

STDF PROJECT GRANT

Application form

SUMMARY

Project title	Enhancing food safety practices to unlock market access for Gambian cashew
Applicant	<i>Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) of The Gambia</i>
Country/region	<i>The Gambia</i>
Implementing organization	United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) www.unido.org
Budget	<i>Requested from the STDF: 798,000 US\$</i> <i>Beneficiary In-Kind contribution: 80,000US\$</i> <i>Other sources (if any): US\$</i> <i>Total project value: 878,000 US\$</i>
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1. What specific SPS problem(s) will this project address?

Located in West Africa, The Gambia, with a population of about 2.76 million, is a relatively small country whose agricultural trade relies heavily on the export of a few key products, including fish and fish products, groundnuts, and cashews, which together constitute the main contributors to its agricultural export earnings. These exports are however sometimes hindered by the limited capacities of the country to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary standards of importing countries.

This project which stems from an STDF funded PPG that applied P-IMA, aims to address some of the critical food safety challenges affecting The Gambia's cashew nut industry, one that proves to have potential for export growth. These challenges are mainly related to weak food safety compliance and absence of internationally recognized conformity assessment services in country.

Indeed, food business operators of The Gambia currently face difficulties adopting good agricultural, hygiene, storage and manufacturing practices exposing their cashew to food safety risks including biological and chemical hazards. This is evidenced, among others, by the P-IMA findings, which ranked the need for capacity building in SPS compliance in cashew nut export first out of six options and the one with the highest export revenue potential.

Food Safety Compliance Gaps

Whilst the food safety legislative landscape in The Gambia was endowed with a modern and comprehensive primary legislation in the form of the Food Safety and Quality Act of The Gambia in

2012, many lessons have been learnt from more than a decade of its implementation. There is need to update the Act taking the lessons learned into consideration, the ECOWAS and AU regulations and following best practices according to CC Africa guidelines (CXG 98-2022).

There is thus a clear need to support the strengthening of the legal framework of the national entity responsible for ensuring food quality and safety, the Food Safety and Quality Authority, FSQA.

Specifically, the revision of the Food Safety and Quality Act is planned to be a collaborative process, in which the Food Safety and Quality Authority, FSQA, will lead the initiative, with the project providing facilitation and all necessary technical assistance.

The revision process includes a series of five workshops designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders. These latter, will be drawn from (non-exhaustive list):

- Government bodies: The Gambia Standards Bureau, Plant Protection Services, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, and the Customs Department.

- NGOs and Private Entities: Chambers of commerce (including The Gambia Women's Chamber of Commerce, GWCC, Cashew Alliance of the Gambia) and consumer associations.

The workshops are structured sequentially, beginning with an initial awareness and brainstorming session and concluding with a final validation workshop.

Gender considerations will be integrated throughout the entire process. To that end, specific actions, such as the following, will be implemented to actively promote equal opportunities for all participants to interact, contribute, and take leadership roles in the activities:

1. Inclusive Consultations and Counter-Stereotyping: To address the underrepresentation of women in industry decision-making, stakeholder consultations with government and partners will reflect an equal representation of men and women. The selection of participating facilities will further consider women-led businesses to ensure their unique operational challenges are heard.
2. Mitigating Time Poverty: All trainings and workshops held for farmers and SMEs will be held during regular working hours, to ensure female participants are included and not excluded during domestic "peak" hours.
3. Improving Institutional Data Accountability: The project institutionalizes the collection of sex-disaggregated data across all project activities. Tracking these data will help identify areas where outcomes or access differ between women and men, highlighting where technical requirements or regulatory processes may be applied unevenly.

The periodic review and update of the post-project legal framework will occur on an ordinary basis every 5 years. However, an extraordinary review will be conducted whenever a change at the national, regional, or international level demands a revision of the existing legal framework. The FSQA, as lead agency, will assign its Directorate of Scientific Affairs to be the unit responsible for verifying that the legal framework remains current and for determining if it requires updating considering the identified changes.

Furthermore, for the effective discharge of its mandate as the competent authority for food safety in the Gambia, key accompanying measures such as regulations and guidelines should be available, where needed, to clarify the provisions of the Food Safety and Quality Act and provide practical instructions for compliance, hence facilitating the implementation of the Act. Measures should be taken to ensure that the identification and development of the specific regulations required under the Food Safety and Quality Act, are conducted following best practices as per CODEX guidelines.

The process of development and adoption of cashew-specific regulations will be led by the FSQA, as per its mandate. Other key stakeholders are TGSB, the PPS, as well as key reference value-chain actors (e.g. Federation of Gambia Cashew Farmers Association, Association of Gambian Horticultural Producers and Exporters). The following roadmap will be taken into consideration for the developing of the identified regulations:

Stage Reference	Stage Name	Description of the steps included in the stage	Step Objective	Stakeholders (Responsible in bold)	Timeline
001	Preliminary Stage (Ensure ownership and coordination between the FSQA, as a lead agency, and the selected stakeholders)	1.1 Establish clear leadership and buy-in.	Establish a clear leadership for the process at the highest-level, to ensure the commitment of the relevant stakeholders in the process developing/adopting the cashew regulations.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and ▪ Selected Reference value-chain actors.	Q3 of year 1
002	Strategic Planning (Determine needs, define priorities and allocate resources)	2.1 Analyze the national context and identify/confirm the key regulations to be developed/adopted.	Ensure that the regulations to be developed/adopted will address the strategic needs/gaps.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and ▪ Selected Reference value-chain actors.	Q3 of year 1
		2.2 Identify key stakeholders, capitalizing on the pre-identified ones during the project formulation.	Decide which stakeholders need to be consulted/involved in the process.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and ▪ Selected Reference value-chain actors.	Q3 of year 1
003	Drafting of the identified regulations	Meetings/workshops to develop the identified cashew regulations.	Develop, on a collaborative process, the identified regulations, following the recommended practices.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and ▪ Selected Reference value-chain actors.	Q4 of year 1; Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 of year 2
004	Final Validation/ Approval/ Official Adoption Stage	4.1 Final review and validation.	Ensure that the draft regulations are approved in a final validation meeting/workshop.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and ▪ Selected Reference value-chain actors.	Q1 of year 3
		4.2 Obtain formal government approval.	Official adoption of the validated draft regulations by the Government of The Gambia.	FSQA (lead); ▪ MOTIE ▪ TGSB; ▪ PPS; ▪ GEIPA, ▪ DLS and	Q2 of year 3

Stage Reference	Stage Name	Description of the steps included in the stage	Step Objective	Stakeholders (<i>Responsible in bold</i>)	Timeline
				Selected Reference value-chain actors.	

The Authority needs to be strengthened to have the capacity to develop and implement an annual food safety risk monitoring plan for commodities such as cashew and an annual risk-based inspection plan for the authority, as well as capacity to carry out inspection planning and execution, sampling and on-site rapid testing to support inspection decision. Many of these needs, still persistent, were identified as opportunities for improvement in the FAO capacity assessment of the competent authority in 2014.

