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Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures

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**INFORMATION ON SPS-RELATED ACTIVITIES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)
(1 MARCH – 1 OCTOBER 2020)**

COMMUNICATION FROM ITC

The following communication, received on 14 October 2020, is being circulated at the request of the ITC.

The International Trade Centre is continuing its efforts to assist enterprises to meet technical requirements. An update of selected SPS-related activities of interest to the WTO Members is provided below.

1 PROJECTS

1.1 EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme - MARKUP (July 2018 - July 2022 / Donor European Union)

1.1. This EU financed project aims to contribute to the economic development of the East African Community (EAC) region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), with the specific objective to improve market access of agro-industrial crop and horticultural sectors to the European Union, and among the five EAC partners. The selected products are avocado, cocoa, coffee, spices and tea.

1.2. Implementation of GlobalG.A.P. among avocado producers in Kenya and Tanzania (June 2019 - December 2020): nine Tanzanian producer groups (comprising a total of 446 farmers), being assisted in the implementation of GlobalG.A.P. towards certification, have undergone third-party certification audit. Results are awaited.

1.3. Eight Kenyan producer groups are currently being helped in the implementation of the said standard. Trainings are now complete. Quality Management Systems have been developed and quality manuals prepared. Soil, water, manure and product testing are ongoing. Upcoming activities include internal audit, corrective action on nonconformities followed by external audit for certification.

1.4. Swahili translation of the GlobalG.A.P. standard applicable to the sector is now published and available on the GlobalG.A.P. website.

1.5. A five-day workshop on food safety for Quality Champions in Burundi was completed.

1.2 Uzbekistan - Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO (21 February 2020 - 20 February 2025 / Donor European Union)

1.6. The project supports Uzbekistan's development plans to modernize its economy through leveraging the process of WTO accession. The overall objective of the action is to contribute to the economic development of Uzbekistan by assisting the country to create a trade environment that is in conformity with international standards, including predictable and enforceable laws and

regulations. The specific objective of the action is to create a trade environment that is in conformity with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

1.7. A mapping of SPS-related institutions and an assessment of their needs were carried out remotely through an electronic survey and validated through videoconference exchanges. Activities to reinforce SPS institutions are being designed, beginning with support to State Plant Quarantine Inspection in the review of the plant health legislation and training for the development of a pest risk analysis system.

1.3 Côte D'Ivoire: UK Trade Partnerships Programme (June 2019 - March 2022 / Donor United Kingdom)

1.8. The UK Trade Partnerships Programme is designed to ensure countries maximize benefits of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and in particular, maximize trade with the United Kingdom under existing EU EPAs or under UK specific EPAs negotiated post-Brexit. Exporters in EPA countries are not fully taking advantage of the export opportunities provided by EU Economic Partnership Agreements for a number of reasons including lack of awareness and gaps in competitiveness in UK/EU markets in such areas as quality.

1.9. In Côte d'Ivoire the project aims to build the ability of targeted firms/products to export to UK/EU markets. Agri-sector products – both fresh and processed - are part of the selected priorities. ITC has commenced the first phase of its support to SMEs in building knowledge among up to 30 producers of fresh produce (e.g. bananas, pineapples) on Good Agricultural Practice, focusing on requirements for GlobalG.A.P. A number of pilot enterprises will be coached to implement GlobalG.A.P.

1.4 Burundi Market Access Upgrade Programme -MARKUP (July 2018 – June 2022 / Donor European Union)

1.10. This project aims to enhance quality infrastructure services with particular focus on its support to coffee and tea sectors. Testing laboratories involved in testing (physico-chemical, chemical, microbiology) are being reinforced in terms of equipment and training of technicians. SMEs in the tea and coffee sectors are being supported to implement food safety systems (HACCP/ISO 22000) and a few to comply with Rainforest requirements.

1.11. The inspectors of SPS related authorities have been trained on the requirements of ISO/IEC 17020 and are now being coached to implement their management systems according to that standard.

1.12. The project is also providing technical assistance to the coffee sector of the country to reduce the incidence of the potato taste defect. In line with the regional EAC strategy on the aflatoxin issue, a national strategy is being elaborated for Burundi regarding measures to be taken for that issue in the local products.

