






Management Response

Evaluation Title:	Effectiveness and impact of the UNDA project "Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains"		
Period of Review:	May 2014 - December 2017		
Date of Evaluation Report:	February 2018		
Approved by:	Chief, Programme Management Unit	Date	Signature
		31/5/18	
Cleared by:	Director of Division: Ivonne Higuero	24/5/2018	
Prepared by:	Manager of the evaluation: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab	24/05/2018	

Recommendation 1: In designing future project proposals, envisage a broader integrated approach. Agricultural standards and trade facilitation are just two "links" in the supply chain "from field to the plate". As UNECE and UNESCAP have clear mandates, strategic partnerships should be envisaged to cover other areas of improvement (e.g. multilateral development banks could address the issue of micro-financing of small producers and traders; FAO could support improving the productivity of producers; UNEP/GEF could contribute in decreasing the carbon footprint of the production).

Management Response: The recommendation is fully accepted and in future work as well as projects, continued attention will be given to the inclusion of partner organizations whenever possible.

Follow up actions and responsibilities: UNECE will continue to closely cooperate in all its regular and project work with organizations covering those parts of the supply chain not covered by UNECE mandates. These include the European Union, OECD, FAO, the Asian Development Bank, UNEP, or ITC in addition to UN countries offices and donor agencies. This will ensure the more coherent delivery of results and impact of the work at country level. This collaboration will include consultations, joint events, joint training and the delivery of joint training material. A first workshop

addressing this recommendation was held with the European Union on access conditions to EU markets and the role of UNECE standards for developing countries (Dominican Republic, April 2018). The next event is planned for June 2018 with UNDP's country office Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well as for September 2018 with the same partners as well as donor-agencies.

Through the existing UNNExT Advisory Group on Agriculture Trade Facilitation (Ag-TF) UNESCAP has been able to forge partnerships with other UN bodies and international working in the areas of agricultural trade facilitation, such as FAO and the WTO's Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) as well as with the private sector and high-ranking government officials in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP will continue to seek guidance and technical support from the members of the UNNExT Ag-TF group in the design and review of projects and activities.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Staff responsible: Yann Duval, Chief a.i., Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

Recommendation 2: As a result of activities in Central Asia, an informal standing working group ("Central Asia Working Group") was established, having an advisory function for UNECE. In order to capitalize on the initiative, a degree of formalization should be envisaged and UNNExT could serve as a model. Similar approaches within UNECE (e.g. International Centres of Excellence on Public Private Partnerships or the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane) also prove to be effective models. When establishing such working groups, the approach should also contain retaining mechanisms for good qualified specialists, in order to minimize their fluctuation.

Management Response: The recommendation is fully accepted and proposals will be prepared for discussion by UNECE Specialized Sections and the Working Party to formalize and extend this collaboration both thematically and geographically.

Follow up actions and responsibilities: UNECE has already approached the already existing informal standing working group Central Asia ("Central Asia Working Group") and first discussions on closer and permanent collaboration will take place in June 2018. In the immediate future, the informal working group has provided input to UNECE's regular work – i.e. submitted proposals for new work; commented on on-going work on standards and implementation to of the two Specialized Sections on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables; as well as Dry and Dried Produce. In addition, at the invitation of the UNECE secretariat, members of the working group will attend the regular meetings of the Specialized Sections on Fresh fruit and Vegetables; Dry and Dried Produce in May and June 2018. Mechanism on how to formally integrate the working group will be discussed at the November 2018 session of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards. This integration could be finalized at the earliest by Spring 2019.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Recommendation 3: Partnerships with national and local stakeholders, as well the UN country teams, should continue for future projects (linked to recommendation 1). Besides broadening the thematic coverage, the partnerships raise the profile of the projects and help lowering the costs (maximizing the efficiency);

Management Response: The recommendation is fully accepted as a priority also in future projects as well as regular inter-governmental work and impact increase in the field.

Follow up actions and responsibilities: For UNECE, building partnerships with national and local stakeholders and UN country teams has been an integral part of this UNDA project as well as the UNDA 11 project on “Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South agriculture trade”. In the latter, the integration of national stakeholders and UN country teams are part of the project design. The first events organized with UN country teams are planned for June and September 2018. In June 2018, the UNCTs Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will contribute substantially and financially to an event focused on improving production patterns and sustainable nuts and dried fruit trade to be held in Geneva. In September 2018, the UNCT Uzbekistan will help organize and facilitate a capacity-building event on UNECE standards and best practice to improve quality production and prevent food loss, to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The involvement and advisory role of national stakeholders will also continue to be an integral part of UNECE’s regular and project work. Country delegations will be invited to contribute to regular intergovernmental work and submit their comments as well take part in projects. They will be included in Rapporteurs teams and capacity-building events. UN Country Teams will continue to be kept informed of the UNECE Agricultural Standards’ Unit regular work via inclusion in the mailing lists and invitations to participate in the events. In addition, the UNECE Agricultural Standards’ Unit will include the national, local and the UNCT stakeholders in country-level events and ask them for assistance in disseminating UNECE’s work at country level, whenever possible.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Recommendation 4: Continue the “open process” approach, making available online links to all events, training materials and case studies. They facilitate knowledge exchange and increase trust and interest from all stakeholders.