Limited capacity of the Conformity Assessment Service Providers

Though there are a few testing, calibration and certification bodies in The Gambia, these lack international recognition making them unable to provide trust-worthy testing, calibration, and certification services. Key analyses required for export markets, such as moisture content, pesticide residues and aflatoxins, must often be conducted abroad, causing delays and additional costs. This lack of in-country capacity undermines trust among foreign buyers and restricts the country's ability to demonstrate the conformity of Gambian products and their manufacturers to the requirements of international markets. However, work has been ongoing at The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) in the past few years aimed at the accreditation of its food testing laboratory (a public laboratory). Following an assessment of the testing laboratories in the country by the West Africa Competitiveness Program, WACOMP, the TGSB National Food Testing laboratory was selected as meeting the minimum requirements to receive support for future accreditation.

The National Food Testing Laboratory of The Gambia Standards Bureau is considered the national food testing laboratory to provide independent testing services to all customers from both the public and private sectors. Collaboration should be established with TGSB for capitalizing on existing equipment, roadmap for accreditation and previous training on reference standards provided to the laboratory by national/regional projects like the West Africa Competitiveness Program, and to provide the additional support needed for completing process for the accreditation in specific tests (determination of pH value, determination of the titratable acidity and determination of ash content) selected by the National Food Testing Laboratory. The support for completing accreditation process of the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory would include prior steps such as, support for the preparation of management system documents, implementation of the system, training of all personnel in the use of procedures and formats, training of internal auditors, support in participating in proficiency tests, conducting internal audits and support in adopting corrective actions for non-conformities and mock audit. In connection with the goal of supporting the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory, the National Metrology Laboratory (also a division of TGSB) would also be supported with a view of getting accreditation, given the fact that calibration services from accredited metrological bodies are necessary in the process of seeking accreditation for specific parameters/assays. Furthermore, the accreditation of the National Metrology Laboratory would facilitate the calibration of weighing devices used in cashew kernel processing.

On the other hand, in the area of food safety certification there is a low-hanging fruit opportunity for this project to support the Certification Body of TGSB (TGSB-CB) to be accredited and offer HACCP certification services, having almost completely put in place all the necessary requirements. This would stimulate the expansion into new markets and increase the competitiveness of the cashew nuts value-chain actors, by decreasing the certification costs. The overall costs are expected to be lower given that the Certification Body's auditors will be available/recruited locally, saving all expenses related to international travel and hotel accommodation of internationally recruited auditors, which would necessarily be reflected in the costs to be incurred for the certification.

Food Safety Issues Along the Cashew Value Chain

It is estimated that there are around 14,000 cashew farmers in The Gambia, and while production is male-dominated, women tend to participate more in activities such as nut collection and post-harvest handling. Cashews can be grown in almost all parts of the Gambia, with current production concentrated along the North Bank and West Coast areas. The West Coast offers easy access to Banjul port and airport, while the north and south roads and navigable river ensure easy access to the rest of the country. These regions are also among the largest producers of rice and groundnuts in the country.

The total volume of raw cashew nuts exported from The Gambia to India, Vietnam and China, in 2023 reached 22,174.3, 9,218.5 and 1,098.2 tons, respectively. With the recent trade agreement signed between the Republic of The Gambia and the People's Republic of China, which grants Gambian exporters duty-free access to the Chinese market under China's Duty-Free Quota-Free Market Access Preferential Scheme, there is a potential to increase the exports to China, hence a potential for higher volumes of export of raw cashew nuts.

Cashew nut kernel production capacity, while having significant potential to increase, is nowadays limited, being transported by air to buyers in the UK, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and Morocco. Gambian cashew kernel producers hope to be able to export much larger quantities by sea, but are reported prevented to do so due to their current inability to demonstrate conformity with HACCP or HACCP-based systems like ISO 22000, FSSC 22000, BRC etc. With higher volumes of cashew kernel exports expected from food safety certified Gambian producers, the export of kernels is projected to increase substantially.

Cashew processing is at a nascent stage in the country, with virtually all the enterprises lacking the capacity to implement HACCP. Support for the certification of these enterprises should hence focus on HACCP certification with possibility to accommodate a rare few who may be eligible to pursue certification in the more advanced food safety management system standards such as ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000.

Indeed, in the specific case of the cashew industry, despite the efforts made in the past and ongoing efforts to support the development of this key value-chain, Gambian cashew nut producers and processors are deficient in the necessary knowledge and skills and the essential environmental and operating conditions to produce safe food and to meet international food safety and quality standards, such as those set by Codex Alimentarius, the European Union, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. They do not have in place the Prerequisite Programs that would enable them to effectively manage food safety hazards – *Good Hygiene Practices (GHP)*, *Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)*, *Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)* – and to subsequently follow on with meeting the requirements for certification in food safety assurance and management systems such as HACCP ISO 22,000 and FSSC 22000. It should be noted that as of this moment only one company in The Gambia is HACCP certified.

These gaps spell a high likelihood for these establishments to put unsafe food products on the market, which translate into difficulties to attract new buyers, frequent rejections, reduced market opportunities, and loss of income. Specifically, with regard to the rejection percentage, it is important to note that, although it is difficult to obtain data due to the fragility of systems in place for its adequate monitoring (which can be resolved, among other initiatives, through the review of the legal framework), it does, in fact, constitute a critical bottleneck, confirmed by operators in the cashew nut value chain.

The above-mentioned initiatives, namely the updating of the FSQA's core legislation and the laboratory upgrade, are expected to have a symbiotic effect on improving the food safety in The Gambia. Indeed, the updating of the core legislation will improve the legal framework for conformity assessment activities, such as inspection, which is likely to impact the demand for testing services, both to support inspection decisions and also as a way for Food Business Operators, namely cashew value-chain actors, to demonstrate product compliance with the applicable standards and regulations and continuously improve their processes. As a combined result of these interventions, the compliance of food products in Gambia in general, and that of cashews and cashew derivatives, in particular, is expected to improve significantly, opening doors to new markets.

Finally, it is important to refer that addressing SPS issues for cashew and derivatives in The Gambia would also benefit groundnuts, another important agricultural crop in The Gambia, as both crops are susceptible to aflatoxin contamination and the knowledge and infrastructure applicable to one will likely also be applicable to the other.

Overall Impact on Trade:

The absence of robust systems to ensure the food safety compliance of the national cashew crop in addition to difficulties the value chain actors face in demonstrating conformity with specified market requirements limits The Gambia's ability to export cashew nuts and value-added products competitively. This project aims to reduce these barriers by updating the national food safety law and strengthening the capacity of the food safety regulator, upgrading testing and certification capacity, and building food safety compliance capacity among producers and cooperatives, thereby unlocking regional and global trade opportunities for Gambian cashew products. These interventions at the level of the regulator and conformity assessment entities with primary focus on cashew will have a catalytic effect as they would not only support the improvements desired in the cashew value chain but also deliver broader benefits for other value chains enhancing the compliance of the traded goods and, as a result, the consistent access to target markets like China (capitalizing on existing agreements) and domestic food safety.

2. How will addressing this problem(s) increase SPS capacity and facilitate safe trade?

In addressing the problems mentioned above, more effective food safety controls would be in place to ensure foods on the market are safe and wholesome. Producers and processors of cashew would be supported to have the required knowledge and means to implement HACCP or HACCP-based food safety management systems. This would help ensure safe and wholesome foods, while also enabling them to demonstrate the conformity of their products and establishments with specified requirements through national conformity assessment service providers. In so doing, the project will build The Gambia's capacity to comply with international food safety standards and regulations at different levels, enabling safer trade in cashew nuts and cashew products. By strengthening food safety compliance and enhancing national testing and certification services, the project will address the key constraints that currently hinder access to regional and international markets, which can be linked, on one hand, to the absence of a suitable legal framework for the operation of the FSQA and, on the other hand, to the inexistence of reliable testing services to support inspection decisions and demonstration of products compliance by the cashew and cashew derivatives exporters, in particular.

