



**INFORMATION ON SPS-RELATED ACTIVITIES OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)  
(NOVEMBER 2023 - FEBRUARY 2024)**

COMMUNICATION FROM ITC

The following communication, received on 13 February 2024, is being circulated at the request of the ITC.

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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 Iraq: Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy (SAAVI) (September 2020 - April 2025 / Donor European Union)**

1.1. This project aims to support stabilization and governance through building the capacities of key Iraqi institutions to deliver public services, as well as sustainable job creation through the development of human capital and the enhancement of the private sector's competitiveness. The project focuses on the development and implementation of sector strategies for high-potential products, as well as on defining more market-oriented policies to improve predictability and efficiency in the business environment. SAAVI also provides assistance to enhance Iraq's trade policy and supports the country in its WTO accession process.

1.2. A sub-activity of the programme supports three agri-food value chains in improving food safety and quality of their products (namely potatoes, tomatoes, and poultry). The project supported farmers of the poultry alliance in Nineva region by connecting them with a modern slaughterhouse facility which engaged in a mutually beneficial business cooperation. The poultry is delivered to local supermarkets in compliance with national SPS related requirements. The objective is to comply with government regulations and meet standards of large domestic buyers. As a second phase, exports are also targeted at a limited scale.

1.3. A workshop for the dates sector (farmers, producers, processors) was conducted from 20 to 22 November 2023. This three-day workshop held in Basra saw 30 participants from both the public and the private sectors. The sessions included market expectations for date exports according to relevant Codex standards, sharing of trade experience, and international and regional technical requirements for the product. The producers and stakeholders present agreed to establish an association, called the "Date Producers and Processors Association in Basra" to reduce overheads, improve food safety aspects, facilitate export-related procedures, and joint representation at trade fairs.

1.4. Research has begun on SPS and TBT requirements for Dates, Fresh or Dried for the markets of Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. This information will be uploaded to the Iraq Quality for Trade Platform and made publicly available. Additional products have been identified for future mappings.

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## **1.2 Malaysia Arise Plus Project (February 2021 - January 2024 / Donor European Union)**

1.5. In partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the project aims to support inclusive and sustainable trade growth and poverty reduction in Malaysia, while contributing to economic integration in the ASEAN region. Activities include biosecurity of fisheries and aquaculture, plant health, animal health and sustainable agriculture practices including GAP, organic, green livestock and agricultural waste management.

1.6. The project improved the capacities of 18 officers from the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) to carry out "Veterinary Epidemiological Modelling" through a practical workshop held in January 2024. Recommendations were provided for further development of this function at DVS through a situation analysis carried out following the workshop.

1.7. After the workshop described in the previous reporting period, 3 DVS staff further reinforced their capacities on implementing traceability in the eggs and dairy sectors through a study visit to the Netherlands in November 2023. During the visit the officers met with representatives of the Dutch regulatory and competent authorities, and visited milk, cheese, poultry and egg processing to observe the different ways and processes through which producers implement and maintain traceability. The participants also visited a dairy testing laboratory to see the various analytic methods (somatic cell count, plate count, antibiotic residues, fat content, antiparasitics, aflatoxin, dioxin, organo-chlorpesticides, melamine, radioactivity, heavy metals) and learn about traceability procedures applied in the laboratory.

1.8. A "Solution finding workshop on IPM and Export Certification" was held in Putrajaya, 4-8 December 2023 with 22 participants to focus on recent updates in the EU regulation for increased import controls. This final workshop was organized to collectively examine and synthesise the learnings from previously held 5 IPM related workshops, and a study visit to Thailand, vis-à-vis EU practices and requirements. The workshop considered the present situation in Malaysia and the different means by which the Malaysian pest control could be improved in relation to pesticide use, implementation of IPM, and Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) to ultimately reduce pesticide dependency, MRL violations and find solutions to reduce non-compliance of EU-bound exports. Also was discussed the impact on Malaysia of a recent increase in EU official border control due to the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2023/1110 on increased controls or emergency measures on food and feed commodities of non-animal origin exported to the European Union. As part of the group exercise participants also developed an IPM Framework and Action Plan for Malaysia.

