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**Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

**MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE STANDARDS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY (STDF)**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT<sup>1</sup>

An independent mid-term review of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) was completed in January 2014. The review was carried out by Saana Consulting and covers the period 2009-2013. It examines the STDF's performance against evaluation criteria developed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

The executive summary of the STDF mid-term review, including the recommendations, is circulated to the SPS Committee for information. The full report can be downloaded (in English only) on the STDF website ([http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/KeyDocs/STDF\\_MTR\\_Jan-14.pdf](http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/KeyDocs/STDF_MTR_Jan-14.pdf)).

This review is the third evaluation of the Facility. Previous evaluations were completed in December 2005 and November 2008, respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> This document has been prepared under the Secretariat's own responsibility and is without prejudice to the positions of Members or to their rights or obligations under the WTO.

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## ANNEX

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the results of the third Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The STDF supports developing countries in building their capacity to implement international SPS standards, guidelines and recommendations as a means to improve their human, animal and plant health status and ability to gain and maintain access to markets. In doing so, it contributes to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and environmental protection in developing countries. More specifically, the STDF increases awareness, mobilizes additional resources, strengthens collaboration and identifies and disseminates good practice to enhance the effectiveness of SPS assistance. The STDF also provides support and funding for the development and implementation of projects that promote compliance with international SPS requirements.

2. The STDF is a global partnership established by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Other organizations involved in SPS-related technical cooperation, donors contributing funds to the STDF and developing country experts participate actively in the Facility's work. The STDF is managed and hosted by the WTO.

3. The purpose of the MTR was to provide an independent assessment of progress in the implementation of STDF's current strategy against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact; to review the performance of the STDF Secretariat, the STDF's governance structure and operation systems, its funding and staffing levels; to capture success stories and lessons learned and to promote feedback and knowledge-sharing among all STDF partners, donors, developing country experts and beneficiaries. The period of the review from 2009 to 2013 overlaps the Medium Term Strategy 2007-11 and the current Medium Term Strategy 2012-16.

4. The evaluation team consisted of two persons supported by a back stopping team. It was carried out in three phases between July and November 2013. It was conducted in accordance with the evaluation terms of reference and the OECD best practice guidelines for evaluations. The first phase included a documentation review, extensive consultation with the STDF Secretariat and interviews with WTO stakeholders. The second phase comprised interviews with members of the STDF Working Group including donors, partners, developing countries, observers and other relevant stakeholders. This was followed by further documentation review and consultations with the STDF Secretariat. The findings of both phases were then collated, analysed and synthesised in accordance to the DAC criteria, after which this draft report was prepared.

5. Measured against the aims of the Medium Term Strategy 2007-11 and the mandate of the Medium Term Strategy 2012-16 the STDF has made good progress in the period under review. The results are impressive and a testament to the effective operation of the STDF WG approval process as well as the support provided by the STDF Secretariat. The major success of the STDF has been as a funding mechanism for project grants (PGs) and project preparation grants (PPGs). A total of 31 PGs were approved for funding in the period 2009-12 with a value of value of USD 15.3 Million exceeding the STDF target of 24. In value terms 55% of the projects addressed food safety issues, 23% general SPS issues, 19% plant health issues and 3% animal health issues. The projects have covered over 40 countries with good geographical coverage. The projects addressed public and private sector capacity deficits, both institutional and technical, which were acting as constraints to gaining and or maintaining market access. 21 projects completed implementation within the review period totaling a value of USD 12.3 Million. Projects were considered highly relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries and to the policies of partners and donors. Projects were generally considered effective in that they produced most of the deliverables as planned. Most projects were efficient delivering planned outputs on time and within budget. Time extensions were granted for about 30% of the grants, but these were justified by circumstances outside the control of the projects themselves. The long-term sustainability of results is likely for many projects, but inevitably was an issue for others due to reasons including

high staff turnover at the recipient organization, a lack of operational funding at project completion, and lack of local ownership of the deliverables. Regional approaches were particularly successful for a project in Latin America to strengthen institutional SPS structures across the region at national level, and in two projects in West Africa: one to improve performance in fisheries management and the other to control fruit flies. It is currently too early to assess impact, but emerging evidence suggests that there is potential for significant impact where outcomes can be sustained.