Medium-Term Benefits (Project Purpose)

In the medium term the project will enhance the ability of the relevant national SPS institutions, namely the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), to enforce food safety regulations/standards based on international reference regulations/standards. It will support the development of relevant food safety regulations and the upgrading of inspection and surveillance systems for food guided by risk and impact assessments, thereby improving the enforcement mechanisms in alignment with best regulatory practices.

It will support service provision in testing and certification, to enable the cashew and related value chains to be in a position of demonstrating their compliance globally to specified standards/regulations.

Cashew farmers, processors, and cooperatives will benefit from awareness and implementation training in the Prerequisite Programs (PRPs) for food safety assurance systems – Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), etc., building a foundation for a HACCP or HACCP-based food safety management system to be implemented and registered with the support of the project. This will reduce contamination risks and improve product safety and quality, and compliance with import standards/regulations.

Testing and certification services, the latter to be provided by the TGSB Certification Division, will be improved through technical assistance and support for accreditation of TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory and Certification Division. This will allow the reliable analysis of critical parameters like moisture content, pesticide residues and aflatoxins in country and allow cashew

value chain actors to be able to confidently demonstrate the conformance of their products with international standards.

Long-Term Impact (Development Goal)

The update of the FSQA Act is expected to give a suitable framework for the operation of the FSQA, contributing to its institutional strengthening and to the overall improvement of food conformity assessment activity in The Gambia.

The impact of the strengthened capacities of FSQA in inspection, and of the TGSB in testing and certification that this project will bring about, will not be felt in the cashew value chain only. It will be extended to other agriculture value chains in the country, particularly those with products facing or prone to face similar SPS challenges as cashews such as groundnuts, another main product of export for The Gambia.

Indeed, much of the knowledge and skills reinforced in the intermediate institutions such as the FSQA and TGSB to overcome the SPS challenges faced by the cashew VC are the same one required for managing the quality and safety of other commodities such as dried legumes, groundnuts, sesame and maize.

In the long term, the country will have the capacity to address food safety issues impacting the cashew nuts and other agri-food products thanks to the support from the project at institutional and technical levels. In particular, the accreditation of the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory and of the Certification Division will create solid and reliable national capabilities to support operators in the cashew and allied value chains, particularly with regard to the provision of testing services and the certification of HACCP or HACCP-based systems, contributing to creating a favorable environment for the respective value chain actors.

By increasing SPS compliance and market readiness, notably through an integrated approach, Gambian cashew and other agri-food products will gain improved access to high-value regional and international markets. This will result in increased trade, higher incomes for farmers and processors, and improved food safety outcomes for consumers.

Implementation of International Standards and timeline associated

The project directly supports the implementation of international standards, including:

- Relevant Codex Alimentarius standards (CXG 1-1969, CXG 98-2022, CAC/GL20-1995; CXS 193-1995; CXS 1-1985 (2024 revision); CAC/RCP 6-1972; CAC/RCP 59-2005) and food safety assurance systems Pre-requisite programs;
- WTO SPS Agreement principles;
- ISO applicable standards for testing and calibration laboratories and certification bodies as described below:
 - ✓ *Standard applicable for the accreditation of the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory:* ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories. Parameters/tests to considered in the scope of accreditation: determination of pH value, determination of the titratable acidity, and ash content determination.
 - ✓ *Standard applicable for the accreditation of the National Metrology Laboratory:* ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories. The scope of accreditation will cover mass calibration services for OIML Class F2 weights and lower (1 mg to 5 kg), Class M2 weights and lower (1 mg to 20 kg), and scales (balances) with capacities ranging from 1 mg to 170 kg.
 - ✓ Standards for the accreditation of the Certification Body: ISO 17021-1-2015 - Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 1: Requirements and ISO/IEC 17065 - 2012 -

Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes, and services.

- ✓ The ISO/IEC 17021-1-2015 and ISO/IEC 17065-2012 are supplemented, respectively, by ISO standards 22003-1 (covers food safety management systems) and ISO 22003-2 (covers food safety systems when implemented alongside a product certification), providing harmonized requirements for food safety certification bodies.
- ✓ The services to be provided by the Certification Body would include certification of food safety assurance systems (HACCP) and product certification.

The time needed to achieve accreditation, *in casu*, can be estimated at 24-27 months for the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory, 12-15 months for the Certification Body, and 18-20 months for the National Metrology Laboratory. The estimated timeline depends on each entity's level of compliance with the various applicable standard requirements.

By aligning national systems with these standards, the project will foster trust of trading partners, reduce rejections, and facilitate safe and sustainable agricultural trade.

3. What specific deliverables are envisaged to address the SPS problem(s)?

The project will produce a set of concrete and measurable deliverables designed to tackle the root food safety challenges in The Gambia's cashew nut sector. These outputs are intended not only to strengthen institutional capacities but also to bring about tangible changes in practices, behaviors, and compliance along the value chain, thereby improving market access and trade performance.

The first deliverable will be a draft Food Safety and Quality Bill, in line with international standards such as the Codex Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CXG 98-2022). This draft will be prepared on a collaborative process, involving the main public and private stakeholders related with the food sector. This updated legal framework will be supported by the development of new cashew-specific regulations. Other deliverables include the risk-based annual inspection and food safety risk monitoring plans, protocols, procedures, guidelines for cashew and technical specifications. Other key deliverable will be a digital Management Information System piloted with documents relevant to the cashew industry, including data on cashew-related food safety.

To operationalize these reforms, the project will deliver practical enforcement tools, including regulations and integrated food safety inspection data, which will be linked to FSQA's Food Safety Information System, FSIS. The FSIS is a national system developed in The Gambia to enhance food and quality control, which is about to be fully operational and would be maintained by the FSQA and fed by the selected users from the various food sectors. The proposed digitalization of the FSQA's data will enable regulators to perform standardized, science/risk-based inspections and better track compliance data across the sector.

In parallel, the project will train a group of food safety inspectors from the FSQA in specialized areas, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to carry out risk-based surveillance and inspection effectively. This specific task would be carried out taking into consideration innovative training programs for building capacity in the cashew sector to enhance sustainability and competitiveness.

To address weaknesses in national testing and certification, the project will support the accreditation of key conformity assessment bodies under The Gambia Standards Bureau, TGSB. This entails assistance for the National Food Testing Laboratory, the National Metrology Laboratory and the Certification Body to meet international accreditation standards focusing on parameters relevant to cashew exports.

The support would specifically encompass the technical assistance for the preparation of the required documentation and the subsequent implementation, as well as the support for the accreditation of the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory and of the National Metrology Laboratory. These entities will be able to maintain the accreditation and be sustainable after the project completion, given the existing market demand and the competitive advantages that the services provided in-country would bring such as the reduced time and cost. In addition, to enhance long-term sustainability, the project will support the development or update of business plans for each of the identified entities. This initiative will leverage the outcomes and lessons learned from previous programmes, such as WACOMP-The Gambia.