1.5 Pakistan: Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (June 2019 – December 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.13. ITC is implementing the EU funded "Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress" (GRASP) project which aims to contribute to the reduction of poverty through development of rural micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in selected districts within two provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan and Sindh. GRASP will focus on selected product lines within livestock and horticulture.

1.14. In the context of this project, ITC is providing support to strengthen the SPS authorities in the two provinces which include the food safety authorities and the departments dealing with plant health and animal health. The project will also provide support to MSMEs to improve quality and food safety of their products.

1.6 Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - June 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.15. The ARISE Plus project aims at building inclusive and sustainable trade growth in Myanmar through support to MSMEs in selected value chains (component 1), enhancing food safety and SPS compliance (component 2 – targeting tea, coffee, honey, horticulture products) and trade policy formulation and implementation (component 3). Under component 2 a number of activities have been completed. Two gap assessments of microbiology laboratories with road map for accreditation of ISO 17025; a webinar on the ISO 17025 for more than 50 laboratory staff. Support was given to provide 100 inspectors from the Plant Protection Division with personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure their safety and the continuity of the inspection duties during COVID-19; companies in the food business took part into virtual sessions on biosecurity requirements; posters and pamphlets delivered to Institutions for COVID-19 prevention for the food sector. More than 130 participants joined webinars on Codex Alimentarius organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry Food and Agriculture Excellence (CII-FACE). World Food Safety Day was celebrated and visible on social media. Myanmar can now export honey to the European Union according to an EU Commission Decision made on 29 July 2020 following the approval of the National Residue Monitoring Plan. Competent authorities, sector association and processors are supported through online training to establish control measures and bee wealth management system and implementation of HACCP. The project Facebook page is: <https://www.facebook.com/ArisePlusMyanmar>.

1.16. The ARISE Plus project with its component on SPS builds synergies with ARISE + Regional, and ITC ongoing projects through related quality and SPS components (e.g. Inclusive tourism development with focus on Kayah state (consolidation) & Tanintharyi (extension) (NTF IV), funded by the Netherlands Trust Fund; Myanmar Trade and Investment Project (TIP) funded by DFID; Myanmar: Upgrading horticulture supply and sustainable tourism to develop business linkages, UN Cluster on trade and productive capacity - funded by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) trust fund).

1.7 Tajikistan: Enabling market access for agricultural products through improved food safety system (March 2018 - February 2021 / STDF - PG-447 implemented by ITC in collaboration with FAO in particular for output 1 on the regulatory control system)

1.17. The goal of the project is to improve export competitiveness of Tajik SMEs and food safety through better use of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines with focus on honey and apricot sectors. It enhances high value market access for Tajik agri-food producers and processors and increases the level of safety of Tajik domestic food by reducing the risk of contamination and improving the systems of control and monitoring of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines.

1.18. A group of 17 previously trained Tajik honey and apricot experts started in March/April 2020 to impart training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), EU market access requirements as well as harvesting and post-harvest technology to farmers and producers. The first set of training was stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions and resumed in September/October 2020 with round of training in Snagvor, Rasht and Laksh districts for 64 participants (nine women) with strict application of the precautionary measures (wearing masks, providing hand sanitizers and following social distance).

1.19. FAO conducted two virtual meetings on the regulatory control system by international consultants while local staff gathered in hotel. In March 2020, the project supported Tajikistan to submit the first National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) a pre-requisite for accessing the EU market for honey by 31 March through a number of virtual meetings with ITC staff and international experts. 2019 honey samples could not be collected due to COVID-19 travel restrictions in support of the NRMP. Synergies with Myanmar in honey sector has been initiated.

1.20. The project launched the development of an information, education and communication (IEC) strategy and implementation plan. The plan includes the creation of awareness and sensitization material on good practices for the application of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines.

1.8 SYMST: Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam)(December 2018 – October 2022 / Donor European Union)

1.21. The overall objective of the project is to improve food safety through better governance in Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. The project aims to strengthening the regulatory framework for control of plant health and pesticides in the fruits and vegetable sector and other plant products through the application of norms and standards and improve market access.