6. The PPG program addressed an exigent need of beneficiaries particularly in least developed countries (LDCs) and other lower income countries (OLICs). The support provided to applicants during the application process built significant capacity in project identification and design on SPS issues related to institutional strengthening as well as technical competence and capacity evaluation. The skills developed are likely transferable and replicable. A total of 24 PPGs were approved for funding in the period 2009-12 totaling USD 733,000. Preparation of PPGs was supported in a wide range of countries and regions. The number of PPGs developed as PGs and approved by the STDF has increased from 14% in 2009 to 50% in 2012 and is expected to increase further in 2013. The cost of the PPG program was considered a good investment by the donors, nearly all of whom cite the PPG program as a key benefit of the STDF and a justification for their continued support. Over 50% of total project grant funding went to projects originating in LDCs or OLICs exceeding the performance target of 40%.

7. In the coordination area the STDF has successfully established itself as a coordination forum for the exchange of information and dissemination of best practice in relation to SPS standards compliance necessary to gain and maintain market access. It is a key part of the WTO support infrastructure to LDCs through its cooperation with the Enhanced Integration Framework and as part of the WTO-led Aid for Trade Initiative. STDF has identified SPS issues of concern to partners, donors and developing countries and prepared background studies, papers and briefing notes to disseminate information on them. It has coordinated an ongoing collaborative discussion of the problems at well-attended workshops, which have highlighted the need for coordinated responses by partners, donors, developing countries and other stakeholders. The issues addressed have included Aid for Trade, Climate Change; Fruit fly control in West Africa; Public-Private Partnerships and International Trade and Invasive Alien Species. The EU believes that coordination is a key role of the STDF. Its role as a coordination forum was cited as a significant value added by most members of the STDF WG and a reason for their continued support and participation. It was relevant to the goals of partners, donors and developing countries. However, the long-term sustainability of some of the results of enhanced collaboration in SPS related technical cooperation was questionable. This was highlighted for activities where ownership was uncertain or where the outputs of the activities were insufficient to effect sustainable change. Ownership and sustainability was higher where a series of prolonged coordination activities targeted a specific response such as in the case of fruit fly control at regional level in West Africa.

8. The performance of STDF Secretariat was considered efficient and cost effective in managing both the grant funding program and the coordination activities. Efficiencies and value for money were achieved in logistics and in effective use of technology. Donors noted that the grant funding program allowed them to extend the range of their technical assistance programs on SPS issues at a fraction of the cost than if they were to do it themselves. This was a critical factor in their decision to support the STDF. The Secretariat's participative and consultative approach to the implementation of the coordination activities enhanced effectiveness in implementation.

9. A number of constraints were identified which hampered progress towards achievement of purpose under both strategies. The lack of a detailed results based management (RBM) framework for activity design as part of work program preparation and implementation reduced STDF efficacy in reaching targeted outcomes in the coordination area. Better design could help identify high performing indicators, increase ownership, and apply more effective solutions, which yield stronger and more coherent outcomes. Monitoring of coordination activities, feedback and reporting could be improved with a more practically applicable RBM framework. The procedures for review and approval of PPGs and PGs in the WG were time consuming and limited the time available in the WG for the STDF to fulfill its role as a coordination forum. The high workload of Secretariat was straining effectiveness in project monitoring and in support provided to PPG applicants. Recommendations to address these issues are:

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## **1 REVIEWING THE MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY AND STRENGTHENING THE RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE STDF'S ACTIVITIES AND BECOME A USEFUL TOOL FOR THE SECRETARIAT WHEN MANAGING THE FACILITY.**