On the private sector side, the project will engage cashew producers, cooperatives, and processors through the development and deployment of visual training materials, manuals, guidelines and practical training sessions on the food safety Prerequisite Programs (GHP, GMP). In addition, support will be provided to help them secure HACCP certification. Selected cashew producers and processors will be supported through tailored food safety improvement and certification programs. Depending on the level of advancement of the producer/processor, as determined through gap analysis, PRP programs or HACCP would be targeted.

The project will also promote awareness campaigns on best agricultural, hygiene, storing, processing and packaging practices.—The technical knowledge to be disseminate would be synthesized in manuals/concise technical documents and made available as reference resources for value-chain actors to assist them in future procurements. Efforts will be made to capitalize, whenever possible, on past-interventions and existing materials.

Together, these deliverables will contribute to improving the country's food safety system and facilitate the safe trade of Gambian cashew products.

The actions mentioned to achieve the deliverables described above would be carried out taking into consideration gender and environment aspects. To that end, a gender analysis would be carried out at the beginning of the project. Also, an Environmental and Social Management Plan would be prepared to ensure that environmental and social aspects would be omnipresent during the project implementation.

Additionally, to ensure a proper reporting and monitoring, a comprehensive baseline study, including the collection of data regarding contamination and/or rejection of cashew consignments rates, would be carried out at the beginning of the project. A self-assessment will also be conducted at the conclusion of the project to assess progress against baseline indicators and measure overall impact. Both the baseline and endline studies will incorporate gender-disaggregated data to ensure that project outcomes and benefits are assessed from a gender perspective.

The project will pursue the following outcome, outputs, as expected results, thus responding to the main challenges identified in the sector aligned to the project objective:

Outcome: Strengthened national food safety system

Output 1. Updated food safety legal framework through public-private consultations

Activity 1.1 Consultations with other partners engaged in supporting SPS capacity in The Gambia (e.g. EU, COLEAD, Germany, World Bank) to ensure synergies, review planned project activities, avoid overlap with other ongoing initiatives, and adjust activities as needed.

Activity 1.2 Support the review, update and revision of The Gambia's primary food safety law in alignment with CC Africa guidelines (CXG 98-2022)

Activity 1.3 Support the development of relevant regulations around cashew nuts related to primary and processed product inspection based on risk-based principles

Activity 1.4 Support the digitization of relevant food safety control info/data/documents/records and a digitalized MIS integrating the existing food safety information system.

Activity 1.5 Develop relevant industry-specific procedures, guidelines and checklists for food safety inspection and link these inspection tools to the MIS system.

Activity 1.6 Conduct training on the enforcement of relevant SPS legislation with particular focus on risk-based inspection following Codex guidelines.

Activity 1.7 Procure test kits and equipment to support inspection

Output 2. Capacities of cashew producers, processors, and cooperatives strengthened to comply with food safety requirements

Activity 2.1 Develop and disseminate visual IEC materials on prerequisite programmes for primary producers and processors based on General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXG 1-1969)

Activity 2.2 Support the implementation and the validation of HACCP or HACCP-based food safety assurance/management plans.

Activity 2.3 Conduct a comprehensive cluster diagnostic of the cashew nut value-chain actors in the Gambia, including their respective production capacity for the different cashew products, the cooperative members' capacities in food safety and value addition and their ability to provide long-term training to its members through master trainers.

Activity 2.4 Identify and disseminate the required technologies for harvesting, transport, processing, and packaging in compliance with food safety requirements.

Activity 2.5 Develop and promote business model(s) for the cooperatives to provide food safety services (training and certification) to its members.

Activity 2.6 Pilot food safety capacity-building among the cashew cooperative members and relevant service providers

Activity 2.7 Prepare GAP and quality manuals and training materials relevant to cashew and pilot their use.

Output 3: Strengthened capacities of national institutions to comply with international food safety standards

Activity 3.1. Support the accreditation of the TGSB Certification Body to certify food enterprises.

Activity 3.2 Provide technical assistance to the National Metrology Laboratory under The Gambia Standards Bureau for accreditation in mass to facilitate the calibration of weighing devices used in cashew kernel processing.

Activity 3.3 Provide technical assistance for the accreditation of the national testing laboratory under The Gambia Standards Bureau in specific tests to enable reliable independent testing services to be available in the country like the determination of pH value, determination of the titratable acidity and determination of ash content of cashew kernel and related products.

Activity 3.4 Support the revision/adoption of relevant cashew regulations/standards

4. Logical framework

Result	Project description	Measurable indicators	Target	Sources of verification
Goal	Improve cashew exports through a strengthened national food safety system	Number of cashew exporters accessing new regional/ international markets Increase in export volume of cashew nuts Number of cashew farmers with increased income (disaggregated by age and gender) Number of food safety legal frameworks and implementing regulations approved by national authorities	At least 3 20% increase At least 50 At least 3	National incomes surveys and statistics. Baseline to be set during the inception Phase. Official Gazette. Project Reports.
Outcome	Strengthened national food safety system	TGSB Certification Division accredited for HACCP certification (Y/N)	Yes	Market access reports (trade/export data, buyer contracts).

Result	Project description	Measurable indicators	Target	Sources of verification
		Number of regulators and inspectors with proven expertise to conduct food safety inspections in line with the updated legal framework, regulations and international standards (disaggregated by age, gender and other inclusive groups) TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory accredited to perform at least two assays in support of food safety control (Y/N) National Metrology Laboratory accredited to provide mass calibration services (Y/N) Number of laboratory staff with proven skills to conduct accredited tests (disaggregated by age, gender and other inclusive groups) Reduction in rejections or alerts of cashew nuts due to non-compliance with food safety and quality standards Number of cashew producers certified in HACCP (disaggregated by age, gender and other inclusive groups)	50 Yes Yes 10 50% 3	Certificates issued by the Certification Body. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports and field verification visits Pre-assessment audits reports (« audit à blanc » reports) Laboratory Personnel Competency Assessments Reports Training Reports. Project Reports.
Outputs	Output 1. Updated food safety legal framework through public-private consultations	Number of public-private consultation meetings organised to update the Food Safety and Quality Act Number of draft legislative acts prepared Number of roadmaps developed to support the implementation of the updated Food Safety and Quality Act Number of regulators and inspectors trained to implement the updated legal	5 1 2 At least 50	Project Reports Attendance sheets. Training reports (including attendance sheets). Project M&E documentation including field visit notes and quarterly reports.

