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The West Africa Competitiveness Programme aims to support a number of selected value chains at national and regional level to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets, while taking into account social and environmental concerns. The WACOMP consists of one regional component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania).

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Mr. Bernard Bau

UNIDO WACOMP
Project Manager

Foreword

I bring you salutations from the West Africa Competitiveness Programme – The Gambia (WACOMP-GM).

Funded by the European Union, the WACOMP-GM project is aiming to increase competitiveness in The Gambia through enhanced quality compliance along the onion value chain, thereby strengthening the country's competitiveness and enhancing its integration into the regional and international trading systems.

The project is implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and United Purpose (UP) in The Gambia.

This is the 2nd edition of our quarterly newsletter which was launched end of last year. The publication seeks to update project beneficiaries, stakeholders and the public at large on the latest developments as they unfold in the project.

In this edition, you will find stories of our important engagements, including trainings to laboratory technicians and media practitioners, interesting testimonials of our project beneficiaries, in-the-field pictures and more.

The project continues to smoothly implement its activities, touching the lives of the ordinary Gambians.

Through our various online and community engagements, we now got even more closer to the people we are serving and so far, enjoyed their strong commitment and ownership of the project deliverables.

This quarter under review has been eventful and this speaks to how much we have achieved during the period.

I wish to commend the WACOMP-GM team for their relentless dedication to service and team spirit. They have built an outstanding reputation of the project and continue to religiously maintain and further enhance this stride.

Happy reading!

Bernard Bau

UNIDO WACOMP Project Manager,

Department of Digitalization, Technology and Innovation

In March, WACOMP-GM participated in the International Trade Fair where we created the much-needed market linkages between our SMEs and buyers.

Training on food safety based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System

A virtual training on food safety based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system for inspection and certification technicians of conformity assessment institutions was held on 2nd and 3rd February 2022.

The training attracted participants from the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), and Plant Protection Services (PPS).

The HACCP system identifies specific hazards and measures for their control to ensure the safety of food. HACCP is a tool to assess hazards and establish control systems that focus on prevention rather than relying mainly on end-product testing.



He commended the participants for their interest and commitment, enjoining them to effectively apply and share the knowledge gained.

The co-facilitator of the training, UNIDO international expert on Quality Infrastructure (QI), Prof. Dr. Adalberto Vieira, said the training addressed the HACCP system and the main pre-requisites associated with it (Good Hygienic Practices (GHP)/ Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)) highlighting

the importance of its implementation to allow access to new reference markets.

“

“WACOMP is committed to providing this support so that FSQA, TGSB and PPS staff will gain the required expertise in HACCP for effectively carrying out their work in inspection and auditing” said Joseph Ndenn, WACOMP-GM National Technical Coordinator.

JN

AV

“A successful implementation of the HACCP System opens several opportunities in relation to the possibility of accessing new markets and also of giving more confidence to the final consumers/ customers regarding the fulfilment of the mandatory food safety requirements,” he noted.

Participants of the HACCP training

Improving Food Safety Management, Technicians trained on ISO 22000:2018

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP-GM) -The Gambia held a 2-day virtual awareness training on ISO 22000:2018 – Food Safety Management System (FSMS) Standard on Wednesday 16th March and Thursday 17th March 2022.

29 participants drawn from The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) and other institutions were introduced to the FSMS Standard, one that is applicable to any Organization in the Food Chain.

An effective FSMS reinforces an organization's control on food safety hazards and ensures that its products are safe for consumption.

The National Technical Coordinator of WACOMP-GM, Mr. Joseph Ndenn, said the training is the beginning of a process to build national capacity in professional auditing of food safety management systems.

The awareness training, he added, is a pre-requisite for the more advanced Lead Implementer and Lead Auditor courses in ISO 22000:2018.

JN “It is also hoped that the training will contribute to enhancing the participants' interest in the food safety management in general and the ISO 22000:2018 food safety management standard in particular,” he noted.



Participants of the ISO 22000:2018 training

The co-facilitator of the training, UNIDO expert on Quality Infrastructure (QI) Prof. Dr. Adalberto Vieira, said the awareness training on ISO 22000:2018 shared with the participants the structure of the standard, the key steps for implementation as well as the importance of having a FSMS in the food sector organizations as a way of ensuring the manufacturing of safe food and access to new reference markets.

A participant, Saikou Darmeh, Standards Officer for Food and Agriculture at TGSB, described the training as timely, saying its significance cannot be over emphasized.