1.9. Two train the trainer workshops were held towards improved biosecurity in Malaysian fisheries. The first, on the "Application of Risk Analysis in Official Control Activities of the Competent Authority" (Department of Fisheries - DoF), was held on 6-8 November 2023, which reinforced the capacities of 27 DoF officers. The participants were trained through presentations and group work, on principles of fish disease risk analysis based on World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) Aquatic Animal Health Code, presented case studies of risk analysis performed by biosecurity agencies of other countries and consequent live fish import regulations in these countries, and on performing fish disease risk analysis using hypothetical situations. A second ToT on "Fish Disease Surveillance in Aquaculture Farms", in routine controls was also held on 9-11 November 2023. 27 participants were trained on fish disease surveillance in line with the WOAHA Aquatic Animal Health Code, presented case studies of listing of diseases at international and national levels, defining scope of national disease surveillance and developing a plan for implementation of surveillance for priority diseases, and on the use of FAO 12-point checklist in developing a national fish disease surveillance plan.

1.10. The practical training on risk screening of aquatic alien invasiveness held in Putrajaya/Kuala Lumpur in August 2023 for Department of Fisheries (DoF) staff at federal level was replicated in November 2023 for 27 staff from DoF Sabah. 25 DOF-Sabah officers and related agencies strengthened their capacity to implement "Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points" in fish and fishery products related establishments.

1.11. 25 participants attended a three-day training workshop on good practices for the organization of farmers in the context of promoting sustainable practices between 12-14 December 2023. The training provided an overview on sustainable agriculture and its benefits towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The workshop also included information on the implementation of national and international standards (e.g. Malaysia GAP; GlobalG.A.P.),

their successes and challenges at various organizational levels, including best practices for navigating the complexities of multiple standards and certification systems.

1.12. This project ended on 31 January 2024.

### **1.3 Philippines Arise Plus Project (March 2021 – February 2025 / Donor European Union)**

1.13. The project aims to foster inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in the Philippines through improved trade performance and competitiveness and specifically by putting in place a National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that promotes export competitiveness, and a quality management and control system for exported food products better aligned with international best practices.

1.14. Planning of a series of trainings on microbiological testing including advanced methods, related method validation, implementation of decision rule, and commercial sterility is ongoing. These workshops are envisaged to be held in the first half of 2024. Also under planning are refresher training courses on EU Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) for the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) and Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Philippines.

1.15. A review of the National Residue Control Program will be conducted as per request from BFAR, and updates will consider the incorporation of new substances and compliance with EU requirements following the repeal and amendment of Council Directive 96/23/EC by Regulation (EU) 2017/625, in addition to other existing Philippine standards and legislation.

1.16. Quality and food safety/SPS requirements for priority product market combinations are now live on the Philippines Quality for Trade Platform, publicly available to all users. Priority sectors include Virgin Coconut Oil, Coconut Water, Coconut Flour.

1.17. Moreover, a team of 20 Quality Champions qualified under the project are now preparing to roll out a series of trainings for MSMEs in collaboration with national public institutions and private sector partners with the Philippines Society for Quality as lead partner to cascade knowledge on the importance of quality and food safety including the main measures and systems such as GAP, GMP, HACCP that should be implemented to meet technical market requirements.

### **1.4 Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance (Arise Plus – Myanmar) (July 2019 - May 2024 / Donor European Union)**

1.18. This 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 (targeting tea, coffee, honey, horticulture products) and trade policy formulation and implementation. The Myanmar Platform on Quality and Food Safety continues to grow in scale and scope. The site now features SPS requirements for mango puree and canned pineapple for the EU market.

1.19. As the project is fully focussing on private sector development, several companies of the project target product groups (honey, coffee, tea, fruit and vegetables, bans and pulses) were assisted to introduce HACCP and FSSC 22000 food safety systems. Three of the companies were already certified and another 8 are expected to be certified by the end of the project in May 2024.