Result	Project description	Measurable indicators	Target	Sources of verification
		framework (disaggregated by age, gender and other inclusive groups)		
	<i>Activity 1.1 Consultations with other partners engaged in supporting SPS capacity in The Gambia (e.g. EU, COLEAD, Germany, World Bank) to ensure synergies, review planned project activities, avoid overlap with other ongoing initiatives, and adjust activities as needed.</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.2 Support the review, update and revision of The Gambia's primary food safety law in alignment with CC Africa guidelines (CXG 98-2022)</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.3 Support the development of relevant regulations around cashew nuts related to primary and processed product inspection based on risk-based principles</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.4 Support the digitization of relevant food safety control info/data/documents/records and a digitalized MIS integrating the existing food safety information system.</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.5 Develop relevant industry-specific procedures, guidelines and checklists for food safety inspection and link these inspection tools to the MIS system.</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.6 Conduct training on the enforcement of relevant SPS legislation with particular focus on risk-based inspection following Codex guidelines.</i>			
	<i>Activity 1.7 Procure test kits and equipment to support inspection</i>			
	Output 2. Capacities of cashew producers, processors, and cooperatives strengthened to comply with food safety requirements	Number of producers, processors and members of cooperatives trained on good agriculture, processing, manufacturing, storage, hygiene practices (disaggregated by age, gender and other inclusive groups) Number of value-chain actors with validated HACCP-based food safety management systems Number of Cluster Diagnostic report drafted	At least 100 At least 5 reference cashew-nuts value-chain actors with food safety assurance/management systems validated. 1 (one)	Project Reports Attendance sheets Certificates issued by the Certification Body Pre-assessment audits reports.
	<i>Activity 2.1 Develop and disseminate visual IEC materials on prerequisite programmes for primary producers and processors based on General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXG 1-1969)</i>			
	<i>Activity 2.2 Support the implementation and the validation of HACCP or HACCP-based food safety assurance/management plans.</i>			

Result	Project description	Measurable indicators	Target	Sources of verification
	<i>Activity 2.3 Conduct a comprehensive cluster diagnostic of the cashew nut value-chain actors in the Gambia, including their respective production capacity for the different cashew products, the cooperative members' capacities in food safety and value addition and their ability to provide long-term training to its members through master trainers.</i>			
	<i>Activity 2.4 Identify and disseminate the required technologies for harvesting, transport, processing, and packaging in compliance with food safety requirements.</i>			
	<i>Activity 2.5 Develop and promote business model(s) for the cooperatives to provide food safety services (training and certification) to its members.</i>			
	<i>Activity 2.6 Pilot food safety capacity-building among the cashew cooperative members and relevant service providers.</i>			
	<i>Activity 2.7 Prepare GAP and quality manuals and training materials relevant to cashew and pilot their use.</i>			
	Output 3: Strengthened capacities of national institutions to comply with international food safety standards	National Food Testing Laboratory supported to get accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025 Certification Division TGSB supported to get accreditation to relevant international standards (e.g. and ISO/IEC 17065 17021 respectively for product certification and management system) Number of successful participations of the TGSB National Food Testing Laboratory in Proficiency Tests Number of successful participations of the National Metrology Laboratory in Proficiency Tests. Number of laboratory staff trained in parameters included in the scope of accreditation Number of staff from the Certification Division trained in standards relevant to cashew products. Number of staff from the National Metrology Laboratory	At least pre-assessment audit stage achieved for relevant standards by project end. At least 3. At least 3. At least 5. At least 5. At least 3. 50	Accreditation Certificates; Preassessment audit reports. Proficiency Test Reports. CAB activity reports Training attendance records Project Reports

Result	Project description	Measurable indicators	Target	Sources of verification
		trained in parameters included in the scope of accreditation Number of inspectors trained to conduct risk-based inspections in line with the new regulations in place Number of field inspections or audits conducted using specific check-lists for cashew nuts.	100	
	<i>Activity 3.1. Support the accreditation of the TGSB Certification Body to certify food enterprises.</i>			
	<i>Activity 3.2 Provide technical assistance to the National Metrology Laboratory under The Gambia Standards Bureau for accreditation in mass to facilitate the calibration of weighing devices used in cashew kernel processing.</i>			
	<i>Activity 3.3 Provide technical assistance for the accreditation of the national testing laboratory under The Gambia Standards Bureau in specific tests to enable reliable independent testing services to be available in the country like the determination of pH value, determination of the titratable acidity and determination of ash content of cashew kernel and related products.</i>			
	<i>Activity 3.4 Support the revision/adoption of relevant cashew regulations/standards</i>			

5. Risk Matrix

Risk Type	Risk Category	Assumptions	Risk Driver	Risk Likelihood	Risk Impact	Risk Level	Risk Owner	Risk Treatment /Mitigation	Contingency plan (Only for High or Critical risks)
Security, Geopolitical & Operational Disruption Risks	Community Health, Environmental Hazards & Safety Threats	Relative political, economic, and social stability creating an environment with clear policies and goals	-Government policy changes -Political unrest or instability -Economic downturn or inflation -Social conflicts affecting production areas	Not likely	High	Low	Gabor Molnar	Monitoring of the situation and implementation of actions aimed at broadening the consensus on the Project benefits.	
Innovation, Adaptability & Market Competitiveness Risks	Biodiversity Loss & Environmental Degradation	Farmers are interested in accessing international markets and therefore strive for implementing GHP/GMP/HACCP	-limited awareness of food safety standards -perceived high implementation costs -lack of technical capacity	Not likely	High	Low	Gabor Molnar	-Engage with farmers early and select farmers eager to participate -Adapt training of trainers approach so trainers can follow up on implementation of GHP/GMP/HACCP	

Structural & Economic Development Risks	Cross-Border Trade Barriers & Policy Uncertainty	International market regulations and standards on food safety remain stable.	-Changes in international food safety standards -new import requirements from key markets	Not likely	Low	Low	Gabor Molnar	-Obtain information on latest trend and movements of regulation and standard changes on food safety.	
Climate, Environmental & Sustainability Risks	Climate change, natural disasters & public health crisis	Climate projections remain relatively stable and do not adversely affect cashew farmers	-Prolonged drought or dry conditions limit cashew growth	Not likely	Medium	Medium	Gabor Molnar	Monitoring of the situation and implementation of mitigation actions.	

6. Who will benefit from the project and how?

The project will benefit a wide range of stakeholders across The Gambia's cashew nut value chain. Final beneficiaries include smallholder cashew farmers and processors (around 1200 individual farmers of which an estimated 15% are women, and 11 cashew farmer cooperatives) predominantly from the West Coast and North Bank Regions of the country who will gain access to specific training, technologies, and cooperative-based support services that improve food safety practices and enhance their ability to meet market requirements. Although women-led farmer cooperatives are well established in The Gambia, particularly in vegetable and rice production under initiatives such as the ROOTS project, their presence in the cashew sector remains limited. This highlights potential opportunities to build on existing group structures to support women's participation in the cashew value chain. Processors and cooperative members will benefit from improved handling, hygiene, and post-harvest practices, enabling them to produce higher-quality, value-added products with better marketability and higher returns. Overall, 1200 cashew farmers and 4 cashew processors would benefit from the project. Three Conformity Assessment Bodies/public entities (for food testing, HACCP certification) would benefit from the project's support to gain international recognition of their competences in their different scopes. Specifically, five (5) technicians from the target laboratory and five (5) technicians from certification body would benefit from specialized trainings from the Project for their respective fields. Overall, at least 60 government employees (including inspectors) would benefit from the Project trainings.

Consumers—both domestic and international—will benefit from improved food safety and product quality. Government authorities, particularly The Food Safety and Quality Authority, and The Gambia Standards Bureau, will benefit from capacity-building, technical tools, and systems upgrades, enhancing their ability to enforce/promote regulations/standards and safeguard public health.

The project actively promotes collaboration between public and private actors by involving government agencies, farmer cooperatives, processors, and exporters in the design and implementation of the food safety programs.

7. How will the project address gender-related needs?

The cashew nut value chain in The Gambia involves significant participation from women, particularly in harvesting, sorting and processing activities. However, women often face systemic constraints such as limited access to training, land, inputs and resources including financial resources, and decision-making roles within cooperatives and producer groups. These gender-based disparities hinder their ability to fully benefit from trade opportunities and adopt improved food safety practices.