- The STDF should review its current strategy within a RBM framework in the context of preparing work plans for 2015 and 2016, beginning with a detailed problem identification exercise and developing a clear intervention logic to frame the problems and respective solutions. High performing indicators should be set for results and be SMART<sup>1</sup>, wherever possible. As the Secretariat currently lacks internal resources for this kind of input, the exercise should be carried out with the support of an external consultant through an inclusive process including WG members as well as the Secretariat. Careful consideration should be made to ensure that any revision exercise only produces tools that are practicable for the Secretariat and does not put any more constrain on them than already exists.
- Activities should be identified and prioritized for inclusion in the work programs based on their contribution to the achievement of the targeted outcome and purpose and the resources available to the STDF. Clear objectives for these activities should be included in the annual work programs, as well as a roadmap to achieve these objectives (including detailed activities, milestones, and high performance indicators with baselines). It would be useful for the STDF to also delineate more clearly between core coordination and thematic activities.

## **2 INCREASED AND IMPROVED COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PLAYERS**

- Building on the lessons learned, the STDF should increase the focus on addressing SPS issues at the regional level and bolster ties with the relevant regional actors for coordination, project identification and implementation (e.g. IICA and OIRSA and regional Aft vehicles such as TradeMark East Africa as well as the regional development banks).
- Coordination and cooperation with the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP) should be strengthened. Better collaboration would allow the STDF to identify best practice in project and program design, as well as harness synergies that strengthen impact and improve sustainability. The World Bank in its role as a founding Partner of the STDF should facilitate coordination with the GFSP to ensure complementarity and reduce for the risk of overlap. The STDF should liaise more closely with One Health initiatives to improve coordination and collaboration on food safety and public health issues and to improve design and sustainability of its own coordination activities.
- The STDF should strengthen its voice in the global Aid for Trade initiative, including advocating for mainstreaming prioritization of SPS issue and related quality infrastructure as a pillar of the Aft initiative. Further cooperation with the EIF would be valuable in order to maintain and bolster the inclusion of SPS issues in DTIS reports and country strategies.
- The STDF should carry a survey of WG members and other relevant stakeholders to assess demand and or willingness to submit documents to the virtual library. Where there is a demand, the STDF should raise the profile of the library and ensure more systematic cooperation from key partners.

## **3 STRENGTHENING THE STDF SECRETARIAT'S CAPACITY AND ENSURING EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE FACILITY**

- The Secretariat's human resources should be strengthened with the appointment of two additional full-time staff members to address the current heavy workload of the Secretariat.
- The STDF should distinguish clearly between final independent and 'ex-post' evaluations or impact evaluations. Final evaluations should be carried out at the same rate as currently: 50% of completed projects selected at random. They should be carried out just before the projects are scheduled to complete. Ex-post or impact evaluations should be carried out on selected projects from 3-5 years after completion. The projects for impact evaluations shall be proposed by the STDF Secretariat and approved by the STDF WG. Ex-post evaluations shall cover up to 25% of the total projects completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant And Time-bound.

- To strengthen efficiency and reduce potential turnover the WTO/STDF should issue staff contracts for up to five years where multi-year funding commitments from donors permit.
- The WG should discuss whether there is a need to amend the current review and approval process for PPG and PG applications. To facilitate this, the Partners should define their minimum technical criteria for approval of PPGs and PGs and advise the WG accordingly.
- To increase effectiveness within the WG and in the implementation of coordination activities, the FAO, IPPC and the STDF Secretariat should seek to improve their working relationship.
- To increase the national and regional benefits of the PPG programme the STDF should introduce an explicit provision in the Operating Rules favoring PPG proposals that address harmonization of SPS policies in a national context between competent authorities or in a regional context between national authorities.
- The STDF WG should clarify its objective in regard to funding qualifying PG proposals that originate from PPGs. It should state if funding such PG proposals will be prioritized over other PGs proposals or if all funding decisions will be made using identical criteria.

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