

The Republic of Moldavia

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International Consultant on Food Safety and SPS requirements

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Contents

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2 MISSION TO MOLDOVA, MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 Activities

2.2 Terms of Reference

2.3 Background of the Mission

2.4 Dates of Consultancy

2.5 Results

2.6 Potential donors

2.7 Main conclusions

2.8 Recommendations

Annex I Partial list of Persons met in Moldavia

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission in Moldova was carried out according to the scheduled. The consultant drafted ToR for the National Consultant, who was sub-contracted and assisted the consultant in organizing meetings, visits and the workshop helping in interpretation from Romanian to English and vice versa during the meetings.

Information have been collected on reforms undertaken to modernize the food control system in Moldova, however most of the reforms have been elaborated by single agencies maintaining some overlaps and regulations not in line with the food law. Consequently a thorough review of the institutional and legal frameworks for food control programmes is required.

Agro processing sectors with high priority for the country have been identified in the fruits and vegetables product considering the high production and capacity for exporting. Assistance in improvement quality control of the products, certification and packaging are key issues to open new market to export.

Since the publication of the World Bank action plan several progress have been made in the registration of animals and traceability, establishment of a new Veterinary Agency, review of the inspection border points, reorganization of the laboratories network for food control, implementation of HACCP in some companies and consistent decrease of obsolete pesticide stocks in the country. However many problems and gaps identified by the WB documents are still valid and have been incorporated in the project document for specific intervention.

Meetings with government officers from different agencies and representatives of Producers and Exporters Associations facilitated an assessment of needs and priorities to facilitate a full participation of Moldova in an open market establishing equivalent systems of control and certification of products from farm-to-fork, responding to expectation of private sector and food industry.

Several meetings have been held with potential project donors. Particularly interest for funding the project was expressed by the World Bank, SIDA, MCC and EU. Repeated meetings with MCC and MCA have been held to verify interest and availability for funding a project proposal for strengthening the food control system supporting the emerging food business sector. Interest for the draft proposal prepared by the consultant was expressed by MCC representatives.

A draft project proposal was prepared at the end of the mission according to the FAO standard project format. The proposal was discussed with AGNS officer before it finalization.,

2. MISSION TO THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA, MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 Activities

The Consultant met the National Consultant Ms. Daniela Batir, officer in the Veterinary Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and prepared with her a programme of meetings, visits and a planned workshop with Government representatives and stakeholders from private sector.

The consultant met the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Ion Perju who was briefed about the mission. The Deputy Minister expressed the interest of the Ministry of Agriculture in supporting the consultancy looking for appropriate follow-up, which could help the country in improving its exporting capacity of strategic food products.

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry

Other meetings were organized with the Head of the Veterinary Department and other officers of the Ministry of Agriculture. The consultant was informed that a new law (221 -10 October 2007) establishing an Agency for Sanitary-Veterinary Safety of animal food products will come into force on 14 September 2008. The law is focusing the reorganization of the Veterinary Service in a single agency for supervision and control of animal products from farm to consumption. The new law liberalizes the veterinary profession as private activity in Moldova, harmonizes most of the requirements of the EU legislation and will reduce and upgrade the system of border inspection and control points with Ukraine and Romania. The number of food safety testing labs will be reduced to three covering the whole country in three areas from North to South. A revision of the phytosanitary and quarantine service has been also undertaken and the Main State Phytosanitary Quarantine Inspectorate will be included in the Plant Protection Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, with a revision of procedures harmonized with the EU requirements and upgrading of quarantine Central laboratory. These reforms are going in the direction of modernizing the food control system, reducing costs and improving the quality and efficiency of the food safety programme.

Regarding the large stock of obsolete pesticides at level of many districts the consultant noted that a strong programme supported by the World Bank and the NATO project has reduced consistently the tons of pesticides and disposal of the remaining 1500-2000 tons should be completed within the next two/three years. A number of progress have been made respect to the publication of the World Bank “*Moldova Managing Food Safety and Agricultural Health; An Action Plan*”, however the Government still needs assistance in capacity building of food safety and in managing SPS criteria according to the WTO rules.