The project will proactively address these constraints by ensuring that women have equal access to training, technologies, and food safety services and that these priorities are reflected in the reference laws, including the one to be revised with the support of the Project. How to best address these constraints will also be part of the gender analysis and the findings will be integrated in the action plan. Gender-sensitive training materials and visual tools will be developed to ensure they are accessible and inclusive, particularly for women with limited literacy. Cooperatives will be supported to integrate gender equity into their organizational structures, including the promotion of women into leadership and trainer roles.

Monitoring frameworks will include gender-disaggregated indicators to track participation, uptake of practices, and improvements in income and market access. Should indicators not meet their gender-related targets, the reasons behind this will be part of the mid-term evaluation to address potential gaps in due course. By addressing structural barriers and creating targeted opportunities for women, the project aims to empower female cashew farmers and workers, enhance their economic resilience, and foster more inclusive growth.

Ultimately, both women and men will benefit from safer practices and improved market access, but the project will help ensure that women are not left behind in the transformation of the cashew sector.

UNIDO emphasizes that empowering women economically has a significant impact on social development and economic growth, serving as a catalyst for prosperity, inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID), and cohesion across all levels. By strengthening women's roles in the global economy, UNIDO directly supports SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, as well as SDG 5 on gender equality. As a result, UNIDO has developed extensive experience in designing projects and initiatives that target and overcome the obstacles limiting productive employment opportunities for women.

UNIDO ensures the equality of men and women through a set of policies and directives aimed at fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities. These include:

- **UNIDO Policy Ref. AI/2020/03**, which mandates equal representation of women; UNIDO's policy on panel parity, in meetings and workshops organized and co-organized by UNIDO.
- The **UNIDO operational strategy for gender equality and the empowerment of women 2024–2027**¹ providing a clear result-oriented framework and a plan of action.
- The **2019 Gender Policy**, which mandates the adoption of sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis throughout the entire project implementation period².

The project aims to ensure that women and men equally benefit from project activities, promoting balanced participation in project management, as beneficiaries, partners, and key stakeholders.

8. How will the project address issues related to the environment?

The project recognizes that promoting food safety compliance must go hand in hand with protecting the environment and supporting sustainable agricultural practices. In The Gambia's cashew sector, environmental challenges include unsustainable harvesting methods, improper disposal of cashew by-products, and the potential overuse or misuse of pesticides in pest control in nearby horticulture gardens. These practices can contribute to soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and contamination of water sources.

To address these concerns, the project will promote environmentally sound practices through the adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies. Training materials and manuals developed for producers will emphasize the safe and minimal use of agrochemicals, encourage biopesticide or low-toxicity alternatives where possible, and promote techniques that maintain soil health and conserve biodiversity. The mapping of the cashew value chain will also identify opportunities to introduce climate-smart technologies, such as improved drying systems that reduce reliance on wood fuel and minimize post-harvest losses. Any risks of negative environmental impact, such as increased chemical usage, will be mitigated through training and regulatory oversight. Overall, the project will contribute to more climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable cashew production systems.

As per UNIDO Environmental and Social Safeguards Policies and Procedures (ESSPP), the Environmental and Social screening template has been completed (Appendix 5), and this project has been categorized as a Category C project. Although no further specific environmental and/or social assessment is required for Category C projects, environmental and social aspects will be duly considered in all the project activities.

¹ [UNIDO Operational Gender Strategy](#)

² [UNIDO 2019 Gender Policy](#)

9. How does this project fit into the national/regional SPS context?

This project aligns closely with The Gambia's national development priorities and regional SPS frameworks aimed at enhancing economic growth, food security, and poverty reduction through improved agricultural trade. It aligns with the country's Food Safety and Quality Policy (2023)³, which emphasizes the strengthening of SPS systems to ensure safe and competitive agricultural exports. It also supports the implementation of the Food Safety and Quality Authority Act (2011)⁴, and the ongoing efforts to revise the latter. By targeting the cashew nut sector—a key emerging agricultural value chain—the project directly addresses the national agenda to diversify exports, increase agro-processing, and generate rural employment opportunities.

At the regional level, the project supports The Gambia's commitments under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) SPS protocols, which promote harmonized SPS measures to facilitate intra-regional trade and improve access to external markets. Strengthening national food safety systems will contribute to regional integration efforts, enhancing market transparency and reducing non-tariff barriers that currently limit smallholder producers and processors from fully benefiting from regional and international trade.

Improved SPS compliance is expected to lead to higher-quality cashew products that command better prices, increasing the incomes of smallholder farmers and processors. This contributes to the national poverty reduction goals and SDG 1 (No poverty) by creating sustainable livelihoods and expanding employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas where poverty rates are highest. The project also fosters inclusive growth by empowering women farmers and cooperative members, thereby supporting gender equality goals.

On the other hand, it shall be noted that the AfCFTA and CCAFRICA are closely linked to The Gambia's SPS context by driving the need for stronger, harmonized food safety and plant/animal health systems to support regional trade. The AfCFTA promotes the removal of SPS-related trade barriers and encourages alignment with international standards, while CCAFRICA, as the regional arm of the Codex Alimentarius, supports African countries like The Gambia in developing science-based food safety regulations and building capacity. Together, these frameworks push The Gambia to modernize its SPS infrastructure, improve regulatory coordination, and actively participate in regional and international standard-setting to enhance market access under AfCFTA.

Overall, the project contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDF 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and safer trade. Ultimately, by embedding SPS capacity building within national and regional strategies, the project offers a pathway to long-term improvements in food safety governance, market access, and economic resilience for The Gambia's cashew sector.

10. How does this project complement or build on other initiatives?

This project builds upon and complements a range of past, ongoing, and planned initiatives in The Gambia focused on strengthening SPS capacities and enhancing agricultural trade. Notably, it aligns with previous efforts supported by international partners such as the World Bank, FAO, UNIDO and regional bodies like ECOWAS that aimed to improve food safety systems, laboratory infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks. For example, the ongoing capacity-building programs for the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) have laid the foundational improvements in inspection and surveillance, which this project will further advance by focusing specifically on the cashew nut sector and introducing risk-based food control measures and digital information management tools.

The project also draws on lessons learned from donor-supported initiatives addressing smallholder empowerment and cooperative development. Past programs/projects, like the STDF "Strengthening food safety capacity in the public sector" in The Gambia (STDF/PPG/462 year of completion: 2015), have highlighted the critical importance of inclusive and dedicated technical training, gender-

³ [National Food Safety Policy of The Gambia](#)

⁴ [Food Safety And Quality Authority Act](#)

sensitive approaches, and the need for sustainable business models that integrate technical and financial support. These insights have informed the project's design.

