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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)
(MARCH-JUNE 2021)**

COMMUNICATION FROM ITC

The following communication, received on 9 June 2021, is being circulated at the request of the ITC.

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

1 PROJECTS

1.1 Malaysia Arise Plus Project (February 2021 - January 2024 / Donor European Union)

1.1. Implementation of this new project commenced to support inclusive and sustainable trade growth and poverty reduction in Malaysia, while contributing to economic integration in the ASEAN region. Amongst its expected results is to enhance and disseminate sustainable practices in the agri-food sector, in line with ASEAN, international, and EU standards. Activities under this results area include building capacities of agriculture personnel, focusing on Ministry staff to engage in international institutions and to promote a sustainable agricultural industry and building institutional capacities of Malaysian certification bodies for agriculture and fishery products.

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

1.2. This project aims to contribute to the economic development of the EAC region (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda), with the specific objective to improve market access of agro-industrial crops and horticultural products such as avocado, cocoa, coffee, spices and tea to the European Union, and among the five EAC partners.

1.3. Implementation of GlobalG.A.P. among avocado producers in Kenya is ongoing with three producer groups having been certified. The nine producer groups in Tanzania that were certified last year have successfully undergone surveillance audits.

1.4. Implementation of quality improvement projects in enterprises in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda by trained Quality Champions is ongoing. In Burundi, a number of enterprises in the tea, coffee and horticulture sectors are being supported to implement HACCP/ISO 22000 as well as private sustainability standards like Rainforest Alliance SAN standard.

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

1.5. The project supports Uzbekistan's development plans to modernize its economy through leveraging the process of WTO accession. The overall objective 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).

1.6. As part of reinforcing TBT and SPS related institutions and agencies, following a request from Uzstandard Agency, a series of online training workshops has been planned. The first three in the series, on implementing ISO 17025, ISO 17065 and auditing integrated management systems will be held between 16 June and 9 July 2021. Work is also commencing to review the food safety law to support improved alignment to the SPS Agreement.

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

1.7. 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 several activities related to building awareness on standards and capacity of the private sectors are ongoing.

1.8. In the honey sector, remote follow up assistance is provided to advance with the food safety management system implementation in the participating companies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are under development. A bee health management training video is under development for distribution to the Myanmar Honey Association, beekeepers and private sector local bee health trainers. Four brochures were drafted for traceability, hygiene, OIE listed honeybee diseases and bee health management by using oxalic acid.

1.9. In the tea sector, discussion is in place with the Myanmar Tea Producers and Exporters Association (MTA) to initiate the support for the sector on market access, food safety, quality and SPS compliance. Fourteen trainers-cum-counsellors and 13 SMEs expressed interest to participate.

1.10. An initial version of the Myanmar Quality for Trade Platform was developed featuring quality requirements for selected product-market combinations (avocado, coffee, honey and target EU market). A success story on EU market access of Myanmar honey was published on the Quality Success Module.

1.11. The project Facebook page is: <https://www.facebook.com/ArisePlusMyanmar>.

1.12. The ARISE Plus project with its component on SPS builds synergies with ARISE Plus Regional, and ITC's ongoing projects through related quality and SPS components (e.g. 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 in the development of food safety eLearning course).

1.5 Tajikistan: Enabling market access for agricultural products through improved food safety system (March 2018 - February 2022 / STDF - PG-447 implemented by ITC in collaboration with FAO in particular for output 1 on the regulatory control system)

1.13. The goal of the project is to improve the export competitiveness of Tajik SMEs and food safety through better use of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines with a 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.

1.14. The competent authority for the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) for honey, the Committee on Food Security, submitted the Plan to EU DG SANTE on 31 March 2021. In parallel, ITC supported the Tajik Government in the analysis of 104 honey samples at an accredited laboratory in Europe. The results of the analysis showed three non-compliant cases related to residues of veterinary medicines and the related Investigation is currently ongoing, led by the competent authority with the support of the STDF national project coordinator. The project partner (FAO) continues its work on the general monitoring system of the country with regard to agrochemicals and veterinary medicines by carrying out a number online seminars to train the respective government officials.

1.15. The information, education, and communication (IEC) strategy and implementation plan on usage of agrochemicals and veterinary medicines was validated and well-received by Tajik counterparts. Preparations to hand it over to Tajik authorities for follow-up and implementation of selected activities are ongoing.

1.16. Two studies on creating market linkages between suppliers of honey and apricots in Tajikistan and national as well as international buyers were drafted. The results will be presented in two workshops (one for honey, one for apricots) in July.

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

1.17. 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 strengthen 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 to improve market access.