SD “It has equipped me with the necessary knowledge as standards officer for food and agricultural products to be able to help stakeholders, especially for agro-food processors to better process their foods in a way that is safer for everyone,” he said

This training followed WACOMP-GM's trainings on 'ISO/IEC 17025:2017 - General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories' and 'Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system' which were held in December 2021 and February 2022 respectively.



Participants posed with their certificates at the conclusion of the training

Strengthening Journalists' capacity on Horticulture and Quality Infrastructure Reporting

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) - The Gambia held a training of 20 journalists on the horticulture value-chain and quality infrastructure system in The Gambia on the 2nd and 3rd March 2022 at Metzy Residence Hotel in Kololi.

The participants acquired basic knowledge of The Gambia's quality infrastructure, the onion and horticulture value-chains and were introduced to WACOMP's planned interventions in increasing the country's competitiveness.

JN “The media has a big role to play in the development of the country's horticulture and quality infrastructure system. Journalists are our valuable partners, and the training is timely as it has better equipped them to effectively report on the sector for positive societal change,” said Mr. Joseph Ndenn, the National Technical Coordinator of WACOMP-GM.

He urged participants to increase their focus on these underreported sectors by producing in-depth human interest stories that will make differences for the value chain actors.

Mr. Ebrima Bah, a Reporter at the Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), said the training came at a better time and that it exposed them to fact-based reporting on horticulture and quality infrastructure.

EB “Knowing how to report on these subjects has enabled us to produce stories that will have a great impact on the lives and livelihoods of vegetable farmers,” he said, adding that they now have the adequate capacity to take on value chain actors and policy makers with a view to adequately addressing the challenges confronting the sector.

Rapid Market Analysis of Tomato, Chili Pepper & Sweet Potato

The value chain team of West Africa Competitiveness Programme – The Gambia (WACOMP-GM) conducted a second Rapid Market Analysis (RMA) of tomato, chili pepper and sweet potato to determine areas for improvements and recommend potential intervention areas to address the quality-related gaps and constraints along the value chains.

The RMA, which took place from the 27th March to the 1st April 2022, followed WACOMP's earlier analysis on onion which was held in August 2021.

The mission is also aimed at discussing with marketing federations and regional stakeholders on the selection of sites for the construction of curing and storage facilities.

The team, led by Mr. Musa Saihou Mbenga, UNIDO - WACOMP International Horticulture Value Chain Specialist, is holding meetings with producers of the allied horticultural crops, representatives of marketing federations, regional departments of agriculture and WACOMP implementing partners - Njawara Agricultural Training Center, Freedom From Hunger Campaign and TARUD.

The delegation held focus group discussions with vegetable gardeners in Buniadu and Illiasi and held meeting with marketing federation representatives and other stakeholders on the selection of sites for the construction of curing and storage facilities in Kerewan on Monday 28th March 2022.



WACOMP team posed with vegetable gardeners after administering a questionnaire

Mr. Mbenga said the value chain assessments on the allied crops will determine areas for quality improvements, underperformance, volume of production, and the feasibility to stimulate change in the market system.

SM “We are doing the RMA through a set of criteria meant to capture the constraints and root causes of underperformance, particularly post-harvest side quality-related non-compliance, opportunities for growth and domestic / export market promotion, and feasibility to stimulate change in the market system,” he said.

He said the RMA will serve as the bases for a bespoke technical assistance program for SMEs and extension officers towards the achievement of international certification and assured market linkages.

Fatoumatta Jagne, the President of Marketing Federation (Solicita) in North Bank Region (NBR), said the intervention of WACOMP is timely and it will greatly help to reduce post-harvest losses and promote production.

FJ “NBR is one of largest producers of onion, but we have many challenges. I am excited that WACOMP will help us with storage facilities and market linkages. This will increase our profitability and help us to better preserve our onions,” the president said.

Fatoumatta thanked UNIDO for their plans to improve the onion value chain and the donor of WACOMP, the European Union, for their relentless support to rural women.



WACOMP officials posed for a picture with the marketing federation representatives in Kerewan, North Bank Region (NBR)

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WACOMP-GM, Stakeholders Select Sites for Construction of Onion Curing & Storage Facilities

In collaboration with the regional agriculture directorates, marketing federations and project implementing partners, The West Africa Competitiveness Programme - The Gambia (WACOMP-GM), identified ten (10) gardens for the construction of curing and storage facilities for onion.

