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GLOBAL QUALITY
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IMPACT STORIES

BOOSTING THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF UKRAINIAN WOODEN WINDOWS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

UKRAINE

The current conflict in Ukraine has driven up the domestic demand for windows, prompting producers to set their sights on the local market. Ukraine's programme for housing and infrastructure restoration estimates that the country will require 5–6 million units per year. The average lifespan of this type of product is 30 years, meaning that the windows built today will impact the future. Recognizing this, the government has put sustainability at the core of its programme and aims to capitalize on the reconstruction efforts to reduce the energy demand in the country.

Wood is a natural insulator and wooden windows can be one of the most energy-efficient window types when manufactured to the highest standards. About 100 producers of windows and structures operate in the Ukrainian market, which is further served by up to 10,000 small companies. However, the lack of capacities among local window manufacturers to meet quality and sustainability requirements may hamper their opportunities to participate in the reconstruction activities and to generate the much-needed income that would allow them to stay in business.

To support the sector UNIDO, in close cooperation with the Swiss University of Bern, has put at the disposal of wooden window producers a new testing scope that will equip them to measure the thermal performance of their products, optimize their design and make them more energy efficient.

At a time when many firms have had to relocate their production, the new capacities will allow labs to provide the service remotely through simulation-based calculation, reaching their customers throughout the country. The new testing scope will become an integral part of Ukrainian laboratories' offer of services and is the first step of a wider strategy aimed at building digital capacities among labs to improve their future resilience.

Currently, buildings represent 32% of the total energy consumption in the country and the average thermal transmittance of windows installed in Ukraine is higher than the maximum allowed in the EU. Hence, producing energy-efficient windows can enable local producers to meet domestic and international performance requirements and gain access to new markets, ultimately contributing to creating a more sustainable future in Ukraine and beyond.

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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.

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PROTECTING COLOMBIAN CONSUMERS THROUGH THE SCIENCE OF MEASUREMENT

COLOMBIA

One of the greatest impacts of metrology on people’s lives is the possibility to guarantee that consumers receive the exact amount of product purchased at the market. For this reason, since 2003, the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce (SIC) of Colombia, the highest national authority in legal metrology and consumer protection, has been carrying out metrological controls of prepackaged products. These actions also facilitate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in formal trade under fair conditions and the access of national products to markets with stricter requirements.

However, over the years, national capacities in legal metrology became insufficient to verify certain products in the market, either because there was a lack of infrastructure or knowledge, or because the regulation did not establish requirements that were already mandatory in other economies. Due to new international recommendations, the country updated its internal regulations and capacities so the SIC could address deceptive consumer practices related to product content.

With UNIDO’s support, the SIC began implementing new national metrological regulations for prepackaged products that came into force in 2021. More than 130 quality infrastructure officials and 21 control inspectors were

trained by a recognized international expert. Furthermore, the SIC was supported technically to double the capacity of accredited scopes in its laboratory and received equipment to verify products that previously could not be verified. A guide for producers and consumers was also published with the main changes related to the prohibition of misleading packaging legislation.

The SIC is proud to have become a reference for countries in the region, including Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago, and it has shared its experience and exchanged best practices with other countries like Mexico.

Thanks to these strengthened capacities, Colombian consumers of prepackaged products can now be sure that they are receiving high-quality products with the right content, boosting their confidence.

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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".

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IMPROVING LIVING STANDARDS OF PERUVIAN COFFEE AND COCOA PRODUCERS THROUGH QUALITY

PERU

San Martin is one of the most important coffee and cocoa regions in Peru. These two commodities have been declared National Flagship Products by the government as they have great social importance for rural development and poverty and are promoted as a replacement for illegal crop production.

Cocoa and coffee are predominantly smallholder crops with similar value chains that are facing similar problems. Both products are heterogeneous in quality and often do not meet standards that allow obtaining best prices at the international level. This is mainly due to the lack of knowledge of Peruvian Technical Standards, little use of quality infrastructure services, and deficient post-harvest processes and quality control.

In sum, quality is one of the most important aspects affecting the international commercialization of these agricultural products and is an important component to create competitiveness. «Improving our quality gives us better conditions to be able to negotiate and sell our product. It is not the same to have an average cup score (which determines the quality of the coffee) of between 80–82 as it is to have a score of over 82. We can look for differentiated clients, but for that, we have to work a lot on quality”, says David Peralta of the Monte Azul Cooperative.