Management Response: The recommendation is fully accepted as a priority also in future projects as well as regular inter-governmental work and dissemination of this work.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

ESCAP will continue to share information on trade facilitation and agricultural trade facilitation measures on the ESCAP and UNNExT websites, to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and best practice amongst relevant stakeholders.

UNECE is in the process of restructuring its web page including both structure and content to make it easier to disseminate available content and provide even more information on events, studies and training material for the Fall of 2018.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Recommendation 5: In order to avoid situations when finding appropriate consultants for technical work is difficult or ill-timed, UNECE and UNESCAP should implement a roster of vetted specialists. The roster could be shared by UNECE and ESCAP, eventually by other UN organizations.

Management Response: The recommendation is partially accepted. The reservation comes from the fact that it is difficult to establish and update rosters between organizations with different mandates and work programmes.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT) consists of a group of specialists and experts on trade facilitation, including agricultural trade facilitation. UNESCAP will continue to maintain an open “expert database” on the UNNExT website. <https://unnnext.unescap.org/> . UNECE will continue to draw on its extensive expert date base comprising close to 1000 experts in these fields and who are actively participating in UNECE events in meetings, trainings and electronic working groups.

Discussions on the possibility of establishing a vetted roster through existing mechanisms (e.g. Inspira) will take place by December 2018. The challenges faced include the difficulty of identifying and including the most competent right experts in the many areas of work covered by the mandates of both organizations; the difficulty maintaining the roster up to date and making sure that it is expanded on a regular basis. The rosters, if established, will be open and jointly managed.

UNECE and UNESCAP will share their experts’ rosters whenever necessary.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Recommendation 6: Continue the Trade Facilitation Survey implemented by UNESCAP. The survey is a very cost-effective way to collect data and to adjust tools and projects to the actual needs of the actors in the region.

Management Response: The recommendation is accepted.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

ESCAP will continue to collect data on trade facilitation implementation, including indicators on agricultural trade facilitation and paperless trade. The Trade Facilitation Survey is one of many tools that the ESCAP uses to collect and monitor trade facilitation implementation. ESCAP will lead work on the next Trade Facilitation Survey scheduled for 2019, in collaboration with UNECE, other regional commissions and other UN and international organizations.

Staff responsible: Yann Duval, Chief a.i., Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

Recommendation 7: Continue collecting case studies and create a Best Practice Guide. The Case Studies should focus both on best practices as well as on lessons learnt from failures, and should cover diverse geographic areas as well as topics. The examples and lessons learnt should be compiled in a Best Practice Guide to contribute to better understanding and improvement of supply chains in agriculture.

Management Response: The recommendation is partially accepted and its implementation is dependent on resource availability.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

The UNNExT website includes already a large number of case studies and policy briefs on trade facilitation measures and innovation in the Asia Pacific region. The case studies and policy briefs are available here: <https://unnex.unescap.org/>. Increasingly, case studies on agricultural trade facilitation have been added to the UNNExT policy briefs. The guides produced under the projects have also been envisaged as best practice guidelines for topics such as facilitating compliance for food safety and quality standards and electronic sanitary and phytosanitary certification. Subject to resource availability, additional case studies may be added to the UNNExT website, when relevant cases and projects are identified.

Staff responsible: Yann Duval, Chief a.i., Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP

Recommendation 8: Create a centralized online training platform for standards setting, implementation and trade facilitation.

Management Response: The recommendation is partially accepted. The reservation comes from

the fact that extrabudgetary resources will be needed to develop and maintain such a platform and keep it relevant.

Follow up actions and responsibilities:

At this stage, and with the implementation of the new UNECE web page structure, it is premature to anticipate the development, concrete structure and hosting of such a platform. UNECE will attempt to study the feasibility of such a platform by the beginning of 2019. Both its development and maintenance would require extra-budgetary funds. In addition, possible partnerships and collaboration with other international organizations will be considered as a way to develop and sustain such a platform.

Staff responsible: Liliana Annovazzi-Jakab, Agricultural Standards Unit, UNECE

Recommendation 9: Strengthen the role of the concluding project event in order to increase ownership, sustainability and dissemination of the project results in beneficiary countries and beyond. In cases when a project or its components have any form of continuation, the concluding event is essential to get endorsement from the stakeholders for the new phases.

Management Response: The recommendation is accepted.

Follow up actions and responsibilities: In future projects and whenever possible and can be integrated into the final project design, more emphasis will be placed on concluding events. In future projects and whenever possible, UNECE and UNESCAP will attempt to strengthen the role of concluding events as one way of fostering sustainability, the continuation of project achievements and the strong stakeholder engagement beyond the projects' life cycles. In addition, UNECE and UNESCAP will make every effort possible to strengthen stakeholders' engagement during the entire project implementation phase.

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