This selection was done in the respective regions during WACOMP's field mission (27th March to 1st April 2022) where it conducted rapid market analysis (RMA) on tomatoes, chili peppers and sweet potatoes. These

findings will complement an already-existing study on onion which was conducted in August 2021.

The selected gardens for the stores are Pakau Njogu and Kani Kunda Suba in North Bank Region (NBR), Jahaour and Medina Lamin Kanteh in Central River Region North (CRR-N), Njoben and Nanaba in Central River Region South (CRR-S), Bureng and Nema in Lower River Region (LRR) and Berefet and Mandinaba in West Coast Region (WCR).

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The facilities will have two compartments: one area will contain wooden shelves where the freshly dug onions will be placed to dry and the second area will be a palleted room where the dried onions - graded, weighed, and bagged - would be packed.

“

MS “Properly cured onions will store longer without spoiling. This development will benefit the whole value chain. The women don't have to sell off their onions at a cheap price at harvest.

“

MS

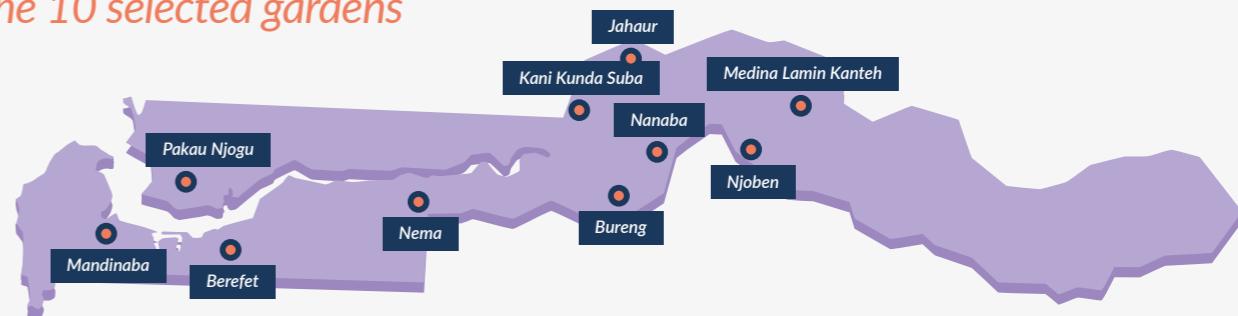
They can keep them longer and catch better price windows down the year,” said Mr. Musa Saihou Mbenga, UNIDO - WACOMP International Horticulture Value Chain Specialist.