To consolidate the productivity and efficiency of coffee and cocoa farmers and producers in the San Martin Region, UNIDO is strengthening eight farmer cooperatives in terms of infrastructure, equipment, and technical assistance. It has supported six quality coffee laboratories and provided specialised training for 40 professionals working there. Moreover, the project has developed and disseminated four national standards and 16 technical guidelines for the application of relevant standards to establish better processes for coffee and cocoa.

As a result of this support, farmers and producers will be able to sell their coffee at a higher price, earning more and providing them with better development opportunities for themselves, their families, and communities in the long run. Ultimately, better products lead to higher prices and increased income leads to an improved quality of life.

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SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATION FOR VEGETABLE OIL, A PATH TO ENHANCED LIVELIHOODS AND MARKET SHARE GHANA

For decades, farming of vegetable oil in Ghana was subsistent while its milling was artisanal. However, low fruit yields, poor standards and lack of sustainable production assurance have threatened the maintenance of the supply chain and the existence of medium-sized millers who have more recently joined the value chain.

The supply gap resulting from increased demand has been filled by smallholder farmers who now produce over 60% of the palm oil in Ghana. Yet palm tree farmers in Ghana have lacked exposure to quality standards and best practices that could increase yields and premiums for quality fruits. Sustainable certification is a powerful method of addressing the environmental and social dimensions of palm oil farming. UNIDO has worked to develop quality standards and integrate them into the industry. To help mitigate the potential negative impact of vegetable oil production in Ghana, key actors and experts in the value chain, including palm tree farmers and medium-sized companies, received training to understand and implement the requirements of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) standards—sustainability standards that conform to the ISEAL standard-setting codes.

The Golden Star Oil Palm Farmers Association—a group of 63 smallholder farmers—has received assistance to obtain certification to the RSPO – Independent Smallholder

Standard. This sustainable certification means the farmers are producing vegetable oil responsibly, contributing to safeguarding the environment. The certification involved the process of training the farmers to understand the requirements of the RSPO standards and to implement them as well as other standards.

In addition to producing palm oil safely and sustainably, with the implementation and certification to RSPO the group of farmers have increased their production yield. The group produces an average of 18 tonnes per hectare, three times above the national average yield for smallholders. The higher yields have translated into increased incomes and improved livelihoods for the smallholders and their dependents, while also helping them protect their natural environment. One quarter of the farmers are women, one of whom stated, “with the help of my group GSOPFA, my farm is being well taken care of and my money keeps going up”.

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RELIABLE AND VALID TESTING SERVICES TO BOOST EXPORT OF MANGOES IN MEKONG DELTA

VIETNAM

Vietnam is the 10th largest mango producer worldwide with a total mango growing area of 87,000 hectares, nearly half of which is in the Mekong Delta. However, the total export turnover of Vietnam's mangoes accounts for roughly 1.5% of the world's (USD 12.34 billion in 2020).

Mango exports in Vietnam have increased dramatically—driven by cross-border trade with China—accounting for 95% of exports. China's cross-border trade restrictions make the export industry particularly vulnerable. Diversifying into other export markets would reduce the risk for Vietnamese exporters and help them reach high value markets.

However, the weak compliance of Vietnamese producers to international standards, especially for the management of pesticides, has affected the entry of mango and other horticultural exports into high value international markets. There is limited knowledge of unregistered compounds and excess levels of registered ones for exporting, largely due to under-developed systems for ensuring validity and reliability of testing laboratories, and an insufficient and fragmented residue-monitoring programme.

The GQSP Vietnam works with partners to build a reliable testing service to boost mango export in Mekong Delta, which is primarily achieved through capacity building for residue testing labs and developing a residue-monitoring programme for mangoes.

Hands-on training and technical support have strengthened the capacity of pesticide testing laboratories networked across Vietnam. Two testing labs also have been selected to receive intense training to increase accuracy. Key pesticide residue laboratory staff now have a greater appreciation of modern approaches to internal quality control, implementing sampling principles and practices, and interpretation of pesticide residue analytical results, following the European Plant Protection Organization's complete set of standards.

