

5 October 2022
5th vTPA Partnership Platform

Moderator: Steve Wearne, Chairperson of the Codex Alimentarius Commission
Participants: Marlynn Hopper (STDF), Abdoulaye Ndiaye, Moctar Sambe and Mahmoud Abdoul Camara (vTPA project in West Africa); Ana Marisa Cordero (IICA, implementing vTPA project in Belize and Honduras), Mirian Bueno, Erika Ochoa Pineda, Delilah Cabb Ayala and Natalie Gibson (vTPA project in Central America); Martha Byanyima (Land’O Lakes), Antoinette Mbabazi (vTPA pilot project in Rwanda), Paul Omanyi, Stella Mbabazi and Hakim Mufumbiro (vTPA pilot project in Uganda); Zeineb El Bouchikhi, Mariam Eid, Wiem Guissouma Ep Najjar, Suha Sawalha, Joyce Haddad and Ula Abdelaziz Makkawi Abdelrahman from the Arab region; Hyunjin Kim (WHO), Markus Lipp (FAO), Peter Wend (Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety department, Germany), Bruno Sechet (Integralim), Cor Groenveld (FSSC Foundation), Iain Lucey (GlobalG.A.P.), Alvaro Francisco Díaz Gallmetzer, competent authority from Chile, Bobby Krishna, food safety specialist in the Dubai Municipality, Gabor Molnar (UNIDO), Marie Michelle Sarr (vTPA NPC in Senegal), Natalia Fernandez (UNIDO).

Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening remarks by Steve Wearne • Initial experiences shared by the STDF pilot countries and the Arab Region on the vTPA approach • Presentation on UNIDO vTPA Assessment Tool by Ali Badarneh, Chief of Food Security and Food Systems Unit • Roundtable discussion on innovative approaches, good practices and opportunities to leverage support to accelerate the implementation of the Codex Guidelines in the STDF pilot countries and beyond. Interventions by participants moderated by Steve Wearne • Summary of discussion and closing remarks by Steve Wearne
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Topic	Comments
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Introduction of participants	<p>This was the first in-person meeting of the vTPA Partnership Platform including representatives of the three STDF-funded projects, as well as the new UNIDO vTPA regional pilot in the Near East.</p> <p>The discussion started with a round of introduction of the new partners. For the first time, representatives from countries where a vTPA project is being implemented were present in the vTPA partnership platform. These included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) From West Africa: Abdoulaye Ndiaye and Moctar Sambe from Senegal present in the room; Mahmoud Abdoul Camara from Mali connecting virtually. b) From Central America: Ana Marisa Cordero, Mirian Bueno and Erika Ochoa Pineda from Honduras, Delilah Cabb Ayala and Natalie Gibson from Belize. c) From East Africa: Martha Byanyima from Land O’Lakes, Paul Omanyi, Stella Mbabazi and Hakim Mufumbiro from Uganda; Antoinette Mbabazi, from Rwanda.
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	<p>d) From the MENA region: Zeineb El Bouchikhi, Mariam Eid, Wiem Guissouma Ep Najjar, Suha Sawalha, Joyce Haddad and Ula Abdelaziz Makkawi Abdelrahman.</p> <p>Countries and implementation agencies from Central America and West Africa shared their initial experiences, challenges, lessons learned so far and the expectations of the project and the platform. The experiences shared by them showed appreciation to UNIDO in the organization of webinars, trainings on risk-based inspection and surveys to identify the best path for the implementation of project activities. The challenges shared included climatic conditions, lack of availability of experts in the topic and data sharing and capacity building. The common challenge faced by countries and implementing agencies was however undoubtedly the slowdown in activities due to covid-19.</p> <p>Stakeholders from East Africa shared their interest to get started with the pilot project in East Africa, noting challenges and capacity gaps faced in the region.</p> <p>Finally, Mariam Eid, from Lebanon, Wiem Guissouma Ep Najjar from Tunisia and Zeineb Elbouchikhi from Morocco, thanked for the invitation to the session and expressed their interest in having a vTPA pilot project for the Arab region.</p>
Presentation by UNIDO	<p>In his presentation, Ali Badarneh, Chief of the Food Security and Food Systems Unit at UNIDO, explained how UNIDO, based on its Food Safety approach and the focus on public-private-partnership, sees the vTPA as a game changer to support national food control systems, particularly in developing countries.</p> <p>He talked about the activities conducted so far in the STDF-funded project in West Africa and in the Sida-funded project in the MENA region. These included webinars and in-person workshops with regulators of countries who have already implemented the approach, as well as physical and virtual trainings around the vTPA approach and the different existing schemes provided by different vTPA owners.</p> <p>He also reminded the essence and the objective of the vTPA partnership platform, which is to mobilize expertise and resources among the members to support the results of the vTPA projects.</p> <p>Ali Badarneh finalized the presentation with the introduction of the UNIDO-vTPA tools that are under development and that will support regulators and private sector in the assessment of vTPA and in the implementation of the approach. The tools will consist of a Model Food Safety Scheme, a vTPA assessment tool or guide, and a vTPA assessor training course. After finalization and validation, the tools will be made available to the pilot countries.</p>
Open discussion	<p>Ali Badarneh emphasized the main objective of the platform, being a benevolent collaboration. Accordingly, members are willing to provide, from the moment they become members.</p> <p>Gabor Molnar from UNIDO reminded the main objective of the pilot projects which is to create awareness among regulators of the countries as</p>