1.18. In Lao People's Democratic Republic three field missions were conducted in the three target provinces: 1) field survey on pesticides including training and sampling crops at the cultivation areas with workshop on pilot farm establishment in Luang Namtha province for watermelon; in Champasak for basil and chilli; in Vientiane Capital for rice; 2) field mission for pest management control with design of training; and 3) field mission on review of enforcement of legislation. A workshop on EU regulations on plant health and food safety for the fruit and vegetable sectors was conducted online, where the lessons learnt from Thailand in complying with the measures was shared with more than 60 participants. A series of online training and consultations are planned in June (i.e. training on the EU TRACES system in the three target provinces, development of the EU manual for target fruit and vegetable crops, training for lab technicians to analyse MRLs for target active ingredients).

1.19. In Viet Nam, the identification phase was completed with the selection of target products and markets (dragon fruit, pomelo, and black pepper for export to the European Union), SPS measures to address (target active ingredients, MRLs, EU quarantine pests), and an initial list of project beneficiaries willing to establish export pilot farming models. The SYMST action plan was validated at the hybrid-modality workshop in May 2021 with more than 50 participants. The project supported the translation of priority ePing notifications relevant to the SYMST target crops and beneficiaries. A black pepper company applied to participate in the China International Import Export Fair and the confirmation to participate is under review. A series of online training workshops are planned in June and July subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 2nd wave in the countries.

1.7 Thailand ARISE Plus Project (November 2020 – October 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.20. The new ITC implemented ARISE Plus Thailand Project, aims to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth through international trade in Thailand. It supports greater connectivity and economic integration between Thailand and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region in line with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025.

1.21. Under this overall objective, ITC supports the enhancement and dissemination of organic agricultural practices in line with EU standards. In this context, the project aims at assisting the relevant departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC) and private certification bodies on organic agriculture.

1.22. A workshop on the new EU regulation for organic production was carried out in March. The event was attended by 190 participants and launched the programme component on organic agriculture.

1.23. Upcoming activities are training sessions on certification of (organic) products according to ISO/IEC 17065, an IRCA approved lead auditor training for ISO 9001, an awareness campaign on organic production as well as the development of training materials on organic agriculture.

1.8 Lao ARISE Plus Project (2018-2022 / Donor European Union)

1.24. A team of future Quality Champions (QCs) continued to be trained and developed. These QCs will support Lao SMEs as trainers and coaches in the area of quality management and food safety. They will be trained and qualified over the next eight months. Seven of out 12 technical workshops were implemented online during the period. Subjects included international quality requirements, process improvement, Lean Six Greenbelt training, training and communication skills. Further work on the Lao Quality for Trade Platform – including food safety requirements – was completed for Lao coffee to a group of destination markets.

1.25. The implementation of the recommendations for strengthening the conformity assessment services validated by stakeholders has started. The gap assessment of the National Enquiry Points and National Notification Authorities on SPS and TBT is ongoing and the training on transparency provisions is planned for June. A cooperation is established with the Centre of Medical Science of Thailand and the Food and Drug Department of Lao to provide assistance to strengthen the pesticides and chemical laboratory. Five posters developed by Codex, WHO and others have been identified by the Food and Drug Department for translation/reproduction to sensitise on COVID-19 and hygiene.

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

1.26. 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 MSMEs in selected districts within two provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan and Sindh. GRASP will focus on selected product lines within livestock and horticulture.

1.27. 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.

1.28. During the period under report, based on the assessments of the food authorities in Sindh and Balochistan, further support is being provided to them in a number of areas including purchasing and operationalizing laboratory equipment, developing regulations and SOPs, building capacity of officials among others. With regards to slaughterhouses, ITC has developed food safety manuals for slaughterhouses based on best international practices and halal standards and will be building capacity of slaughterhouses and MSMEs to improve their quality and SPS compliance. In addition, ITC will also develop materials and train relevant provincial officers at district level to improve compliance of slaughterhouses. At the enterprise level, ITC is also working with MSMEs (farmers and processors) in rural Sindh and Balochistan to improve their quality, SPS and food safety awareness through GAP and GMP modules.

1.10 EU-Bhutan Trade Support Project (2012-2023 / Donor European Union)

1.29. The specific objective of the Project is to increase export diversification, contributing to the implementation of the "Brand Bhutan" initiative, by improving the capacities of trade and investment policy formulation and implementation, and increasing exports in two selected value chains, i.e. horticulture (ginger/turmeric, mushrooms, and yak dairy) and textile handicrafts.

1.30. Under the sub-output on "Export and quality management capacities of stakeholders - from farmers to exporters - along the horticulture value chain built and coordination improved", ITC provides a hands-on step-by-step training programme on food hygiene and food safety based on CODEX HACCP for Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) staff and SMEs spread over 10-12 months. The programme started in March for a pool of 14 Trainers-cum-Counsellors (TcCs) (12 from BAFRA) and 12 enterprises in ginger, turmeric, mushrooms and yak dairy products.

1.11 Covid-19 related measures

1.31. Under a new Arise Plus Philippines project, support to Bureau of Philippine Standards to develop standards related to Covid, and to export-oriented operators and national quality

infrastructure bodies to boost exports related to personal protective equipment, and related medical devices, as well awareness raising materials related to fighting Covid have been incorporated.

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