Most importantly, a scientifically valid residue-monitoring programme was developed for commonly exported mango varieties in two Mekong Delta provinces, providing a model for roll-out to the remaining horticulture sectors. Overall, the GQSP Vietnam has assisted in unlocking global markets for Vietnamese mango exports.

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PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY INCREASE EARNINGS FROM SELLING HIGH-VALUE SEAWEED

INDONESIA

In 2011, Indonesia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, reasserting that all people with all types of disabilities are entitled to all human rights and fundamental aspects of life, which include access to education and employment opportunities. In line with this, Indonesia has mandated companies and government institutions to allocate 1% employee capacity for people with disability.

However, it was recorded in 2021 that from the total of 17.7 million (working age) people with disability, only 7.8 million or 44% are employed, indicating that this ‘1% capacity’ has not been implemented optimally as mandated by law. Social inequalities, marginalization and discrimination towards people with disability will continue to escalate if no action is taken and subsequently will leave vulnerable people in poverty.

The GQSP Indonesia—in collaboration with Fisheries Centre (BBPBAP) Jepara, Central Java—has developed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in Enhancing the Shelf Life and Packaging Techniques of Caulerpa spp. (often called sea grapes), one of the most popular consumed seaweed species in Indonesia. To upscale this SOP, and as an initiative to support disabled community empowerment, GQSP Indonesia and BBPBAP organized a training series on preservation and packaging techniques of fresh Caulerpa

spp. for the disabled community in Jepara, called SADIFA. Within two days, 41 community members were trained on how to improve the shelf life of fresh Caulerpa as well as on packaging methods to increase the selling value of raw Caulerpa products. Participants were also provided with market access information.

SADIFA is now receiving requests for preserved Caulerpa from BBPBAP, which has helped them to earn additional income. In order to gain a wider market for this product, assistance and support from local government and other stakeholders are necessary. Ultimately, improving the skills of people with disability enables them to explore their interests and potential, and provides them with increased opportunities to improve their economic and social welfare. The GQSP Indonesia may help to generate not only skillful human resources, but also small and medium-sized enterprises for the disabled community.

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INCENTIVIZING THE JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

INDONESIA

Demand for blue food—food from our waters—is growing. Given the depletion of wild aquatic resources and ecosystems, aquaculture will play a significant role in meeting demand. Aquaculture production has increased by 7.5% annually since 1970, making environmental sustainability a growing concern. Increased attention has also been given to the corresponding implementation of good aquaculture practices designed to reduce the environmental impact of aquaculture.

The QOSP Indonesia, in cooperation with the Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fishery (MMAF) and the National Standardization Agency (BSN), strengthens the quality and standards compliance capacity of small-scale fish farmers towards sustainable aquaculture. Aquaculture commodities supported include shrimp, seaweed, milkfish, and catfish. Improvements have been made in aquaculture practices to increase productivity and implement the four pillars of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)—food safety, fish health and welfare, environmental and social responsibility. The QOSP Indonesia has developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) to increase productivity and fulfill these CCRF pillars. To guide farmers on SOP implementation, local assistants, technical guidance and farming management have been provided. As of June 2022, 2990 fish farmers and extension

workers have taken the SOP training module provided by the Fisheries Extension Center, and 951 farmers have adopted the SOP.

As an alternative to high-cost eco-label certification, the QOSP Indonesia, together with BSN and MMAF, enhanced the Indonesian Good Aquaculture Practices (IndoGAP) certification scheme—the cheaper, local certification solution that meets the needs of around 2 million small-scale fish farmers. The QOSP supports benchmarking IndoGAP with the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI) to encourage global market acceptance. To date, three IndoGAP conformity assessment bodies have been certified to ISO/IEC 17065. This year, 68 farmers applied for IndoGAP, 5 of whom have been certified.

The QOSP also helps farmers access finance to obtain IndoGAP certification and implement the Good Aquaculture SOPs.

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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.

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INCREASING COMPETITIVENESS THROUGH ACCESS TO ACCREDITED TESTING

PHILIPPINES

Like many countries, the Philippines was ravaged by the health and socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country also faced a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) brought about by mass impulse-driven purchases and heavy reliance on importing this product. The absence of a testing laboratory in the country for medical textiles at the onset of the pandemic was further challenging. Local manufacturers, traders, and the government had to send PPE samples for testing to international laboratories in China, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This led to additional shipment costs and longer result lead times—a difficult approach for micro, small and medium enterprises.

