

ELECTRONIC EAR TAGS AS A PASSPORT FOR COSTA RICAN BEEF TO THE EU MARKET

COSTA RICA

In June 2012, Central America (CA) and the European Union (EU) signed their Association Agreement—the AACUE—which relies on three complementary pillars, namely political dialogue, cooperation and trade. The AACUE presents good opportunities to export to Europe and includes a contingent of 13,775 tons of beef to be exported at a zero tariff that started in 2020. Livestock is the most important economic activity within the agricultural sector in Costa Rica, and its linkages with other sectors of the economy give rise to multiplier effects in terms of employment, income generation, foreign exchange and general economic growth.

However, CA countries, including Costa Rica, face significant barriers to trade related to compliance with EU regulations. The Costa Rican Individual Identification and Traceability System for Cattle and Buffalos (SIRIGABB) does not cover all stages of the beef value chain and it was not connected to the mobile applications used by the livestock farmers. For this reason, farmers had to input the same information twice, making the process more error-prone. Moreover, it did not allow for the recording of information regarding the sanitary health management of the animals, such as diseases and veterinary drugs that were administered.

To support the sector in achieving and proving compliance with European regulations, UNIDO undertook a compre-

hensive global assessment of the beef value chain. The SIRIGABB national traceability system was connected to the mobile applications. Now all the information concerning the life of an individual animal is stored in electronic ear tags, allowing for proof of compliance with the traceability requirements of the EU. “Keeping record of all information of the cattle allows us to have better practices in the farm and prepares us for exporting to the EU market”, says Melissa Pérez, Administrative Manager of La Quina farm.

Costa Rican farmers can now register any health events and medications in the national electronic system to ensure traceability according to the EU requirements. In addition, the establishment of a connection with the mobile applications used in the farms considerably reduces the margin of error and times in data management. Thanks to this, livestock farmers are one step closer to exporting their beef to the EU market.

The Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP) is a global initiative to strengthen the export competitiveness of twelve partner countries, supported by Switzerland through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).



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