

# KYRGYZ ECOFLORIS BREAKS THE NORM TO REACH REGIONAL MARKETS

## KYRGYZSTAN

In 2016, Kyrgyzstan was granted GSP+ status, the European Union's Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance. The status allows zero customs duty for over 6,200 tariff lines from Kyrgyzstan. Prior to GSP+, Kyrgyz exporters paid customs duties as high as 14.6 % for certain types of fruits and vegetables.

GSP+ status, however, does not remove or reduce requirements for safety, quality, packaging or labelling of products. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in rural regions of Kyrgyzstan often have a limited ability to offer competitive products that meet the requirements and standards of target markets. In addition, rural SMEs are often unaware of conformity assessment services that are available locally and in Bishkek.

To develop a fit-for-purpose quality infrastructure system, UNIDO supported calibration and testing laboratories to implement quality management standards and improve the quality of measurements. At the micro-level, the project worked closely with stakeholders—focusing on women-led enterprises—to enhance their capacity to comply with standards, technical regulations and market requirements along the value chain. This contributes to gender equality and reduces prejudices around women's competences in industry, and is also achieved through tailored technical guidance for ISO 22000.

EcoFloris, a woman-led and majority women-staffed SME producing herbal and fruit tea, was supported to improve its production process, transportation and product safety. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, EcoFloris has maintained uninterrupted production, constant release of new products, and diversification of production.

Overall, UNIDO's support has positively impacted income generation and market opportunities for Kyrgyz SMEs. As put by the Director of EcoFloris, Elena Novikova, who soon will be able to confidently sell products on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and other international markets, "We implement ISO 22000 to demonstrate our commitment to food safety to customers and other stakeholders. The norm allows us to correctly manage all production systems, from branding to transportation to the client, and ensures that our food products are safe according to international quality standards".

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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