Ministry of Health

Meetings have been also organized with representatives of the Ministry of Health, responsible of the Codex Contact Point and chief of the inspection services. The Centre of Preventive Medicine (CPM) is the key agency responsible for food safety in Moldova implementing the food law published in 2004. Most of regulations published by different Ministries are not in line with the Food Law , the National Central Laboratory needs an upgrading of equipment, laboratory staff and support for pesticide residue analyses in food. Most of the overlaps with other agencies and inconsistency with a risk based approach are still in place and require appropriate intervention and system revision.

Ministry of Commerce and Trade

The consultant met representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, which is assuming responsibilities in market surveillance and consumer protection according to the existing regulations. The National Institute of Standardization and Metrology will be incorporated in the Ministry of Economy including the TBT enquiry point. The consultant expressed the opinion that the current legislation should be revised avoiding that the Ministry of Economy be involved in food market surveillance and consumer protection, considering that these responsibilities are covered by the CPM of the Ministry of Health.

A meeting with the Accreditation body clarified the procedures and policy followed under the Accreditation Council, chaired by the Minister of Economy. A process of harmonization with EU standards and accreditation system is ongoing.

Private sector

The consultant met the Director of the Economic Development Department of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Chisinau, Mr. Sergiu Harea to verify the possibility of using the Chamber of Commerce as a partner representing the private sector in the implementation of the project. The Chamber functions are regulated by the Law of 1999, which recognizes the Chamber as unique representative of the business sector, having strong influence on Government policy and developing activities such as export promotion, exhibitions, and training through seminars and round table. There are Chamber offices in each rayon and municipalities in Moldova. The Chamber is representing Moldova in the negotiations with WTO. The Chamber is also involved in discussion with Government in the regulatory commission for reforms. The exporting market of Moldova is oriented to 40 countries, 27 in EU, 11 in CIS and the remaining in CEEC. Romania is continuing to be trader partner of agricultural products. From its accession to EU export of animal products has been suspended. The exporting market to EU has been limited by high custom duty, however since 2007 the export of products are out of custom duty so the export is increasing. Only for sugar, wine and vegetables have been established quotas; however these quotas will be increased each year until 2012. The Chamber of Commerce is representing 1500 companies, who are members and pay a fee of 50 USD per year. The Director proposed that the executing agency of the project should be established by a Consortium constituted by a National Coordinator of the project from the Ministry of Agriculture and coordinators representing Ministry of Health and Chamber of Commerce. Each member of the consortium will be responsible for the implementation of specific activities at level of Government and Private Sector with and internal coordination.

The National Federation for Agriculture and Food Industry Uniagro protect (FNPAIA) funded in 2001 and including 15 Associations and 2000 farm members could be a good partner in the project to support some activities concerning assistance to private sector in creating and strengthening business cooperatives, developing training activities, implementing technologies and promoting exports.

The consultant visited a processing plant in construction for fruits in Stefan Voda District Funds for the establishment of cold storage system were obtained through an IFAD credit. The area of production is of around 400 ha and includes around 30 small producers. Seven cold storage rooms in construction with a capacity of 1,800 tons will be used for storage of peaches, plums, apples and table grapes. When completed the plant should be able to process 20,000 tons of fruits per year. The consultant considered this visit extremely important to develop some inputs for the project proposal in supporting the private sector, taking into consideration:

- A need of organizing the fragmented production system of small producers in cooperative or association
- Facilitate credits considering the unsustainable system imposed by Moldovan Banks

- Provide training in GAP looking for a certification system in place
- Assist in technology development for cleaning, sorting, grading and packing final products
- Market information and assistance

Ongoing projects

The consultant met people operating in projects providing assistance in the agribusiness sector and recognized the importance to establish links and cooperation in training, technology development and rural community organization. A list of possible cooperation with some identified projects has been attached to the project proposal.

Food Testing laboratories

A visit to the National Food Safety Laboratory of the Veterinary Department in Chisinau evidenced the need to separate private and official analyses to avoid conflict of interest, focusing more on food safety parameters instead of wasting time and resources in applying GOST standards parameters related to food composition and commercial quality. Some section should be upgraded and laboratory staff trained in international methods of analysis. International accreditation system should be built up to obtain Mutual Recognition with EU

Workshop

The consultant organized in collaboration with the National Consultant a Workshop in the Protocol Conference Room of the Ministry of Agriculture. Cost of interpretation, water and coffee break have been supported by the Consultant's budget. The Ministry offered the Conference Room free of charge.

