. The Working Group **did not approve** this application, which resulted from a PPG. Members recognized Uzbekistan's strong commitment to strengthening its SPS systems, linked to WTO accession and use of the IPPC PCE Tool. Members noted the relevance of the proposal's preventive, systems-based approach (including pest-free production, risk-based surveillance, good agricultural practices, standard operating procedures, digital tools and protocols, etc.) and potential to strengthen the operations and delivery of Uzbekistan's Agency of Plant Protection and Quarantine. Overall, this application was considered the stronger of the two applications from Uzbekistan.

57. Members provided recommendations to strengthen the proposal before any future consideration. These focused on opportunities to: (i) strengthen donor coordination based on consultations in capital, including with the EU Delegation; (ii) clarify complementarity with ongoing and planned donor-funded support to Uzbekistan; (iii) support long-term institutional ownership, maintenance, sustainability and financing of the proposed digital surveillance tools; (iv) clarify baseline data and progress/results measurement; (v) make more use of the IPPC Plant Health Campus and lessons from other STDF projects; and (vi) clarify target markets, including in the EU. Members acknowledged that the submission of two proposals from Uzbekistan led to competition between them. Some suggested merging the two proposals into one, which would promote a coordinated, One Health approach to phytosanitary and food safety capacity development.

STDF/PG/962: Strengthening the National Food Safety System in Uzbekistan

58. The Working Group **did not approve** this application, which resulted from a PPG. Members recognized the importance of strengthening Uzbekistan's national food safety system in the context of WTO accession and ongoing institutional reforms. They noted the proposal's focus on developing a modern, science and risk-based food safety system aligned with Codex principles, including support for implementation of the new food safety law, improved coordination and the adoption of HACCP and traceability systems. However, several members considered the proposal to be overly ambitious, particularly related to the timeline for developing and approving regulations.

59. Members provided recommendations to strengthen the proposal before any future consideration. These included the need to: (i) coordinate closely with the phytosanitary proposal and explore whether elements of the two Uzbekistan submissions could be combined into a single application; (ii) consider the results of the WHO Food Safety Roadmap Development Tool which has already been applied in Uzbekistan, and potentially the use of the IFC Scan Guide; (iii) clarify the scope and sequencing of regulatory work, including activities already supported by ITC; (iv) further develop the design and feasibility of the proposed compliance and training hubs to improve their sustainability; and (v) provide more detail on gender and inclusiveness. Members acknowledged that the submission of two proposals from Uzbekistan led to competition between them. Some suggested merging the two proposals into one, which would promote a coordinated, One Health approach to phytosanitary and food safety capacity development. It was also recommended that the revised proposal should consider the new SPS institutional reform and SPS governance set-up in Uzbekistan (including creation of the Food Safety Committee which integrates parts of the Veterinary Committee function, the Phytosanitary and State Sanitary and Epidemiology Service), as well as results from the national food control system assessment that is to be completed at the end of 2026.

STDF/PG/1135: Strengthening the Capacity of the Andean Region to Manage Maximum Levels of Chemical Contaminants in Fruit and Vegetable Exports

60. The Working Group **approved** this application. Several members agreed that chemical contaminants in fruit and vegetable exports were a major challenge for Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, given the importance of horticulture exports to regional and international markets. Members valued the proposal's regional cooperation dimension, focus on traceability, risk communication, laboratory capacity and harmonized approaches, as well as its potential to support public-private collaboration and compliance with evolving international market requirements.

61. Members provided recommendations to strengthen project implementation, results and sustainability. These included the need to: (i) clarify complementarity with existing initiatives in the region; (ii) ensure adequate national commitment and beneficiary contributions, including concerted efforts to promote PPPs and leverage co-financing, particularly given the value of the industry; (iii) provide more detail on laboratory strengthening and traceability systems; (iv) conduct a stocktaking of ongoing activities and available capacities; (v) strengthen links with trade facilitation initiatives; and (vi) support harmonized approaches, South-South cooperation and risk communication in the Andean region. The Secretariat agreed to work with the applicant and the implementing organization to reflect the comments provided in the project document and delivery.

