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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 JULY – 1 OCTOBER 2019)**

The following communication, received on 9 October 2019, 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 Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - June 2023 / Donor European Union)

1.1. The ARISE Plus project aims at building inclusive and sustainable trade growth in Myanmar through support to MSMEs in selected value chains, enhancing food safety and SPS compliance and trade policy formulation and implementation. The project started in September 2019 with an inception phase, where priority sectors have been confirmed and gaps on SPS related issues are to be further identified. At the end of this phase in February 2020, the activities of the project in the area of food safety and SPS will be finalised.

1.2. As an initial support in the context of this project, ITC provided technical assistance to the honey sector in Myanmar to submit the 2019-2020 honey National Residue Monitoring Plan to EU - DG SANTE and Myanmar is now included in the EU approved list for market access.

1.3. The ARISE Plus project with its component on SPS will build synergies with the other ITC ongoing projects and their related quality and SPS components. The projects are: 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).

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

1.4. This project aims to enhance quality infrastructure services with particular focus on its support to coffee and tea sectors. During the first year, an assessment of the National Quality Infrastructure was conducted and a draft National Quality Policy has been developed with an action plan addressing quality and food safety issues. Seven testing laboratories have been assessed and a road map for their reinforcement has been developed. Several lots of testing of equipment are being procured to reinforce their capacities. The Burundian NSB has been supported and trained to implement management system certification scheme, including ISO 9001 and ISO 22000 in line with ISO/IEC 17021 and to reinforce its product certification scheme in line with ISO/IEC 17065. Selected beneficiaries were trained on advanced coffee grading techniques.

1.3 Afghanistan: Trade-related support assistance (August 2016 – extended to January 2020 / Donor European Union)

1.5. This project aims to strengthen human and institutional capacities in trade policy, strategy formulation and implementation, including quality management and SPS measures. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) is the main counterpart. Beneficiaries include Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Health (MoPH), National Standards Body (ANSA) and relevant sector associations.

1.6. Discussions and consideration of a creation of Food Safety Authority, has been ongoing while ITC has drafted a roadmap to develop a food safety control system in Afghanistan. Technical support for laboratories will be provided by an international expert in the month of November 2019.

1.4 Tajikistan: Enabling market access for agricultural products through improved food safety system (March 2018 - February 2021 / STDF - PG-447) (Implemented by ITC in cooperation with FAO for output 1: Regulatory and control system for use of agri-chemicals and veterinary medicines established and operational)

1.7. 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.

1.8. Samples of the target project products (24 samples of the dried apricots and 28 of the bee honey) were tested in an accredited laboratory and results were discussed and validated during workshop held in May. Workshops on EU food control system, EU market requirements focusing on SPS measures, Quality Management System and Development of the National Residue Monitoring Plan (NRMP) for exploring access of the Tajik honey to the European Union were carried out from 22 to 28 May 2019.

1.9. An inter-disciplinary Task Force on development of the NRMP was established and its first meeting was initiated. A series of workshops on Good Hygiene Practice, Harvest and Postharvest Technologies, Food Safety Standards and relevant aspects of the regulatory control system to assure food safety were conducted in August-September 2019.

1.10. FAO conducted two missions on Control Systems capturing the following activities:

- A multi-stakeholder meeting on 10 July 2019 with government officials to discuss the status of the current controls for apricots and honey, identifying gaps and weaknesses to be addressed;
- A technical meeting on 11 July 2019 with government officials engaged in the control of safety of apricots and honey;
- Meetings with the Task Force Group on establishing the National Residues Monitoring Plan, and provision of advice to the Task Force;
- Two workshops in Soghd Region on 13 and 14 August 2019 with apricot and honey producers on food safety standards and sensitization on relevant aspects of a regulatory control system to assure food safety;
- Meeting with representatives, and visit production and storage sites, of the honey and apricot producers in Soghd region during 10-16 August 2019.

1.11. Dried apricots from Tajikistan are featured and made available for tasting at the STDF stand at the WTO Public Forum in October 2019.

1.5 SYMST: Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (December 2018 – October 2021 / Donor European Union)

1.12. ITC has started implementing a new project with the aim to improve food safety through better governance in Thailand and Lao People's Democratic Republic. The target sector of this project is the agro-sector, covering food products of plant origin. The action focuses on compliance with requirements of the European Union and international markets. ITC intends to strengthen the

regulatory framework for control of plant health and pesticides in the fruits and vegetable sector and other plant products (i.e. rice in the case of Lao People's Democratic Republic) through the application of norms and standards and improve market access.

1.13. The project has started with its inception phase in Lao People's Democratic Republic, where a baseline collection will identify the export products (rice, fruits and vegetables), pest and diseases, as well as the main SPS issues to build a solid basis for technical assistance under the project. The first mission is to start mid-October and validation workshop of the results is planned for the month of December.

1.6 Sri Lanka: Feasibility study for value addition in the fruit and vegetable sector (1 October 2017 - extended to 31 March 2019 / STDF PPG 576)

1.14. The Feasibility Study, evaluating technical, economic and operational feasibility of value addition for five export fruit and vegetable crops was endorsed by stakeholders in Sri Lanka. Value addition was identified for dehydrated processing (with focus on natural, organic) and an MoU was signed between the Sri Lanka Fruit and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association (LFVPPEA) and a leading company in Italy in the sector. The two partners started the implementation of the recommendations of the feasibility study. The Italian company presented dedicated lines of products packed in Sri Lanka at Anuga fair in Cologne in October promoting a corporate social responsibility project. The products were displayed and made available for tasting at the STDF stand at the 2019 WTO Public Forum.

1.7 CEFTA: Support to the facilitation of trade between CEFTA parties (3 year project ending in December 2019 – EU funded project implemented by ITC and GIZ)

1.15. ITC is implementing a project in the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) parties to address non-tariff trade barriers as a way to facilitate intra-regional trade. The most problematic trade barrier in the region, particularly for fruits and vegetables, is the lengthy and complex border procedures resulting in long queues of trucks. In order to address this issue, ITC is currently assessing the capacities of laboratories in the CEFTA region to make them more efficient in terms of the services they provide to the traders and also developing a training curriculum on risk management. Customs and SPS inspectors from CEFTA parties will subsequently be trained on integrated risk management practices, following a study tour they conducted on the same topic to Latvia (jointly organized by ITC and GIZ).

1.8 Pakistan: Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) (6 year EU funded project started in 2019)

1.16. GRASP aims to reduce poverty in Pakistan by strengthening small-scale agribusinesses in two provinces: Balochistan and Sindh. GRASP will help rural SMEs in horticulture and livestock become more competitive by making improvements at all levels of the value chain. The project has three main components: (i) Improve the institutional and policy environment for small firms including by improving quality infrastructure; (ii) Support small-scale farmers and producers in a holistic way; and (iii) Boost the competitiveness of small-scale firms including by improving quality.

1.17. Currently ITC is conducting a needs assessment study related to the SPS-related legislation and institutional framework including those related to food safety, plant and animal health which would form the basis for designing future activities and initiatives under the project.

For more information, please contact:

Ludovica Ghizzoni, ITC Adviser on Export Quality Management
Tel: +41 22 730 06 38 - Fax: +41 22 730 05 76 - E-mail: ghizzoni@intracen.org

Khemraj Ramful, ITC Senior Adviser on Export Quality Management
Tel: +41 22 730 04 87 - Fax: +41 22 730 05 76 - E-mail: ramful@intracen.org

ITC Export Quality Management
Website: <http://www.intracen.org/eqm>
Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/ITCstandards>