of what a vTPA is and how they can benefit from the data generated by them thanks to the development of public-private partnerships.

Markus Lipp from FAO acknowledged that the work done on the vTPA pilot projects is a great example of successful implementation of a Codex standard. He also mentioned the Food Control Systems assessment tool developed by the FAO and called for the integration of activities from the pilot projects into the national food control systems to ensure the success. Ali Badarneh requested Mr. Lipp for help from FAO with the inclusion of vTPA discussions in FAO's agenda.

Mike O'Neil called for information sharing and collaboration among all partners.

Marlynne Hopper reminded that vTPA programmes may be seen as only one part of the overall solution to improve food safety systems based on the Codex Guidelines. She underlined that the pilots are not expected to result in certification of food business operators though if that happens, this would be an additional benefit. She acknowledged and expressed gratitude for the contributions (expertise, time and/or travel) already provided by regulators and private sector partners towards the pilots, and called for the stakeholders in the pilots to work together across regions.

Mirian Bueno offered support with the validation of the training tools presented by Ali and asked for them to be shared with all countries in the respective languages.

Mukayi Musarurwa from COMESA asked for the support from UNIDO to implement the vTPA approach in COMESA. Ali Badarneh ensured UNIDO's support.

Ula Abdelaziz from Sudan asked whether the adoption of vTPA in a country would get recognition from other countries. Gabor Molnar summarized the different types of approaches around the vTPA and clarified that the decision on the use of vTPA in an international context should be left to be decided by the jurisdictions.

Delilah Cabb Ayala recognized and appreciated the openness and support that the competent authorities of developed countries who have already implemented the vTPA approach have given during the webinars that have been organized until now. She also reminded that the competent authority continues to have full responsibility when it comes to the decision on the use and application of vTPA in the country.

From the private sector, GlobalG.A.P. offered to provide free of charge webinars and support to the vTPA pilot projects, while LRQA also confirmed their interest in supporting the pilots with training and capacity building for free, but he also clarified that when it comes to certification, because of potential conflicts of interest, it cannot be for free.

Ali Badarneh thanked all participants and in particular, the moderation of the chair of the Codex Alimentarius, Steve Wearne, and Gabor Molnar closed the meeting with the announcement and invitation to all participants to next year's Food Safety forum to discuss relevant topics. Information will be shared in due time.

Date for next vTPA platform	The date for the next vTPA platform remains open. Information will also be sent in due time.
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