3.6 Prioritization and funding decision

62. Following discussion of the individual applications, the Working Group used an opinion poll (Mentimeter) to inform the prioritization process and a consensus-based decision. The poll was open to founding partners (plus IPPC and Codex), donors and Developing Country Experts. The iterative polling process achieved consistently high participation of members included in the poll, with response rates close to 100%. The Chair consulted the Working Group during the polling process to ensure that the poll findings accurately reflected members' views and preferences, and to facilitate a final decision based on consensus.

63. Based on this process, the Working Group approved the following three Project Grants for STDF funding: (i) Developing a modern risk-based import inspection system for food safety in Djibouti (STDF/PG/1124); (ii) Promoting SPS-compliant fruit fly management in Sub-Saharan Africa (STDF/PG/1130); and (iii) Strengthening the capacity of the Andean region to manage maximum levels of chemical contaminants in fruit and vegetable exports (STDF/PG/1135). The Secretariat agreed to work with the applicants and proposed implementing organizations of projects prioritized for funding to incorporate members' comments prior to contracting. The Secretariat also noted that it would follow-up with applicants of projects not prioritized for funding, based on the discussions, including to explore whether any other funding sources may be available for some of these projects.

3.7 Update and discussion on work to mainstream cross-cutting issues

64. The Secretariat provided an update on work to mainstream cross-cutting issues. Work is ongoing on the training toolkit on practical approaches to support equal opportunities in safe trade facilitation, which is expected to be finalized later in 2026. The toolkit aims to raise awareness of inclusion and equity in SPS capacity development and safe trade facilitation projects, respond to recommendations from completed STDF gender analyses, and support implementation, dialogue and locally relevant inclusive solutions. It will include visual decision-support tools, including checklists, quick-win ideas, practical examples and visual aids.

65. The Secretariat noted recent activities, including an online event with CABI, COLEAD and the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso on 30 March 2026 entitled "[Levelling the Playing Field: Driving Stronger, More Inclusive Safe Trade Results](#)". The webinar (moderated by DCE MaryLucy Oronje and attended by 120 participants) showcased examples, lessons and good practices from STDF projects. A request has been received to organize a similar side event on the margins of a future SPS Committee meeting. The Secretariat noted that inclusion and equity indicators are being integrated into STDF results frameworks and templates (including project baseline and endline assessments and guidelines for project implementers) and the definition of inclusion is being broadened to include other minority groups, such as youth, persons with disabilities and indigenous groups. Gender and inclusion analyses have recently been carried out for projects in Nigeria, Bangladesh and Ghana.

66. The Secretariat recalled that the Environment Action Plan was approved in March 2026 and available on the [website](#). Implementation has already begun, including through revisions to the project review templates. Indicators related to environment, climate and biodiversity have also been strengthened in the STDF results framework and are being better captured in baseline and endline assessment tools and guidelines for project implementers. Additional activities are planned in 2026.

67. IPPC welcomed the Secretariat's long-standing work on gender and inclusion, noting that it was helping to open the eyes of the SPS community and influence increased adoption. IPPC suggested that the training toolkit may be shared as a contributed resource through the IPPC Plant Health Campus (subject to review) and invited the Secretariat to tag IPPC in related communications on LinkedIn.

4 KNOWLEDGE WORK

4.1 Financing Study

68. The Secretariat introduced the consultants (Jennifer Maurer and Venny Mayaka) who delivered the STDF [financing study](#), to make a virtual presentation on the key findings and recommendations. The study explores opportunities to access and mobilize alternative sources of financing to strengthen SPS capacities and facilitate trade. Drawing on 32 key informant interviews, three country case studies (Colombia, Bangladesh and Ethiopia) and more than ten financing models, the study found that the main constraint is often not a lack of capital for SPS investments but limited investment readiness. The analysis showed that SPS gaps are more likely to attract funding when they are framed as trade-enabling investments and linked to broader economic opportunities, rather than solely as technical compliance measures.