1.20. The project is advancing to support a private food testing laboratory for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025, helping to revise and update its documentation to comply with ISO/IEC 17025 requirements.

### **1.5 Lao ARISE Plus Project (1 November 2018 – 31 December 2023 / Donor European Union)**

1.21. The project ended on 31 December 2023.

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### **1.6 Uzbekistan: Facilitating the Process of Accession to the WTO (February 2020 – October 2024 / Donor European Union)**

1.22. The project continues to support the relevant agencies of Uzbekistan, closely aligning with their commitment set out in the Action Plan for Implementation of the SPS Agreement, submitted by the Working Party on the Accession of Uzbekistan to the WTO in November 2023.

1.23. In the area of food safety, the Draft Law on Food Safety has been reviewed, and the final draft legislation, incorporating recommendations, has been submitted to the Sanitary-Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health Committee, the lead agency for drafting the law, which is currently preparing to submit it further for deliberation by the *Oliy Majlis*, the parliament of Uzbekistan. The project continues to review the selected Sanitary Rules and Norms (SanPiNs) for food hygiene, sanitation, and safety criteria, aimed at aligning with the requirements of the Codex Alimentarius and the SPS Agreement.

1.24. In response to a request by Uzbekistan's State Committee of Veterinary and Livestock Development, relevant chapters of the World Organisation for Animal Health's (WOAH's) latest version of the Terrestrial Animal Health Codes were translated into the Uzbek language, expanding access to a valuable knowledge repository for inspectors, veterinary health practitioners, as well as veterinary researchers and students. Forthcoming work will, inter alia, cover the review of national legislative documents in the area of animal health, as well as practical training workshops in animal traceability, the national residue monitoring plan, and hygienic practices for food inspectors and food operators.

1.25. The project continues to build the capacity of the Agency for Plant Protection and Quarantine for risk-based official controls. The two-fold technical assistance includes the development of draft legislation on the implementation of a risk management system, a review of the phytosanitary import control policy and procedures, including the pest risk analysis for high- and medium-risk imports, enhanced by field training workshops engaging officials and regional inspectors. In parallel, to ensure compliance with the transparency requirements of the SPS Agreement, the legislative document on phytosanitary import quarantine requirements, which was endorsed by the Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan in February 2023, was translated into English.

### **1.7 Pakistan: Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) (June 2019 - December 2024 / Donor European Union)**

1.26. ITC has been providing technical assistance to government agencies related to food safety, plant protection and animal health in Sindh and Balochistan provinces in Pakistan to improve their technical functions, equipment and capacities. These include the food authorities in both the provinces, agriculture extension departments, livestock departments, plant protection departments, and animal health institutes.

1.27. In this context, ITC is supporting Pakistan's agriculture sector by fostering its sanitary and phytosanitary regime. In order to develop the capacity of professionals, the existing curriculum on SPS at university level has been reviewed and the contents of new courses have been scripted. The proposed MoUs between GRASP and three universities of Sindh province will pave the way to enhance capacity of the students in this important field of study through introduction of courses on SPS at undergraduate level. Moreover trainings and exposure visits have been arranged for staff of provincial departments to enhance their capacity to implement SPS measures.

1.28. Towards strengthening provincial departments performing SPS functions in Balochistan and Sindh provinces, as per expressed needs, GRASP will support the establishment of Balochistan Food Authority Training School at Quetta, procure food testing kits to provincial food authorities of Sindh and Balochistan, as well as equipment for pest surveillance, and strengthen the mechanism for collection of pesticide samples. The project will also inter-alia up-grade the regional pesticide quality control and a research laboratory at Quetta, establishing an advanced virology laboratory, and procure modern equipment for Sindh Institute of Animal Health.

1.29. To ensure competence of provincial laboratories, laboratories involved in SPS functions have been selected for support to achieve ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation. Training and preparatory work is underway as is the provision of minor equipment necessary for accreditation.

1.30. At the enterprise level work envisages strengthening the food safety culture. Activities to provide hand holding support to MSMEs for food safety certifications against ISO 22000, GlobalG.A.P., HACCP and BRCGS have been initiated.