The Workshop was attended by around twenty people representing the main agencies interested to food control in the country, consultants and advisers of ongoing projects, agribusiness entrepreneurs, Representatives of producers and exporters Associations and potential donors.

The consultant gave a Power Point presentation to provide a background information on the current status of food safety and management of SPS criteria in the country, the scope of the mission and proposals to assist Government and private sector in improving SPS system in the country and requirement of importers to expand and liberalize the exporting market.

Many interventions followed to the presentation. The Head of the Department of the Agro-Industrial Technologies pointed out that the proposed project is very important as support to the emerging food business sector that needs improvement in regulations, training, international system of certification and transfer of new technologies in order to have Moldovan products more competitive on international trade.

Some people representing associations or private companies emphasized the important role played by the private sector and particularly the association of producers and exporters in the promotion of export of national products and the system implemented to comply with the requirements requested by importing countries.

Agroinform referred to their main activity concerning the organization of small producers and exporters, organized in cooperatives oriented to export market. The most important activity in this programme is appropriate information on commitment requested to members to put in place a system, which can give many functional and economic vantages to associated producers. The

cooperative system can be oriented to domestic or exporting market according to characteristics and vocation. The organization has experience in different projects funded by Oland and Sweden. The representative also referred to the difficulties of obtaining valid certification by accredited laboratories and certification bodies, which are not recognized internationally.

The representative of the Ministry of Health said that the project should support some revision and modernization of the food control system in Moldova. In particular the project should support a review of the inspection bodies and delimitate responsibilities avoiding overlaps in the food market surveillance. Most of regulations issued by different governmental agencies are not in line with the food law of 2004. The system in the country should be developed giving more responsibilities to producers, processors and to the food industry sector in the quality and safety of their products for domestic and export trade. Relationship and mechanism of control should be changed focusing better collaboration between control bodies and producers. The inspection system should change from repressive to supportive and preventive system, working more with exporter associations and food safety responsible in the food industry. Most of the current responsibilities on food quality and safety should be transferred from the State to industry and related associations. The inspection control should be limited to safety aspects and conformity with technical regulations harmonized with international (Codex/EU) standards. The training for operators in food sector and inspectors in Governmental agencies was highlighted. It was envisaged the possibility to establish a training Centre for food industry and officers from Government, which could be assisted by Universities, projects, private sector, different donors and Government. The Centre could respond to the need of training in the country in a coordinated way avoiding overlap and waste of resources.

Some private companies expressed the need for getting loans at low interest rate to invest in technologies and improvements, because the current banking system loans in the country is not sustainable. In a technological development of infrastructures and machineries the companies need a lot of advises and consultancies.

The private sector also expressed some concern on rules imposed by EU for import of food commodities such as period imposed for export, tax payment, minimum price, quotas and other rules which are not facilitating the exporting Moldovan market. Some time prices are better in CIS countries such as in Byelorussia for apples.

3.2 Terms of Reference, International Consultant on food safety and SPS requirements

1. Undertake a mission to Moldova from 22 July to 6 August 2008;
2. Draft terms of reference for a national consultant, in consultation with AGNS and the STDF, select and sub-contract the national consultant and work closely with the national consultant in the delivery of his/her activities;
3. Collect information on the existing structure of food control in Moldova, current strengths and weakness and ascertain government and private sector priorities in this field;
4. Identify priority agro-processing sectors to be strengthened through investment in official food control activities and the private sector knowledge and capacity to meet these requirements;
5. Determine what progress has been made since publication of the World Bank “*Moldova Managing Food Safety and Agricultural Health; An Action Plan*” in the areas of border control, certification and accreditation. If there are still outstanding needs, identify the priorities and interventions to resolve existing challenges in the most effective and timely manner.
6. Undertake a needs assessment of public and private entities (to complement needs identified in the aforementioned *Action Plan*) to strengthen the identified agro-processing sectors through:

- Convening of a stakeholder meeting; and
 - Relevant meetings with government officials and representatives of food industry.
7. Meet with donors supporting Moldova in the field of food safety and food control activities and determine any synergies with the project under development;
 8. Prior to, and during the mission, maintain contact with the Millennium Challenge Cooperation (MCC) and Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) office in Moldova. Take account of the priorities identified by MCC and MCA in the area of food safety while drafting the project document. Hold discussion with the MCA representative in Moldova on opportunities to obtain funding for this project through MCC support for Moldova in the field of high value agriculture;
 9. Upon close of mission, discuss the main conclusions and proposals for the project with the national authorities as well as in-country donors (including the MCA);
 10. Based on the analysis, findings and discussions with national authorities and donors (including the MCC/MCA), prepare a draft project identifying key activities based on the needs assessment. This should address: (i) priority food industry sectors to be targeted in terms of training, strengthening capacity with the food business sector; (ii) identification of related capacity building needs and activities to strengthen food control functions such as standards, laboratory functions, inspection, training, etc.; and (iii) identification of other outstanding needs and priorities to facilitate trade in food and agricultural products from and into Moldova;
 11. Consider the findings of the World Bank Action Plan and any other relevant projects document produced by FAO or other donors as part of background information;
 12. Prepare the project in line with the FAO standard project format (Technical Cooperation Project or TCP). Present the project proposal to FAO, WTO, the MCC/MCA and any other relevant development partners by 29 August 2008, and consider feedback received (as necessary in its finalization);
 13. Prepare an end-of-mission executive report (2-3 pages) presenting the findings, results, conclusions and recommendations for follow-up.

3.3 Background for the Mission

The consultant had access to many basic documents, which have been used as background of the mission such as documents from the FAO regional project TCP/RER/3002 and the World Bank “Moldova Managing Food Safety and Agricultural Health; An Action Plan” in the areas of border control, certification and accreditation. Other documents regarding inspection, statistics on agriculture production and data on import export have been provided and consulted.

3.4 Dates of Consultancy in Moldova

The consultant’s mission was carried out from 22 July to 6 August and the consultant prepared the project proposal and his report from 7 to 18 August as home work in Rome

3.5 Results

1. The mission in Moldova was carried out according to the scheduled
2. The consultant drafted ToR for the National Consultant, who was sub-contracted and assisted the consultant in organizing meetings, visits and the workshop helping in interpretation from Romanian to English and vice versa during the meetings.
3. Information have been collected on reforms undertaken to modernize the food control system in Moldova, however most of the reforms have been elaborated by single agencies maintaining some overlaps and regulations not in line with the food law. Consequently a

thorough review of the institutional and legal frameworks for food control programmes is required.

4. Agro processing sectors with high priority for the country have been identified in the fruits and vegetables product considering the high production and capacity for exporting. Assistance in improvement quality control of the products, certification and packaging are key issues to open new market to export
5. Since the publication of the World Bank action plan several progress have been made in the registration of animals and traceability, establishment of a new Veterinary Agency, review of the inspection border points, reorganization of the laboratories network for food control, implementation of HACCP in some companies and consistent decrease of obsolete pesticide stocks in the country. However many problems and gaps identified by the WB documents are still valid and have been incorporated in the project document for specific intervention.
6. Meetings with government officers from different agencies and representatives of Producers and Exporters Associations facilitated an assessment of needs and priorities to facilitate a full participation of Moldova in an open market establishing equivalent systems of control and certification of products from farm-to-fork, responding to expectation of private sector and food industry.
7. Several meetings have been held with potential project donors. Particularly interest for funding the project was expressed by the World Bank, SIDA, MCC and EU.
8. Repeated meetings with MCC and MCA have been held to verify interest and availability for funding a project proposal for strengthening the food control system supporting the emerging food business sector. Interest for the draft proposal prepared by the consultant was expressed by MCC representatives.
9. A draft project proposal was prepared at the end of the mission according to the FAO standard project format. The proposal was discussed with AGNS officer before it finalization.,

3.6 Potential Donors

World Bank

A meeting was organized in the World Bank office with the senior operation Officer, Rural Development Specialist, Mr. Anatol Gobjila who after the briefing provided by the consultant on his mission referred that World Bank prepared an Action Plan as consequence of an extensive study and assessment of the Moldovan system, which was published in 2006. This activity was a consequence of a specific request of the Government at that time, however considering some limits in resources the implementation of a project was postponed. In July 2008 a cycle of three years has been funded with an allocation of US\$ 150 million. Discussion with Government concerning programmes and activities will be completed in December and it will be possible to define a likely participation of the World Bank in this project, depending more by the Government request. This will be a good occasion having many multiagency and multilateral donors involved for funding a key programme. WB is funding with US\$ 4 million a project on Animal Health supporting three laboratories in the North Centre and South of the country. In conclusion WB is very keen to complete what was initiated in 2005. Mr. Gobjila requested that a copy of the project proposal, when finalized should be sent to him for consideration and possible involvement of the WB in this programme.

