



## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

## FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

## Twenty-third Session

## Virtual

22-26 July 2024

## UPDATE ON THE STANDARDS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY (STDF)

*(prepared by the STDF Secretariat)***1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1. The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) is a global partnership to facilitate safe trade. It promotes improved food safety, animal and plant health capacity in developing countries and helps imports and exports to meet SPS requirements for trade, based on international standards. It operates as a funding mechanism and global partnership for dialogue and learning on SPS capacity development.

1.2. The STDF was established in 2004 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the World Bank and the WTO, which houses and manages the partnership. It also benefits from active participation of the Secretariats of Codex Alimentarius and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). Donors, developing country experts and diverse other international and regional organizations involved in SPS capacity development also participate in the STDF. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this includes the International Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Regional Organisation for Plant and Animal Health (OIRSA), and the Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency (CAHFSA), among others.<sup>1</sup>

1.3. In 2024, the STDF marks its twenty-year anniversary. Since it was established in 2004, the STDF has grown from a small collection of projects to a global partnership to facilitate safe and inclusive trade that is recognized for its convening power, good practices and knowledge work, and for its results in driving catalytic SPS improvements that benefit the public and private sector in developing countries.

1.4. This document provides a brief update on STDF's activities and projects, with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. Codex delegates are encouraged to visit the [STDF website](#) to learn more about STDF's work and [subscribe](#) to STDF's monthly newsletter.

1.5. The STDF acts as Global Platform. It convenes and connects diverse public and private sector organizations across agriculture, health, trade and development to exchange experiences, identify opportunities for collaboration, and promote a more coherent approach to SPS capacity development. As part of this platform, the STDF Working Group allows members to share and learn from each other's work, helping to disseminate, influence and scale up good practices more widely.

**2 KNOWLEDGE WORK**

2.1. The STDF identifies and promotes good practice across all its activities and projects to improve SPS capacity development outcomes. This includes work on topics that cut across the areas of food safety, animal and plant health, and trade. Outputs include practical and user-friendly knowledge products (briefing notes, publications, events, videos, etc.) that can be accessed on STDF's website. Knowledge and outreach work is ongoing on the following topics:

- Use of [Good Regulatory Practices \(GRPs\)](#) to ensure SPS measures are fit for purpose and do not lead to unjustified barriers to trade. STDF has published a [GRP Guide](#) to help SPS regulators in developing countries navigating and using GRPs when designing, developing, and reviewing SPS measures. In June

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<sup>1</sup> See the STDF Strategy 2020-2024 (page 43) to find out more about stakeholders involved in STDF's work.

2024, the STDF approved a new project to improve clarity, predictability, and coordination on SPS/TBT regulations affecting trade through enhancement of the [ePing SPS&TBT Platform](#) ("ePing"). This project, which benefits from co-funding from the European Union, will also aim to increase the uptake of ePing in developing countries.