1.31. The project is also engaging with the Pakistan Fruits and Vegetables Exporters Association (PFVA) to enhance exports to the European Union. In this regard capacities of public sector to precisely analyse food safety parameters such as pesticide MRLs is underway.

1.32. Moreover, the project supported the Sindh Food Authority (SFA) to develop a Five-Year Action Plan (2024-28) to effectively enforce food safety regulations.

### **1.8 Nepal: Trade-Related Assistance (2020-2024)**

1.33. ITC has been providing technical assistance to the to the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control (DFTQC) with the development of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) – based Regulatory Directives for the coffee sector. The Directives were drafted under supervision of the GMP task force, reviewed, finalized and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MOALD) for adoption.

1.34. Support was also provided to the Plant Quarantine and Pest Management Centre (PQPMC) through the development of Pest Survey and Surveillance for the coffee sector. Several interim reports were generated in parallel with 12 months of field work including inception report, survey protocols for pests, and diseases.

### **1.9 EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II) (1 August 2023 – 31 July 2027 / Donor European Union)**

1.35. The second phase of the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II) is a regional initiative funded by the European Union (EU) to unlock the full potential of agribusinesses within the EAC region; implemented by ITC working in partnership with the EU regional Delegation, the EAC Secretariat and the governments of six EAC member States. The quality and SPS component of MARK UP II aims at strengthening quality and food safety compliance and standards, including the development of quality awards, training and coaching of enterprises and awareness raising regarding quality and food safety requirements of export markets. Value chains selected for support are: avocado, cocoa, coffee, essential oils, French beans, gum Arabic, horticulture, leather, packaging, spices and tea.

1.36. Between the official launch of the [MARK UP Phase II project](#) on 3 October 2023 and the planned Project Steering Committee in March 2024, activities are focused on engaging regional and national stakeholders to share recommendations and provide inputs for planning and start of activities. A joint EAC Secretariat/ITC regional consultative workshop on quality and standards compliance is scheduled on 12 and 13 February 2024, in Nairobi, to engage more than 40 members of the relevant technical subcommittees, taskforces or working groups and member States with the objective to align and integrate MARKUP II Quality Compliance and Standards component with their workplans.

1.37. ITC circulated a first Expression of Interest for MSMEs in the 6 partner States to express their interest to benefit from MARKUP II – deadline is 12 February 2024 - [ITC Survey was circulated \(intracen.org\)](#).

1.38. MARKUP II continues to build on and sustain the achievements of MARK UP I, such as on the recently completed one in Burundi where two testing laboratories obtained international Accreditation (the Laboratory for Soil Analysis and Food Products – LASPA of the Institute of Agriculture Science of Burundi (ISABU) and the Chemistry Laboratory of Burundi Bureau of Standards and Quality Control (BBN) and two inspection bodies (BBN and DPV).

### **1.10 The Philippines: Bangsamoro Agri-Enterprise Programme (BAEP) – FAIR VALUE Project (12 September 2023 – 11 September 2026 / Donor European Union)**

1.39. Part of a bigger programme (Farmers – Fisherfolks' Advancement and Integration to Resilient Value Chains in BARMM) led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and

co-implemented with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in the Philippines - the project (FAIR VALUE) aims at improving quality, diversity and consolidation of local agricultural/marine aqua products in response to market needs. ITC's interventions specifically focus on implementing food safety systems and increasing the investment readiness of selected enterprises.

1.40. The Action is anchored on a partnership between IOM, FAO and ITC that maximizes the strengths of each partner in terms of field presence, existing community partnerships, technical expertise and international value chain linkages respectively.

1.41. The BAEP programme was officially launched on 15 January 2024 in Bangsamoro. ITC National Project Coordinator of the ITC Arise Plus Philippines (EU-funded) joined the first coordination field mission to Tawi-Tawi (22-24 January) to facilitate synergies among project and activities, particularly on food safety. IOM/FAO/ITC ongoing activities are currently engaged in value chain assessment and selection of beneficiaries.

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