MS

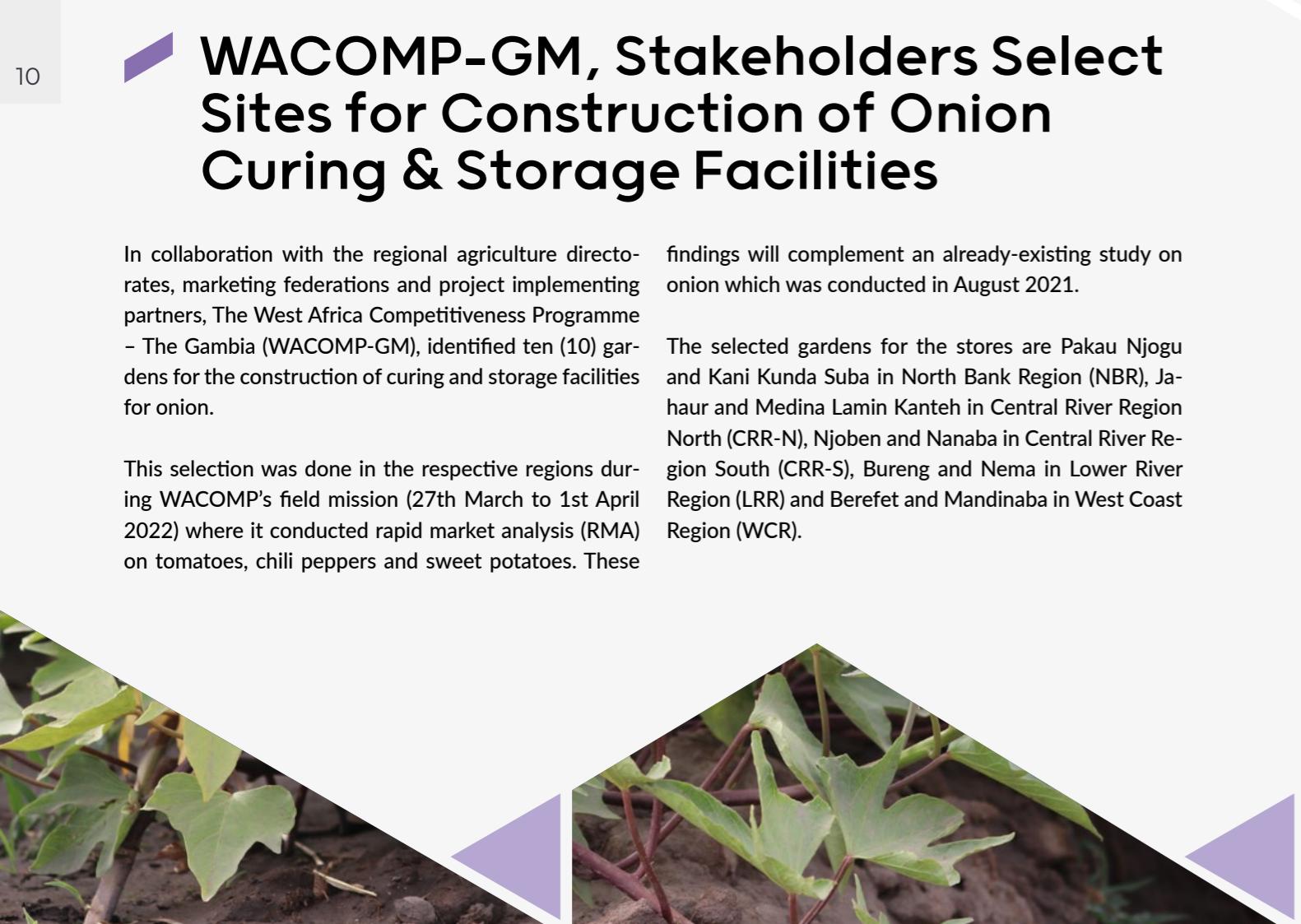
The availability of the facilities, he added, will greatly help to reduce post-harvest loses in the onion sector.

Mr. Mbenga said the selection was done by the stakeholders, using a set of criteria to maximize the impact of the facilities.

The 10 selected gardens



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Linking SMEs to Markets: Onion Producers Participate in International Trade Fair



The West Africa Competitiveness Programme – The Gambia (WACOMP-GM), participated in the 15th edition of the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) International Trade Fair at Bijilo.

The fair, which attracted over 450 participants from the ECOWAS region, Europe and Asia, began on the 26th February and concluded on the 27th March 2022.

With the theme "Accelerating Intra-Africa Trade for the realisation of AFCFTA through innovation", the platform availed participants the opportunity to network and promote their goods and services.



UNIDO and UP jointly facilitated stalls for onion producers and the marketing federation representatives to promote locally produced onions and allied crops, and create the much-needed market linkages.

The National Horticulture Value Chain Expert of UNIDO WACOMP, Mr. Malamin Drammeh, said as part of WACOMP's initiative to increase quality compliance in the onion value

chain, it will create market linkages for growers of onion and allied crops to meet potential buyers.

WACOMP's participation in the trade fair, he said, is one of the many strides they will embark on to create more platforms for their beneficiaries.

MD “We will support onion producers through various post-harvest activities including the construction facilities for curing and storage in conformity with best practices,” said Drammeh.

Ms. Ngansa Touray, the Project Manager of UP component of WACOMP-GM, expressed delight over the rainy season variety of the onions which are on sale at the trade fair for the first time in recent history.

This is a breakthrough, she said, adding that will promote year-round onion production as WACOMP seeks to achieve.

Jimbi Ceesay, the President of National Vegetable Growers Association (Sosalaso), expressed gratitude to UNIDO and UP for the initiative and to the European Union for funding the project, saying it will go a long way in helping vegetable growers to promote

their produce, network and learn from other participants at the trade fair. Jimbi and other participants at WACOMP stall sold their produce and secured markets for those they are yet to harvest.

JC “This is a huge empowerment for women. We have learned a lot since we came here and we have sold our goods too. We have now been introduced to the use of measurement in the marketing of our produce and this has increased our profits,” she rejoiced.

Another WACOMP participant, Maimuna Jabang of Pirang Mansa Garden, thanked UNIDO and UP for providing such an opportunity to them. She called on fellow onion producers to adhere to standards and promote the rainy season onion variety for an all-year-round production.