- Use of [public private partnerships](#) to strengthen SPS capacity and facilitate trade. The STDF PPP Practitioner Group shares experiences and lessons of PPPs in developing countries to improve compliance with SPS requirements and facilitate safe trade. STDF also publishes case stories about examples of PPPs, and has developed a vTPA programme [assessment tool](#) with UNIDO. Many STDF projects promote public private collaboration, for instance, within value chains, on electronic certification and on the use of voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programmes based on the Codex Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of vTPA programmes. Three regional STDF projects are piloting the use of vTPA programmes in specific sectors and products (including in Central America, see in section 4).
- Use of **electronic SPS certification (SPS eCert)** to reduce the costs and time of trade. The STDF share experiences and lessons on SPS eCert in its community of practice on SPS eCert, the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group and events like the STDF session with partners during the WTO Global Aid for Review in June 2024. An [external evaluation](#), conducted in 2023, illustrated the continued relevance and huge impact of STDF's innovative ePhyto project. In 2024, the STDF initiated a new project, in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) on exchanging electronic veterinary certificates ("[eVet](#)") in Latin America.
- Use of **evidence-based approach to prioritize SPS needs (P-IMA)** in a way that informs and improves SPS planning and decision-making processes. The P-IMA Framework helps to link SPS investments to public policy goals including export growth, agricultural productivity, and poverty reduction. In the process, P-IMA encourages public-private dialogue, boosts transparency and accountability, and improves the economic efficiency of investment decisions. The P-IMA tool was applied in [Ecuador](#) and is being used in the [Caribbean](#). P-IMA was externally evaluated in 2023, with ongoing work to follow-up on the [evaluation](#) recommendations.
- Mainstreaming gender in STDF's work through the STDF [Gender Action Plan launched in 2023](#). Gender analyses are ongoing in STDF projects, with recommendations included in project activities and delivery<sup>2</sup>. Ongoing STDF outreach on gender mainstreaming is increasing awareness globally on opportunities to take into account gender-specific needs, challenges and opportunities to improve the results and impacts of SPS capacity development.
- STDF is assessing how to best consider **environment, biodiversity and climate change** in its work. An independent external learning assessment is underway. Preliminary recommendations include setting up a STDF Practitioner Group on environment, establishing criteria for assessing how projects have integrated environmental mainstreaming, and improving the tracking of current STDF environment indicators through better data collection and story gathering from project partners. The evaluation report will be available in the fall of 2024.

### 3 FUNDING FOR PROJECTS THAT FACILITATE SAFE TRADE

3.1. Since its inception in 2004, the STDF has evolved from a small collection of projects into a robust knowledge platform of SPS stakeholders from across agriculture, health, trade and development. Donor members have provided over US\$100 million in contributions to the STDF trust fund to date, which have been used to develop and implement more than 250 projects and PPGs globally, driving sustainable SPS outcomes and increased market access for developing countries, contributing to economic growth, poverty reduction and food security.

3.2. Overall, the STDF has devoted 63% of project and PPG resources to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Other Low-Income Countries (OLICs), as shown in Figure 1 below. Of all STDF projects, 49% have benefited Africa, 24% the Asia-Pacific region and 18% the Latin America-Caribbean region, while 9% are classified as global, benefiting all developing countries, as shown in Figure 2.

3.3. An overview of on-going project and project preparation grants (PPGs) in Latin America and the Caribbean is provided in [Annex 1](#).

<sup>2</sup> Specifically for projects: for [STDF/PG/807](#), [STDF/PG/946](#) and to start soon for [STDF/PG/768](#), [STDF/PG/770](#) and [STDF/PG/845](#)

Figure 1: Projects &amp; PPGs by country

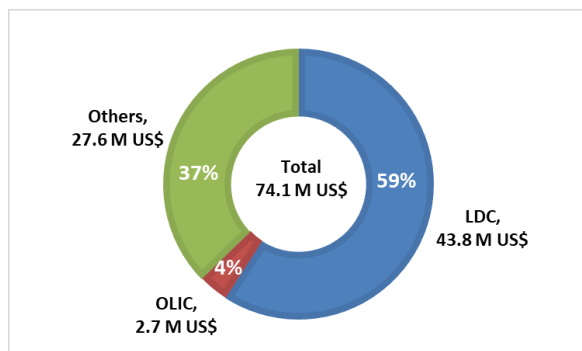
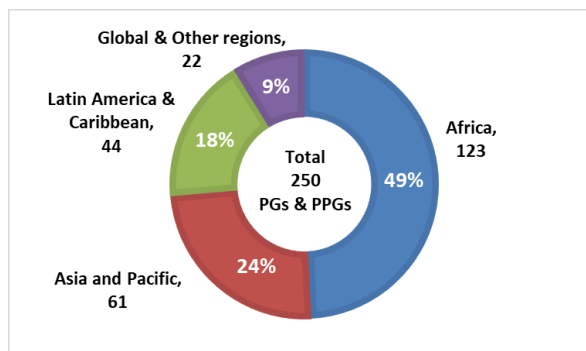


Figure 2: Projects &amp; PPGs by region



3.1. An overview of on-going project and project preparation grants (PPGs) in Latin America and the Caribbean is provided in [Annex 1](#).