69. The study identified five conditions that enable successful SPS financing: (i) investment readiness; (ii) trust among stakeholders; (iii) effective coordination; (iv) evidence of economic returns; and (v) alignment with national investment frameworks. It highlighted that public funding remains essential for core public goods (such as inspection and regulatory functions), with opportunities to mobilize increased blended and private finance for areas such as traceability, export infrastructure and value-chain improvements. The study makes targeted recommendations for national governments, Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), the private sector and the STDF.

70. Working Group members welcomed the study and noted that they would need time to digest its findings and better understand their implications for future STDF work. Questions were raised about whether countries at different levels of development have varying opportunities to attract private finance, how the case studies were selected, and how lessons on financing models could be shared with future applicants. Some participants noted the growing potential of blended finance, catalytic capital, philanthropic funding, climate finance and financing from regional banks including Islamic finance. Members also emphasized that investment readiness, an enabling regulatory environment, strong coordination on financing across institutions, and engagement of political decision-makers are critical to mobilizing financing for SPS improvements. The Secretariat agreed to develop a note on proposed follow-up to the study for further discussion by the Working Group.

4.2 Following up on the Scaling Study

71. The Secretariat introduced the session on STDF knowledge work with a preview of the STDF video on electronic certification, which is one of the STDF's flagship examples of scaling. Members were updated on ongoing follow-up to the STDF [scaling case study](#) (delivered in 2025), which examined how scaling has been mainstreamed across STDF activities and identified opportunities to strengthen scaling through both the knowledge workstream and grant mechanism.

72. The Secretariat noted that several recommendations from the study are being implemented. These include embedding scaling considerations into grant reviews, integrating scaling indicators into the MEL Framework, improving consistency in scaling-related communications, incorporating scaling responsibilities into staff work plans, and developing practical guidance on scaling. Additional opportunities include engaging potential partners and funders earlier, strengthening scaling pathways during implementation, and using longer-term monitoring to capture scaling outcomes after project closure. Members were invited to reflect on how the Working Group could help champion

successful STDF innovations, support promising projects in transitioning to scale, and strengthen connections with partners and programmes that could help sustain and expand impact.

73. Members welcomed the update and shared reflections on how to strengthen scaling in practice. DCE Saliou Niassy emphasized the importance of demand-driven approaches, noting that successful innovations should be turned into products or services with private-sector involvement where appropriate. IPPC suggested that scaling should not be limited to completed projects and should be considered from the start of project design, including through practical roadmaps or checklists. APAARI highlighted examples of horizontal and "natural" scaling from the STDF-supported regional biopesticides and seeds projects in Asia, including active communities of practice. Germany stressed the importance of maintaining contact with other organizations during proposal development and implementation to identify partners for sustainability and scaling before the end of projects. The Chair encouraged a clearer understanding of the meaning of innovation and IFC suggested additional case studies on innovation and knowledge products during project implementation. The US encouraged more intentional screening and consideration of whether scaling potential should be given greater weight in project selection. The Secretariat noted that scaling is being integrated earlier in STDF processes, including through MEL, communications and potential business-case stories.

5 INFORMATION EXCHANGE

74. The FSSC Foundation provided an overview of its ISO-based certification schemes, FSSC 22000 and FSSC 24000, highlighting their contribution to [sustainable food systems](#). The Foundation noted that more than 42,000 organizations are certified globally, around half of which are SMEs, with particularly strong growth in Asia. FSSC emphasized its focus on post-farm food chain activities, capacity building, digital solutions and business impact measurement, noting that certification increasingly serves as a strategic business asset rather than a compliance exercise. Members raised questions about certification and implementation costs, with some emphasizing the need to balance compliance requirements with affordability for SMEs. Several participants highlighted the financial burden associated with meeting multiple certification requirements, noting that producers and exporters often need to obtain several certifications simultaneously to satisfy different market and buyer demands. Participants stressed the need for stronger capacity-building support and greater recognition and acceptance of equivalent certification schemes to reduce duplication, lower compliance costs, and ensure that certification delivers tangible benefits.