Crucially, this project is designed to avoid duplication by targeting gaps identified in earlier interventions, especially regarding third-party conformity assessment services. The Project will build upon and complement the past and ongoing efforts of projects such as the Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification Project in the Gambia, funded by the EIF Trust Fund (2012 – 2015), USDA IRD, Gambia River Basin Cashew Value Chain Enhancement Project (CEP), 2009-2017, the Shelter For Life LIFFT Cashew projects 2017-2023, the EU/BMZ funded Comcashew/MOVE project 2022 – 2027 implemented by GIZ to promote cashew production and processing, the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), (2017- 2023) co-funded by the European Union and implemented by ITC to contribute to the economic development of The Gambia by improving the employability of the youth population of the country, especially potential and returning migrants and the West Africa Competitiveness Program, WACOMP (The Gambia Component), funded by the EU and implemented by UNIDO (2020 – 2025). The latter, although focused on onion and allied value chains, had a comprehensive intervention aimed at strengthening the technical capacity and competence of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), Plant Protection Services (PPS) and other relevant entities of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) and the coordination between them. The aforementioned intervention resulted in the achievement of several milestones, namely the improvement of conformity assessment (in particular, inspection) and standardization activities, which the project can capitalizing on, complementing the intervention with new or complementary initiatives and contributing to its consolidation and expansion of its effects.

It is also complementary to the recent interventions of the Gambia Inclusive & Resilient Agricultural value Chains, GIRAV (2022 - 2026) funded by the World Bank to provide matching grants for the procurement of cashew processing equipment by processors. Specifically, GIRAV intervention aims to improve market orientation for smallholder farmers and agro-businesses by focusing on value addition, post-harvest management, and increased yields, ultimately contributing to the sector's overall economic and social benefits for the target communities.

The project also integrates with the country's broader trade facilitation efforts under the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and Aid for Trade initiatives, which emphasize strengthening SPS systems to promote export diversification and competitiveness. By improving SPS infrastructure and value chain capacities in a high-potential sector, the project supports The Gambia's EIF objectives to reduce trade barriers and enhance the participation of small-scale producers in global markets. In light of this latter, the EIF would be invited to contribute to the Project.

The project's interventions in the testing laboratory area are complementary to the commitments of the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Trade to establish an internationally recognized national food testing laboratory and calibration laboratory. These interventions also perfectly align with the national policy for testing laboratories relating to investments in the national laboratory infrastructure.

Overall, the project's targeted approach ensures synergy with existing and past programmes, leverages institutional strengths, and responds to identified national needs without overlap, thereby maximizing impact and sustainability in The Gambia's SPS and trade development landscape.

11. How was this project developed?

This project stemmed from the STDF-funded Project Preparation Grant Scaling up the P-IMA tool in The Gambia (STDF/PPG/921) in which an in-dept analysis of different value chains in the Gambia was conducted, involving the inputs of multiple stakeholders. The P-IMA analysis prioritized different SPS investment options with the option "capacity building in SPS compliance in cashew nuts export" ranked first to tackle SPS-related trade barriers and enhance Gambia's agricultural exports. The results of this analysis were validated and adopted at a stakeholders' workshop involving multiple stakeholders.

The below table shows a list of investment options, estimated costs and export potential from the P-IMA (STDF/PPG/921), where cashew nut expert has been identified as the most prominent investment option.

Investment Options	Cost of Investment (USD)	Export Potential (USD)
Capacity building in SPS compliance in cashew nut export.	453,000.00	45,000,000.00
Aflatoxin Control and Management in Groundnut	574,000.00	5,700,000.00
Enhancing SPS Compliance in Chilli Pepper Exports	845,000.00	174,000.00
Enhancing phytosanitary for increased mango export to EU and UK markets	823,000.00	1,360,000.00
Support Compliance to standards and food safety requirements for smoked fish exports	626,000.00	125,000.00
Strengthening disease control for hides and skins export	156,000.00	-
Total Investment	3,478,000.00	52,359,000.00

Building from this analysis, the present project was developed following a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder, and evidence-based process aimed at ensuring relevance, ownership, and alignment with national priorities. It began with an extensive desk review of The Gambia's cashew nut sector, including analysis of existing SPS capacities, regulatory frameworks, and market access challenges. Key national policies, such as the validated draft national laboratory policy for The Gambia (2025), Food Safety and Quality Policy (2023), the Quality Policy for The Gambia (2013), The Gambia Trade Policy (2018-2022), the Food Safety and Quality Authority Act (2011), and regional SPS protocols under ECOWAS, were reviewed to identify gaps and opportunities.

Overall, the project was developed through a participatory, inclusive approach involving key public and private sector actors, international partners, and thematic experts. This collaborative process ensured that the project responds effectively to identified SPS challenges in the cashew sector while aligning with The Gambia's broader economic development and trade facilitation strategies.

12. How will the project be implemented?

Considering UNIDO's long standing experience in implementing projects in support of the development of both the FSQA and TGSB as well the horticulture value chain in The Gambia, the project will be led and implemented by UNIDO in close collaboration with The Gambia Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), the national agency responsible for food safety. FSQA's proven technical expertise, institutional mandate, and experience in implementing food safety programs make it well-positioned to lead the project. Evidence of FSQA's capacity, including past achievements and financial management records, will be submitted as part of the application.

Key stakeholders involved in implementation include The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), for the accreditation of the certification body, the National Metrology Laboratory and the National Food Testing Laboratory; cashew farmers' cooperatives and processors representing the private sector. Academia and relevant environmental agencies will provide technical advice and support monitoring of environmental impacts.

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) be established, comprising representatives from FSQA, TGSB, farmer cooperatives, private sector actors, financial institutions, and development partners. The PSC will meet twice a year to oversee implementation, resolve challenges, and ensure alignment with national priorities. Decisions will be made preferably by consensus, with FSQA as the chair ensuring coordination and accountability.

The project is firmly rooted in national demand, aligning with the Food Safety and Quality Policy (2023) and supported by multiple government ministries and private sector groups. Letters of support from all key stakeholders, including government agencies and cooperatives, will accompany the application, demonstrating broad ownership and commitment to the project's success. This inclusive approach ensures the project is responsive, sustainable, and impactful.

Legal Context:

All procurement activities will be conducted in accordance with UNIDO's standard modality of Open International Competition, utilizing the lowest cost, technically acceptable approach, pursuant to Financial Rule 109.5.6 (a) (i) or (ii)

The present project is governed by the provisions of the Standard Basic Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Gambia and UNIDO, signed and entered into force on 27 January 1994.

Project Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation:

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will be conducted using criteria, indicators, and means of verification derived from the logical framework as well as the work plan. It commits to tracking, reporting, and assessing equality and women's empowerment results both quantitatively and qualitatively using sex-disaggregated data. These will be reviewed and confirmed and a simple M&E system will be developed in the initial phase of the project. A baseline assessment will be conducted at the start of the project to establish reference values for key indicators, and an endline assessment will be carried out at project completion to measure progress and overall impact, including gender-related outcomes. The initial M&E plan and budget can be found in table 3 below.

The overall objective of the monitoring and evaluation process is to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the project by: i) tracking and reviewing project activities and actual accomplishments (including any accomplishments related to equality between men and women); ii) providing visibility into progress as the project proceeds so that the team can take early corrective actions if performance deviates significantly from original plans; and iii) adjusting and updating project strategy and implementation plan to reflect possible changes encountered during the execution of activities, and take corrective actions.

Monitoring of results, financial disbursement, and reporting to partners as well as communication will be the responsibility of the project management in close cooperation with the UNIDO Field Office. The project team will prepare a terminal self-assessment report as per UNIDO evaluation policy (DGB/2021/11) and a financial report will be submitted within six months after the completion of the project. UNIDO will organize online or in-person project steering committee meeting (PSC), involving relevant competent authorities, the donor and UNIDO, after 6 months and at the end of the project to discuss activities and lessons learned.

