



GEORGIA

STRENGTHENING CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT FOR FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Global trade is growingly embedded within value chains and is increasingly governed by quality and standards requirements. Despite trade liberalization and globalization in recent years, many exporters still face substantial challenges to meet and prove conformity with market entry requirements, and face technical barriers to trade that hinder their ability to access markets. Lengthy procedures and border rejections due to non-compliance with market requirements can result in major financial losses for producers, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

This is where the Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP) aims to make a difference. The GQSP represents an innovative approach developed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Switzerland, through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), to strengthen the quality and standards compliance capacity in selected value chains of partner countries to facilitate market access for SMEs.

Conformity assessment is fundamental to prove compliance with market requirements and is thus one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning national quality infrastructure (QI) system. However, in Georgia, laboratory personnel lack the knowledge and skills to perform conformity assessment activities in line with international standards and good practice, therefore their service often is not recognized internationally.

The GQSP Georgia project was designed to strengthen the capacity of conformity assessment bodies (CABs), including laboratory infrastructure serving the fruit and vegetable (F&V) sector, ultimately contributing to upgrading the ability of producers to comply with international market requirements.



AT A GLANCE

Main counterparts

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) of Georgia

Duration

2.5 years, starting July 2020

Executing Agency

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Donor

Switzerland, through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

Budget

EUR 339,000



THE PROJECT

The overarching goal of the project is to align Georgia's QI institutions and services to the needs of the national production and potential export of F&Vs, in view of accessing foreign markets, particularly the European Union market, through the following interventions:

- » An in-depth analysis on the F&V value chain that identified the specific gaps between the demand and supply side of the quality-related services, paving the way for tailored capacity building activities
- » Improving the supply of capacity building services
- » Providing a strategic roadmap on laboratory infrastructure development

MILESTONES



Launch of revamped Georgian Laboratory Association (GeLab) as a service center for CABs.

GeLab represents an ideal body for sustainable strengthening of Georgian CABs in terms of knowledge sharing, talent training, network building and capacity upscaling. The GQSP provides institutional restructuring, strategic planning and brand building activities to strengthen GeLab's institutional capacity and service portfolio. As a result, the revamped GeLab was launched in March 2022 as a leading platform to better support coordination and cooperation among individual actors in the conformity assessment service sector. GeLab's business sustainability has been improved, and its members and regular monthly access to its online information platform have both increased. A database of existing laboratories was also established to facilitate the access of F&V producers to compliance services.



Alignment of the conformity assessment system with international standards and good practice.

12 trainings were held for CABs to align their service with relevant international standards and good practices. Through Training of Trainers courses, the project supported GeLab in setting up a pool of national trainers for local laboratories. Technical literature was translated into Georgian in various areas of requirements for testing and calibration laboratories. Access to this knowledge by local laboratory personnel is thereby expanded.



Gender empowerment for better career/business development.

In Georgia, the GQSP is helping more women to achieve their career goals in the field of quality and standards. Through mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women, the project helped to achieve extensive female presence. Among the more than 400 trainees supported by the GQSP so far, 90% are women from over 50 companies. The trainings give the trainees a more competitive edge and allow for them to set their aims higher and for greater achievements.



Strategic guidance for long-term laboratory infrastructure development.

The Laboratory Infrastructure Roadmap was developed to provide lasting positive momentum and change to Georgia's QI system. By identifying existing challenges and recommending pathways to systematically address them, it will serve as continual and impactful guidance for public and private stakeholders to achieve the sustainable development of QI in Georgia.