75. FAO presented newly launched Resource Kit to support risk-based food inspection and food control systems, including an [online guidance package and a risk categorization application](#). These resources are aligned with Codex Alimentarius and are intended to help countries strengthen inspection systems, improve targeting of controls and build national capacity. FAO highlighted the ongoing application of these approaches in Barbados and their forthcoming implementation in Djibouti, and encouraged members to make use of the freely available tools and guidance materials. Attention was also drawn to a joint event organized by FAO and the Singapore Food Agency on 8-9 June 2026 in celebration of World Food Safety Day, entitled "Regional Technical Forum on Food Safety Alert and Intelligence for Early Warning", for countries in the Asia and the Pacific region.

76. IFC provided updates on its newly established Farming and Agribusiness Department, established under the World Bank Group's One Knowledge Bank initiative to strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing across the institution. Attention focused on AgriConnect, a new World Bank Group initiative aimed at transforming agriculture, creating jobs and strengthening food security. Members were informed about two recent publications: (i) [From Compliance to Competitive Advantage, a Practical Guide for Food Businesses](#) and (ii) [Strengthening the business case for food safety management system](#). IFC also shared information about the [IFC Food Safety Training Curriculum](#), where all World Bank Group resources on food safety are collected, including the [Food Safety Handbook](#). IFC also shared two knowledge products in collaboration with the WHO: (i) [Investment Case for Foodborne Disease Surveillance](#), designed to help governments demonstrate the value of investing in surveillance systems; and (ii) [Food Safety Roadmap Development Tool](#), recently piloted in five countries, which supports countries in assessing food safety systems, identifying priorities and developing national action plans.

77. IPPC provided updates on a workshop on Systems Approach carried out with IICA in December 2025, and presented the [Plant Health Campus](#) which offers a growing range of multilingual training courses, including modules on risk-based inspection, sea containers and ePhyto. IPPC encouraged

greater use of existing knowledge resources, collaboration among partners and stronger links between STDF-funded projects to support learning and scaling of successful approaches.

78. WTO provided an update on upcoming thematic events during the November 2026 and March 2027 SPS Committee meetings, which will address hitchhiker pests, testing and inspection methods, and artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. WTO invited members to submit suggestions for speakers by 24 July 2026.

79. The World Bank highlighted its work on National Single Window systems and integrated border management projects globally, including in the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa. Reference was made to support provided through the Trade Facilitation Support Program (TFSP), which assists developing countries in implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

80. IICA presented progress on work related to the eVet project ([STDF/PG/856](#)), highlighting the development of an electronic certification prototype and plans for pilot implementation by the end of 2026. Updates on the project were shared at the WOAHS General Session in May and the STDF online ECAC meeting in June. IICA noted that the project's governance structure is being expanded to include the Andean Community, with the aim of scaling the project across the region.

81. UNIDO updated members on the Asia Food Safety Forum in Bangkok in June 2026, which focused on digital innovation and recycled food contact materials, drawing attention to the Vienna Food Safety Forum in June 2027. Information was shared on [STDF/PG/782](#), including validation by the ASEAN SPS contact points of a regional guideline on Remote Audits, and pilots in six food establishments across Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines. UNIDO noted development of codes of practice and self-assessment tools, and launch of a [global best practice benchmarking framework](#).

