

STRENGTHENING GELAB TO BECOME A SERVICE CENTER FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES

GEORGIA

Laboratories in Georgia have lacked the requisite technical skills to provide conformity assessment services in accordance with international standards and requirements. The Georgian Laboratory Association (GeLab), established in 2013 as a nationwide association for laboratories, has helped tackle this issue.

GeLab, however, faced challenges in delivering services aligned to stakeholder expectations, which was exacerbated by travel restrictions and the interruption of quality training services imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the GQSP Georgia, GeLab has been upgraded to serve as a capable service center and now plays a significant role in promoting laboratory infrastructure development in Georgia, catalyzing quality assurance along the country's fruit and vegetable value chain.

The GQSP Georgia also has supported GeLab in establishing a training center to provide quality trainings to local laboratories, including equipping trainers in the field of microbiological and chemical testing. Additionally, technical literature has been translated into Georgian in the field of requirements for testing and calibration laboratories, proficiency testing, measurement uncertainty and traceability, method validation and terminology. Access to this has expanded the knowledge of local laboratory personnel.

Since 2020, the GQSP Georgia has supported GeLab in upgrading its charter and organizational structure, and developing its communication tools, inter alia. As a result, GeLab has established a new governance structure to operationalize the association, its business sustainability has improved, its membership has grown, and monthly visits to its online information platform have increased thirteenfold. A database of existing laboratories also has been established to facilitate fruit and vegetable producers' access to compliance services.

Furthermore, the GQSP Georgia proudly supports women laboratory staff in gaining laboratory knowledge and experience to more easily obtain leadership positions, as many are looking to become authorized trainers. Over 400 professionals from laboratories and other quality infrastructure institutions have been trained through GQSP Georgia, 90% of which are women.

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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