1.22. In Lao People's Democratic Republic three field missions were conducted from March to August 2020 to the target regions to launch the project and offices, select beneficiaries and plan field activities and trials (Luang Namtha to support watermelon for export to China; in Vientiane for export of rice to the European Union and in Pakxe for export of chili and basil to the European Union). The project is initiating support to the pesticides laboratory on usage of a LC-MS/MS machine for measuring Maximum Residual Levels (MRLs); training on EU regulations relating to the importation of the project's target products; development of the EU Regulation manual, plant health and pesticide awareness campaign.

1.23. Viet Nam was included as second beneficiary of the project in May 2020. The Plant Protection Department is the project focal point. A series of online meetings were conducted between ITC, EUD in Viet Nam and PPD to develop a proposed plan of action for the project. Selection of national and international experts are ongoing. A preliminary list of products to target under the project include mango, dragon fruit, citrus, and black pepper for export to the European Union. Synergies with Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) and ARISE Plus Vietnam were discussed through online meetings.

1.9 Lao ARISE Plus Project (2012-2023 / Donor European Union)

1.24. A team of future Quality Champions (QCs) has been identified and selected. These QCs will support Lao SME as trainers and coaches in the area of quality management and food safety. They will be trained and qualified over the next 15 months.

1.25. The recommendations for strengthening the conformity assessment services have been validated by stakeholders through more than ten online meetings; implementation of recommendations is planned in the areas of SPS such as assistance to strengthen the pesticides laboratories, training of inspectors of the food and drug department on HACCP.

2 COVID-19 RELATED MEASURES

2.1. ITC has launched a number of initiatives to monitor the effect of the global COVID-19 pandemic on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and to provide assistance customized to their needs during this challenging time (<https://www.intracen.org/covid19/>).

- ITC Action Plan: Supporting small businesses through the COVID-19 crisis and towards the future - A 15-point action plan for open economies (<https://www.intracen.org/covid19/15-Points-Action-Plan/>);
- ITC Trade Forum magazine (<http://www.tradeforum.org/tradeforum.aspx>): issue n° 3 is now out and it looks at small businesses and micro entrepreneurs based in least developed countries and small island states, a group particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Covid-19 dimension was included in ongoing and planned training and sensitization activities provided off site via video conferences, webinars, with support of local consultants and institutions;
- Provision of relevant information on standards on personal protective equipment made available (from ISO and AFNOR) and helped beneficiaries with implementing quality management systems to produce disinfectants, masks, and hospital gowns;
- Posters and sensitization materials developed and disseminated among project partners and beneficiaries including COVID-19 prevention for the food sector. A set of online animated videos is also under production in Guinée for dissemination. A COVID-19 Safety Guides for Community Visits including for community food service providers (in Myanmar as ITC joint initiative under NTF IV and One UN SECO projects);
- A joint ISO/ITC webinar on COVID-19 and food safety, 15 June 2020 - how SMEs in the food industry can take advantage of ISO standards to overcome the challenges and succeed in

the New Normal (more than 1,000 people registered and more than 600 attended the webinar

(https://zoom.us/rec/share/1ZJ4C7jR1EhOf43ctHHud4A4HqC8T6a80Ckc_voExITSAPYSqt3tI6IIRJdYhcI - Access Password: 5d.#A3*.);

- Promoted access to webinars organised by other institutions, e.g. more than 130 participants from Myanmar joined webinars on Codex Alimentarius organized by the Confederation of Indian industry Food and Agriculture Excellence (CII-FACE);
- Mapping of SPS-related institutions and assessment of their needs carried out remotely in Uzbekistan through an electronic survey and validated through videoconference exchanges;
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment to plant health inspectors to ensure their safety and continuity of the inspection duties (i.e. in Myanmar under ARISE Plus project);
- Gap assessments of microbiology laboratories with development of road map for accreditation of ISO 17025 through questionnaire, video calls and webinar on the ISO 17025 for more than 50 laboratory staff (in Myanmar under ARISE +);
- International off-site support with national consultants (video calls, webinars) to develop and submit National Residue Monitoring Plan to the European Union (i.e. DG SANTE approved Myanmar for export honey to the European Union). Support to honey sector to competent authorities, sector association and processors through online training to establish control measures and bee wealth management system and implementation of HACCP.

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