82. ITC shared that it is currently implementing [STDF/PG/734](#) in Bhutan and [STDF/PG/845](#) in Nigeria and continues to participate regularly in the WTO SPS Committee as an observer. Under the EU-funded Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II), ITC and the East African Community (EAC) developed a roadmap to strengthen laboratory maintenance and technical skills. The programme also supports the implementation of the EAC's Codex Strategic Plan, resource mobilization efforts, and initiatives to raise awareness of quality management among SMEs, including through the Regional Quality Award 2026. ITC pointed to recent opening of offices in Brussels and Nairobi.

83. CABI highlighted the implementation of its SPS Strategy 2024–2034, which promotes risk-based SPS measures, harmonization with international standards and trade facilitation. Through systems-based approaches to pest management, including STDF-supported projects, CABI has helped countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Additional activities include an EU-funded project in Uganda to strengthen horticulture exports, as well as preparatory work for an STDF-related livestock value chain project in Chad. CABI also emphasized the growing importance of inclusive trade and highlighted ongoing STDF-supported research on small-scale cross-border trade involving women and other vulnerable groups in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, with additional support from partners including TradeMark Africa and FCDO.

84. SSAFE provided an overview of its work as a global non-profit public-private partnership dedicated to strengthening safe food supply chains and trade through One Health approaches, food safety systems and standards. Attention was drawn to its widely used [resources](#) such as its Food Fraud Vulnerability Assessment Tool and Food Safety Culture tools, as well as frameworks to support good agricultural and food safety practices. SSAFE is also contributing expertise to STDF-funded projects, including initiatives in Ghana and on jute bags.

85. APAARI reported on its engagement with partners including a planned Bangladesh trade facilitation project under the U.S. Food for Progress Programme, World Bank-supported project in Southeast Asia and work by ASEAN countries on SPS value chain digitization. APAARI is supporting the development of a national SPS strategy for Cambodia aimed at enhancing trade competitiveness, and seeking to scale up a One Health initiative in the Mekong region (linked to work under the completed STDF One Health PPG).

86. The Minor Use Foundation shared details on its work to address priority pest and disease challenges. In collaboration with partners such as CABI and IPPC, it has undertaken a global priority-

setting exercise and is working with governments and other stakeholders to develop solutions. The Foundation is supporting the development of ASEAN guidance on minor-use pesticide registrations to facilitate the availability of crop protection tools across the region. In addition, through a USDA-funded project, it is addressing gaps on crop groupings and Codex MRL through use of existing data and extrapolation to support new Codex MRLs in more cost-effective ways.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

87. The Secretariat shared its sadness at the sudden passing of Sydney Suma, a former STDF developing country expert from Papua New Guinea, and respected and valued contributor to the STDF's work over many years, and Razik Faisal, who made a valuable contribution to the ongoing STDF project in Bangladesh. Both individuals were recognized for their significant contributions to the STDF community and their commitment to SPS capacity development.

88. UNIDO informed the Working Group that preparations are underway for the Vienna Food Safety Forum on 28-30 June 2027, and proposed to host the STDF Working Group meeting in Vienna, following the Forum. The proposal was presented as an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with organizations based in Vienna, including IFC, IAEA and UNIDO, while benefiting from potential logistical and cost efficiencies.

89. The United States suggested that future information-exchange sessions could be scheduled earlier in the meeting agenda rather than at the end, noting this could create more opportunities for networking, follow-up discussions and collaboration during the meeting. This suggestion was welcomed for future consideration.

7 CLOSURE

90. The Chairperson thanked all participants for their active engagement and contributions throughout the Working Group meeting. She announced that this meeting marked her final official mission before retiring from FAO after 17 years of service, and noted that the Working Group meeting in November would be chaired by Catherine Bessy, FAO. Participants and the Secretariat expressed their appreciation for the Chairperson's leadership and dedicated service. The Secretariat reminded participants that the next STDF Working Group meeting would take place on 9–10 November 2026 in Geneva. The meeting concluded at 17:20.

ANNEX 1**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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