### 3.1. Funding opportunities

3.2. The STDF provides funding for the development and implementation of collaborative and innovative projects that strengthen capacity to implement international standards (Codex, IPPC and WOH) and facilitate safe trade.

- **Project preparation Grants (PPGs):** funds up to US\$50,000 are available to help beneficiaries articulate their SPS needs and develop technically sound and sustainable project proposals. PPGs can be requested to: (i) apply SPS capacity evaluation and prioritization tools; (ii) prepare feasibility studies before project development to assess the potential impact and economic viability of proposals in terms of costs and benefits; and (iii) develop project proposals for funding by STDF or other donors.
- **Projects grants (PGs):** that promote compliance with international standards and requirements. Preference is given to projects that: (i) identify, develop and disseminate good practice in SPS technical cooperation, including innovative and replicable approaches; (ii) apply regional and cross-cutting approaches to address SPS constraints; and (iii) implement collaborative approaches across food safety, animal and plant health, and trade. Beneficiaries must contribute to STDF projects from their own resources, either in the form of financial or in-kind contributions (such as staff time, use of premises, vehicles or other existing assets).

3.3. Further information on how to apply for STDF funding, including application forms, is available on the [STDF website](#).

#### RECOMMENDED STEPS TO APPLY FOR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE STDF

- Browse the funding webpage for information (aims, eligibility criteria, etc.) on PPGs and PGs.
- View examples of previous projects:
- Consult relevant stakeholders in the country/region
- Send a brief concept note of your potential project for feedback to: [STDFSecretariat@wto.org](mailto:STDFSecretariat@wto.org)
- Fill out an application form and submit it electronically before the deadline

## 4 EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS TO IMPROVE FOOD SAFETY OUTCOMES AND FACILITATE TRADE IN LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

4.1. Since its inception, the STDF has financed over 44 projects and PPGs benefitting Latin America and the Caribbean, including 17 projects and PPGs related to food safety. Results from selected projects are outlined below:

- *"Strengthening capacity in Latin America to meet pesticide export requirements"* [STDF/PG/436](#). The project improved capacity of selected Latin American countries to meet pesticide-related export requirements based on international (Codex) standards through extensive capacity building in both the field and laboratory. Government authorities partnered with industry, farmers and other partners to carry out coordinated and complementary pesticide residue studies. This collaborative approach generated data to support the registration of new, improved low-risk pesticides to help farmers control pests and diseases more effectively. Together with similar related regional MRL projects in Africa and Asia, these three regional projects Asia led to the approval over five new Codex MRLs. The Global Minor Use Foundation was created to build on the projects' results to expand low-risk pesticide options for tropical produce.

- *"Mitigating pesticide residues in Latin America using biopesticides"* [STDF/PG/753](#). Building on the regional MRL projects (above), stakeholders in Asia, Africa and Latin America are partnering to pilot the use of non-residue producing biopesticides at the end of the growing season, following conventional pesticide use, to reduce violations of maximum residue limits (MRLs). This approach combines the advantages of using conventional pesticides, such as lower costs and overall efficacy, with the environmentally friendly benefits of using biopesticides, to reduce residue levels. Policymakers are also starting to standardize regulations on biopesticides at the country and regional levels.
- *"Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA)<sup>3</sup> Programme in Central America to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade"* [STDF/PG/682](#). This ongoing pilot project promotes public-public and public-private collaboration to pilot and learn from the use of the vTPA approach in practice, based on Codex principles and guidelines, in order to modernize national food control systems, move towards a risk-based regulatory framework, and make better use of scarce resources. The lessons and experiences shared at an upcoming workshop led by Belize on the margins of the WTO SPS Committee in November 2024.
- *"Mitigating high levels of cadmium in cacao in Colombia and Ecuador"* [STDF/PG/681](#). This project is improving capacity to manage cadmium concentrations in cacao and cocoa products, based on Codex limits and import requirements in the European Union, in order to maintain competitiveness and market access. For instance, collaborative networks have been established across 30 public and private sector laboratories in South America and globally to support improved proficiency and diagnostic testing, and to adopt innovative approaches and equipment (e.g. X-ray fluorescence).
- *"Improving the implementation of food safety standards in Saint Lucia"* [STDF/PPG/970](#). This Project preparation grant is developing a project proposal to enhance the national food safety system and the capacity of MSMEs to meet food safety standards, with a focus on sea moss, an export product with increasing global demand.