SIDA

The consultant met the First Secretary, Deputy Head of Mission, Ms. Yiva Sorman Nath and the National Programme Officer, Ms. Lilia Razlog, who have been briefed about the mission and the intention of preparing a project proposal for implementing SPS requirements in the country with direct benefits to the exporting sector in the country. The National programme officer expressed the

interest of SIDA in cofounding a similar project, considering the high priority in the country for this programme. She requested that once the proposal was finalized could be sent for consideration to SIDA.

MCC

The consultant met the team of MMC and the Director Agriculture Operations, Ms. Katherine Farley and explained the scope of his mission and the objective of a project proposal, which should be prepared to strengthen the official food control programme to support the emerging food business sector in the Republic of Moldova. He explained that some progresses have been reached since the publication of the World Bank report of 2005 in the area of stock of obsolete pesticides in the country and the new laws introducing a best management of service and resources for food control, however most of the problem related to the lack of coordination, overlaps and use of reactive measures instead of preventive measures in the supervision and inspection system are still in place.

The Consultant in a second meeting presented an outline of the project proposal and planned intervention at level of Government and private sector. The MCC team took note of the progress made and requested that a final project document should be sent to MCC for consideration.

EU

Before leaving the consultant had the opportunity to speak by telephone with Mr. Tudor Robu of the European Union in Moldova. He expressed interest to the project proposal and recommended to send the project document when finalized to him and to Ms. Speranta Olaru for consideration, taking into account that EU is funding a number of projects to improve food safety and facilitate the implementation of equivalent systems in food sector control and supervision.

3.7 Main conclusions

The food control system in the country is still influenced by the Soviet period system and the exporting market to CIS countries is still implementing GOST standards and rules not recognized by EU countries. Overlap of activities at level of different agencies is still influencing cost and efficiency of the system

The regulatory system in the country needs a review considering that most of the inspections and food laboratory testing continue as if the former GOST standards were still mandatory.

Inspections, monitoring and surveillance are still operating as reactive system to samples collected from market, while the main food safety responsibility should be with producers and food industry implementing preventive system to avoid food contamination along the food chain

Most of the laboratories in the country have been accredited by a national system, however they are still using old methods of analysis, are not efficiently equipped and the accreditation system should be mutually recognized at level of EU. Most of the analytical control should focus food safety aspects, avoiding to waste resources and time controlling parameters included in GOST standards, considered necessary for the issue of conformity certificate.

The production system in rural areas is fragmented and small producers are not able to give an added value to their production. They lack of application of good agriculture practices, certification of system of production, appropriate technology and organization in association or cooperative systems. Limitation of the national food control system and of appropriate implementation of SPS criteria influence negatively possible penetration of new markets and liberalization of food trade.

One of the first priority in the country is the food safety capacity building. Most of the ongoing project carry out training activities including high cost for services, interpretations, transport, hosting participants in hotels etc.. Lack of coordination and overlaps of training activities determine waste of resources and little impact on the food safety capacity building programme

3.8 Recommendations

Setup an institutional restructuring for a multi agency system with clearer definitions of roles and tasks between agriculture and health authorities in the food safety and SPS management, avoiding overlaps and duplication of activities, which could negatively affect the agribusiness sector.

A programme for replacing the existing regulatory system with a system compliant with international standards and good practices for a market economy needs to be organized

Redesign inspection, monitoring and surveillance at level of each interested agency responsible for the evaluation of the level of preventive system in place along the food chain. Training and capacity building for inspector in risk based inspection approach are considered essential.

The two Central Laboratories of the Veterinary Agency and of the PMC should be supported in internal and external training of staff, upgrading of equipment and development of a programme to have an international accreditation system in the country.