M&E plan and budget

Type of M&E activity	Responsible Parties	Budget USD	Time frame
Kick-Off Consultations as per Activity 1.1	UNIDO Project Manager (PM); UNIDO Country Representative (UR) in Senegal	5,000**	Within first month of project start up
M&E design and tools to collect and record data (IRPF and performance indicators)	PM	0**	Continuous
Regular monitoring and analysis of performance indicators	PM; UR, Local short-term expert	5,000**	Regularly to feed into project management and Project Review with PSC meetings.
End of Project -Assessment	UNIDO Project Manager	0**	At the end of the project

TOTAL indicative cost	10,000**	
<i>* Other costs to be added, covered by Project Management Budget</i>		
<i>** The costs are covered under Project Management Costs</i>		

Scaling and Sustainability:

The project is designed to ensure long-term sustainability by embedding its activities within national institutional structures, particularly through close collaboration with the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA). By integrating project activities into FSQA's existing mandates, procedures, and oversight functions, the project will institutionalize the knowledge, tools, and practices developed during implementation. Capacity-building activities, joint implementation, and the development of practical operational guidelines will ensure that national counterparts are equipped to continue supporting the cashew sector beyond the life of the project, reinforcing national ownership and continuity.

In addition, the solutions developed under the project will be designed to be sector-agnostic, allowing them to be applied across other agricultural value chains in The Gambia. Tools and approaches related to quality management, traceability, and compliance with international standards will therefore provide a foundation that can support other export-oriented commodities. By strengthening both institutional capacity and private sector practices, the project establishes a scalable model that can be replicated to enhance the safety, competitiveness, and export readiness of additional agricultural sectors.

13. How will project results be communicated?

Project results will be communicated through a multi-channel strategy designed to reach all relevant stakeholders effectively and taking into due consideration the STDF Communication Plan. Training materials, such as manuals, visual guides, and presentations, will be developed in accessible formats and distributed widely to farmers, cooperatives, processors, and government inspectors. These materials will be made available both in print and electronically, ensuring broad accessibility even in remote areas.

A dedicated section on the FSQA website will host project updates, key documents, training resources, and monitoring reports. Additionally, collaboration with the STDF will enable dissemination of key outputs and lessons learned through the STDF website and newsletters, reaching a global audience engaged in SPS capacity building.

The project will also use communication tools such as briefing notes, success stories, photos, and short video documentaries to showcase achievements and challenges, with particular attention to highlighting women's participation and achievements. These will be shared via social media platforms, government communication channels, and partner networks to enhance visibility and encourage knowledge exchange.

At the conclusion of the project, a national workshop will be organized, bringing together public and private sector stakeholders, donors, and development partners to share experiences, results, and lessons learned. This event will provide an opportunity to discuss sustainability strategy and replication of best practices within the cashew sector and other agricultural value chains, thus maximizing the project's long-term impact.

14. What steps will be taken to ensure that the project results will be sustained in the long run?

To ensure the sustainability of project results beyond STDF funding, the project will design a clear exit strategy at the beginning of the project, focused on institutional ownership and financial viability. Key activities such as capacity building of government authorities (namely, FSQA and TGSB) and private sector cooperatives will embed skills and systems within existing national structures,

ensuring that improved inspection, certification, and food safety practices become standard operating procedures.

Cooperatives will be supported to develop sustainable business models for delivering food safety training and providing support for certification services to their members, generating income that will maintain its services independently after project completion. More, cashew cooperatives would act as central "knowledge hubs," bridging the gap between project intervention, including capacity building, and effective field-level implementation next to cashew farmers. By help to follow standardized practices and facilitating peer learning, they ensure that the entire value chain adopts sustainable methods rather than just a few early adopters.

On the other hand, with a view of promoting the project replication in other regions/countries, the project will capitalize on standardized developed technical documentation, capacity building programs, validated pilot data, and strategic outreach to deliver the necessary 'blueprint' and 'proof' for adoption of its intervention model.

The establishment of a Project Steering Committee involving government, private sector, and development partners will facilitate ongoing coordination and advocacy, ensuring that SPS priorities remain integrated into national policies and budgets. Additionally, upgraded IT systems and inspection tools introduced by the project will be maintained by the responsible agencies as part of their routine operations.

Through embedding training curricula into government and cooperative capacity-building programs and continuous monitoring of compliance, the project creates a foundation for lasting improvements. These efforts will help institutionalize SPS standards and practices within The Gambia's cashew sector, securing long-term economic and health benefits for all stakeholders.

15. Why should the STDF fund this project?

This project is submitted to the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) because the initiative aligns closely with the STDF's unique mandate to strengthen SPS capacities in developing countries, particularly through innovative, replicable, and collaborative approaches that enhance market access and trade facilitation. Unlike other donors that may focus broadly on agricultural development or trade, the STDF specializes in SPS-related technical cooperation that directly addresses sanitary and phytosanitary constraints limiting export potential.

The project promotes the identification, development, and dissemination of good SPS practices by introducing risk-based inspection systems aligned with Codex and IPPC guidelines, supporting the revision of national food safety laws, and enhancing conformity assessment services through accreditation of testing laboratories. These efforts are designed to be replicable and scalable, setting a model for other sectors and countries in the region. The integration of digital tools such as management information systems for inspection data and other technical operational documents and records of the Authority further exemplifies innovative application of technology in SPS control.

Furthermore, the project strongly addresses several cross-cutting themes prioritized by STDF. Gender considerations are embedded by empowering women farmers and cooperative members through tailored training and inclusion in leadership roles, contributing to equitable economic development. Environmental sustainability is incorporated through promotion of good agricultural practices and integrated pest management, mitigating negative environmental impacts. The project also supports trade facilitation by improving transparency and efficiency in certification processes, reducing non-tariff barriers.

Regional linkages are fostered by aligning with ECOWAS SPS protocols and leveraging national institutions such as the Gambia Standards Bureau, thereby contributing to harmonized SPS standards and cooperation across West Africa. This regional dimension strengthens market access beyond The Gambia, facilitating integration into broader economic communities.

Importantly, the project is collaborative and interdisciplinary, involving multiple national organizations — Food Safety and Quality Authority, The Gambia Standards Bureau— and private sector cooperatives, while also engaging financial institutions and development partners.

In sum, STDF's specialized focus on SPS capacity-building, innovation, and inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships makes it the most suitable platform to support this project, ensuring effective solutions to SPS challenges and sustainable improvements in The Gambia's cashew sector and beyond.

Last but not least, as one of Africa's least industrialized nations and a designated Least Developed Country (LDC), The Gambia faces systemic challenges in adding value to its agricultural products and accessing high-value export markets. Strategic investment through STDF funding offers a unique opportunity to transform the cashew nut value chain by strengthening SPS and QI Systems. These improvements are critical to ensuring compliance with international standards, unlocking new trade opportunities, reducing poverty, and laying the foundation for inclusive, sustainable industrial development. By supporting this initiative, STDF can directly catalyze economic resilience, food safety, and export diversification in one of the continent's most underserved economies.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Work plan

Appendix 2: Project budget in Excel

Appendix 3: Theory of Change

Appendix 4: Letters of support from organizations that support the project request

Appendix 5: Environmental and Social Screening



STANDARDS *and* TRADE
DEVELOPMENT FACILITY



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