## 5 ANNUAL REPORT 2023

5.1. STDF's [2023 Annual Report](#) *"From Global to Local: Safe Trade in Partnerships"* presents progress and results in the implementation of STDF's five-year [Strategy in 2023](#) including updates on various aspects of STDF's work, including knowledge work, projects, communications, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the STDF Trust Fund.

## 6 EXTERNAL EVALUATION AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

6.1. An [external evaluation](#) of the STDF programme, with a focus on the period from 2020 to 2024, was completed in May 2024 to assess the results and impact achieved by the STDF and capture key lessons learned. The evaluation concluded that "STDF's work largely aligns with its partners and with other major SPS and safe trade initiatives", and that "the STDF has delivered significant and tangible results across its three workstreams". It also found evidence that "the target countries and sectors that have benefitted from STDF support have seen stronger export growth in plants, animals and foods than their comparators".

6.2. The evaluation's findings and lessons will be used by STDF founding partners, donors, developing country experts and other STDF partners to inform development of the STDF's next Strategy for 2025 and beyond. This work is currently ongoing in consultation with members of the partnership.

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<sup>3</sup> The Codex Committee on Food Import-Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) defines a vTPA programme as "a non-governmental or autonomous scheme comprising of the ownership of a standard that utilises national/international requirements; a governance structure for certification and enforcement, and in which food-business operator (FBO) participation is voluntary" (CX/FICS 18/24/6).

**ANNEX 1**  
**ONGOING STDF PROJECTS (PGS) AND PROJECT PREPARATION GRANTS (PPGS)**  
**IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Country	STDF reference and hyperlink	Project / PPG name
Grenada	<a href="#">STDF/PG/880</a>	Enhancing SPS capacity and market access for Grenadian soursop exports
Jamaica	<a href="#">STDF/PG/759</a>	Enhancing food safety capacity of the pepper value chain in Jamaica to increase market access
Saint Lucia	<a href="#">STDF/PPG/970</a>	Improving the implementation of food safety standards in Saint Lucia
Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru	<a href="#">STDF/PG/753</a>	Mitigating chemical residues in Latin America through the promotion of biopesticides
Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru	<a href="#">STDF/PG/716</a>	Improving food safety risk analysis capacity in Latin America
Belize, Honduras	<a href="#">STDF/PG/682</a>	Piloting the use of vTPA in Central America
Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru	<a href="#">STDF/PG/838</a>	Strengthening regional pest surveillance on banana farms in the ANDEAN community
CARICOM countries	<a href="#">STDF/PPG/733</a>	Prioritizing SPS investments in the Caribbean using the P-IMA tool
Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago	<a href="#">STDF/PG/577</a>	Coordinating management of cadmium levels in cocoa in Latin America and the Caribbean
Colombia, Ecuador	<a href="#">STDF/PG/681</a>	Mitigating high levels of cadmium in cacao in Colombia and Ecuador
Dominican Republic, Haiti	<a href="#">STDF/PG/751</a>	Strengthening the phytosanitary and food safety system in key value chains
Latin America and Caribbean	<a href="#">STDF/PG/856</a>	Enhancing multilateral e-veterinary certification in Latin America and the Caribbean