As part of the government's COVID-19 response, the Department of Trade and Industry collaborated with local textile manufacturers to expand and diversify their production to produce locally manufactured PPE. Moreover, the Philippine Textile Research Institute (PTRI) of the Department of Science and Technology expanded their operation and launched a medical textile testing center to fill the gap in rapid and affordable testing of textiles used in the healthcare and hygiene sector.

To further support these government-led initiatives, the GQSP Philippines will assist the PTRI Medical Textile Testing

Center in developing a business plan consisting of the center's objectives and development goals, including the scope of services and their target market for testing services. A market assessment will provide baseline information, focusing on the demand for quality testing services of PPE. The GQSP Philippines also supports the development of an implementation roadmap for the business plan—with a training and capacity building programme for the laboratory—and application for accreditation of the new testing scopes of three component laboratories in the fields of chemical, mechanical, and microbiological testing.

Ultimately, the efforts of the GQSP Philippines will, allow local PPE producers to compete with lower-priced, imported PPE and ensure compliance of PPE with international standards and certifications required for exporting PPE, thus improving the capacity of local manufacturers to access global markets and value chains.

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INCREASED MARKET ACCESS THROUGH BETTER QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

ALBANIA

Albania's rich biodiversity represents an important avenue for economic development and has led to Albania becoming one of Europe's top producers of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) & fruit and vegetables (F&V) in recent years. Despite current positive developments and initiatives resulting in export, enterprises along the MAPs & F&V value chains in Albania, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), face quality-related challenges in demonstrating conformity with standards and requirements in high-end markets in which consumers are concerned about the sustainability features of products.

There is a need to provide support to ensure that SMEs can benefit through improving quality and strengthening sustainability along MAPs & F&V value chains. The GQSP Albania aims to make a difference through specific measures, including:

Leveraging global knowledge and good practices

Methodologies, tools and best practices in the GQSP framework will be tailored to analyze the value chains and their gaps, and develop solutions for strengthening the capacity of MAPs & F&V value chain actors for improved quality assurance and sustainability. Global knowledge dissemination and application of good practices will enable the quality infrastructure (QI) system in Albania to provide modern services, supporting the sustainable development and trade of the MAPs & F&V sector.

Aligning with QI systems QI institutions in Albania will be capacitated, in line with international standards, guidelines and good practice, to boost their governance and participation in related regional and international QI systems.

Strengthening stakeholder engagement along value chains Public and private MAPs & F&V value chain stakeholders will be engaged, and their roles and responsibilities for assuring quality and increasing sustainability strengthened, to mainstream international quality standards and requirements.

Turning competitive advantage into trade benefit International quality standards and new technologies will be promoted to farmers, producers and exporters to improve their production and quality management practice, and support them in improving compliance with international standards and foreign technical regulations.

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COLLABORATIVE EFFORT ENSURES QUALITY NEEDS OF INDUSTRY

SOUTH AFRICA

Standardization, quality assurance, accreditation and metrology (SQAM) activities play a crucial role in enabling the emerging South African essential and vegetable oils value chains to participate in global trade. The GQSP South Africa supports the strengthening of the quality of essential and vegetable oil exports from South Africa.

The South African public sector technical quality infrastructure (TQI) supports a range of industry sectors and has evolved over a period of more than 70 years. In addition to the TQI, there are private stakeholders active in the market place addressing the quality needs of industry and supporting trade. These institutions have programmes to market their own value proposition, but it is a challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to navigate through the maze of public and private sector institution service offerings in order to determine how they can be assisted.

In 2020, the national Multistakeholder Quality Forum (MSQF) was formed, with support from the GQSP South Africa, to act as an umbrella body through which the collective strength could be leveraged of government, South African technical/quality infrastructure institutions, and the various private sector SQAM service providers in order to respond to the needs of industry and ensure the protection of the health and safety of consumers.

This initiative brings together the specialized organizations and private sector associations that operate at national level and are active in promoting and implementing quality infrastructure activities as a tool for sustainable economic development. The MSQF members have developed a collective website through which the members' different service offerings are available in one place without duplicating what is already available on the individual websites, enabling SMEs to obtain the information they need before being referred to the correct service provider. Although the role of SQAM in facilitating trade is a difficult story to tell, the members of the MSQF agree that "Quality is a collective endeavour".

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