A programme of support to producers and agro-processing sectors need to be strengthened through intervention in rural areas using LPAs and other agencies and associations to support a cooperative organization of small producers targeting an improvement of quality and costs reductions. Development of activities in selected areas will be used as a model for the development of the small/medium enterprises.

To better coordinate training programme in the country and reduce costs and waste of resources it should be envisaged the possibility of establishing a Training Centre co-financed by the Government, Universities, ongoing projects and potential donors.

Partial list of persons met during the mission in Moldova

FAO

FAO National Correspondent in Moldova, Ms. Diana Gherman
Investment Officer, Joseph G. Nagy

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry

Deputy Minister, Dr. Ion Perju

Department of Veterinary Medicine

Head of Department, Mr. Vsevolod Stamati

State Veterinary Inspector, Mr. Cotici Vladislav

Specialist in Animal Health and National Consultant, Ms. Daniela Batir

Department Agro-Industrial Technologies

Head of the Department, Mr. Pintilie Ion Pirvan

Mr. Mihai Mocanu

Department of Agro Chemistry, Ecology and Plant Protection

Head of Department, Mr. Iurie Malanciuc

National Food Safety Laboratory of the Veterinary Department

Director, Ms. Svetlana Burlacu

State Centre for certification and approbation of phytosanitary and fertilizers

Chairman, Mr Nicolai Pamujac

Main State Phytosanitary Quarantine Inspectorate

Chief, Mr. Nicolae Soia

Ministry of Health

National Centre of Preventive Medicine

Deputy Director, Ms. Ana Valneanski (Codex Contact Point)

Inquiry Point SPS

Consultant on Food Safety, Dr. Opopol

State Sanitary Epidemiological Service

Chief, Ms. Galina Obreja

Ministry of Economy

Department of Standardization, technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment

Chief, Ms. Nona Luscalov

Accreditation Body (SAMD)

Director, Ms. Eugenia Spoiala

National Institute of Standardization and Metrology

General Director, Mr. Alexandru Tarlajanu

Centre of quality control and food safety for food producers (CCIPAM)

General Manager, Ms. Galina Leasenco

World Bank

Senior operation Officer, Rural Development Specialist, Mr. Anatol Gobjila

Millennium Challenge Corporation

Director, Agriculture Operations, Ms. Katherine Faeley

Director, Financial and Private Sector Department, Mr. Lawrence Camp

Lead Economist Economic Analysis, Ms. Teresa K. Osborne

Programme Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr. Paul M. Pleva

Millennium Challenge Account Moldova

Economist, Mr. Dumitriu Caragia

Agriculture Consultant, Ms. Felicia Pricop

Embassy of Sweden, SIDA

First Secretary, Deputy Head of Mission, Ms. Yiva Sorman Nath

National Programme Officer, Ms. Lilia Razlog

USAID MOLDOVA

Project Development Officer, Ms. Susan Kutor

Senior Project Management Specialist, Mr. Sergiu Botezatu

CNFA/USAID

Chief of Party/Country Director, Mr. Conrad Fritsch

Agribusiness Development Advisor, Mr. Viorel Leahu

Consultant Dezvoltare Agribusiness, Mr. Nicolae Zaharia

Food Safety and Quality Management Coordinator, Mr. Andrei Cumpanici
Agribusiness Development Advisor, Mr. Victor Gaina

Agricultural Policy Project/USAID

Chief of Party, Ms. Svetlana Ojog

Deputy Chief of Party, Andrei Bat

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova

Director of Economic Development Department, Mr. Sergiu Harea

AGROINFORM

Coordinator of Cooperative system, Mr. Grigore Daraban

FINPAIA Federatia Nationala a Patronatului din Agricultura si Industria Alimentara

Executive Director, Mr. Alexandr Slusari

National Agency for Rural Development (ACSA)

Executive Director, Mr. Costantin Ojog

Research, information and agro marketing coordinator, Mr. Anatolie Fala

URS Bergher Ltd

General Manager, Mr. Iurie Fluierau

Association of Fruit Producers and Exporters

CODRU ST srl

Sales Manager, Mr. Mihai Chilianu

MVS-INVEST, srl

Mr. T. Girbu

AGROCOLECT srl

Mr. Ch. Andronic

VERA-TROFIM

Mr. Valeriu Trofim

Table Grapes Growers and Exporters Association

Executive Director, Mr. Igor Vatamaniuc