Women Praise WACOMP-GM for efforts in Improving Livelihoods as they commemorate International Women's Day

On the occasion of the International Women's Day (IWD), women beneficiaries of WACOMP-GM expressed gratitude to the project for its significant role in improving livelihood of rural women.

IWD, marked annually on March 8, is a UN day that celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

The women commended WACOMP-GM during their participation in the 15th edition of the annual International Trade Fair organized by Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) at Bijilo from the 26th February to the 27th March 2022.

The President of the National Marketing Federation (SOSALASO), Jibbi Ceesay, said a significant number of women engaged in horticulture grow onions and earn their living through it. Developing the value chain, she said, will improve their production and consequently increase profits.



Jibbi Ceesay and Jalima Cham holding WACOMP brochure and newsletter at the trade fair

Speaking on the trade fair, Jibbi thanked WACOMP for facilitating the participation of their members in this year's edition of the trade fair.

MD

"We are grateful for this opportunity. We sold their produces and made contacts with potential buyers too," she rejoiced.

The president said the trade fair has introduced them to the use of measurements in selling their produce. This, she noted, has significantly increased their profitability.

She called on women to be committed to horticulture and adhere to best practices of production and post-harvest management practices in order to enhance the quality and compliance of their produce as envisaged by WACOMP-GM.

Maimuna Jabang of Pi-rang Women's Garden

in West Coast Region (WCR) and Jalima Cham of Pakalinding Women's Garden in Lower River Region (LRR) expressed delight over their successful participation in the trade fair.

MD

"WACOMP has come ease the burden on us. When our capacities are developed, and we are supported with curing and storage facilities and others, we will be able to address post-harvest loses and be more competitive in the market," she said.

MD

MD

"I brought some onions and sold all of them, using the measurement scale. I have received a lot of compliments from spectators and networked with some value chain actors too," Maimuna said.

The president said that women are crucial drivers of the country's economy and as such, they should be further supported to maximize their potentials.



Therese Munchu Gomez at the TGBS Metrology Laboratory in Abuko

How WACOMP-GM Trainings Have Enhanced My Work as a Certification Officer

MD

"My name is Therese Munchu Gomez, a Certification Officer at The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) under the Certification Body of the Conformity Assessment Division.

As a Certification Officer for Quality Management System (QMS), I manage certification services offered to organizations based on the QMS standard (ISO/IEC 9001), implement and maintain a quality management system according to ISO/IEC 17021, promote certification services of the Certification Body (CB) especially QMS certification services and serve as an auditor for other certification schemes other than QMS.

I participated in West Africa Competitiveness Programme -The Gambia (WACOMP-GM) awareness raising trainings on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000, ISO/IEC 17025:2017, and ISO 22000:2018.

Most of my responsibilities are based on QMS and Food Safety Systems standards, which has been offered by the trainings through the WACOMP project, especially GHP, HACCP and ISO 22000. The trainings on these standards have additionally equipped me to effectively execute my responsibilities as a Certification Officer, to

audit and certify food businesses on GHP and HACCP. The ISO/IEC 17025 standard training came at a time when the CB was helping the National Metrology Laboratory to implement the standard by developing relevant documents required by the standard.

The GHP, HACCP and ISO 22000 trainings have widened my knowledge to better understand and implement these standards as a Certification Officer and has improved my auditing skills so as to serve as an auditor to other schemes. With the knowledge acquired during these trainings, I was able to implement other requirements of the standards that weren't in place.

The trainings were well delivered and came at a time well needed. The contents were specific to the subject matter thus, objectives of the training were achieved. I would like to solicit for WACOMP to provide the advanced levels of the trainings already conducted for better understanding and implementation.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to UNIDO and EU for making it possible for these trainings to be availed to us. These trainings will serve a long way in promoting food safety and security in our country."



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Increasing competitiveness through enhanced quality and compliance along the onion value chain

WACOMP The Gambia

Overall Objective

Strengthen the competitiveness of The Gambia and enhance its integration into the regional and international trading systems.

Specific Objective

Improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of onion and other horticulture VC.

Expected Results

- Increased onion value-chain (VC) compliance and performance, leading to expansion of market access.
- Strengthened technical capacity and competence of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), The Gambia Standards Bureau (TSB) and the other relevant institutions of the quality infrastructure and the coordination between them.
- Strengthened technical capacities of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and related services in respect of the implementation of food quality and safety standards at primary production.



For media inquiries



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