

External evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of the UNDA project “Strengthening the capacity of transition and developing economies to participate in cross-border agricultural food supply chains” (February 2018)

Final Progress Report as at 30 June 2019

#	Recommendation	Management response	Responsibility	Date of implementation/comments
1	<p>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).</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	<p>Agricultural Standards Unit (With ESCAP)</p>	<p>November 2018</p> <p>UNECE: implemented as outlined. UNECE has taken the Recommendation to envisage a broader approach into consideration in its drafting of new project proposals as well as in its implementation of new activities. UNECE continues to work in strategic partnerships to cover related areas and has organized activities and project implementation with UNCTAD, UNDP, FAO and the private sector. This will continue also in the future.</p> <p>ESCAP: implemented as outlined. Strategic partnerships are being deepened, most recently with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) to support capacity building on trade facilitation and paperless trade in least developed countries of the region, as well as with the International Trade Centre (ITC UNCTAD/WTO) on reducing trade cost of non-tariff measures, in particular for food and agricultural products.</p>

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		(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.		
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.	UNECE has already approached the already existing informal standing working group Central Asia 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.	Agricultural Standards Unit	May 2019 Implemented: UNECE has held preliminary discussions with the Central Asia Working Group and the Chairs of the UNECE Specialized Section on Fresh Fruit and Vegetables as well as Dry and Dried Produce. Given the complexity of establishing and integrating a new structure&/group, it was decided to leave the Central Asia working Group as a separate entity outside and formal UN structure. UNECE and its Specialized Sections will continue to advise the group and closely collaborate with the group. In addition, an e-coaching mechanism has been set up to provide continuous coaching on a monthly basis.
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	For UNECE, building partnerships with national and local stakeholders and UN country teams has been 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	Agricultural Standards Unit	November 2018 UNECE: Implemented as scheduled and outlined in the management response. The very fruitful cooperation with national and regional stakeholders as well as the UN country teams has become integral part of the new UNDA project as well as

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	<p>lowering the costs (maximizing the efficiency)</p>	<p>integration of national stakeholders and UN country teams are integral 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 quality implementation for sustainable trade in agricultural trade, to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The involvement and advisory role of national stakeholder will also continue to be 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 as be integral part of 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 participation 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.</p>		<p>UNECE's regular work.</p>

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4	<p>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.</p>	<p>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 easier to disseminate available content and provide even more information on events, studies and training material for the Fall of 2018.</p>	ESCAP	<p>November 2018</p> <p>ESCAP: Implemented as outlined, in particular through https://unnex.unescap.org/ and https://www.unescap.org/our-work/trade-investment-innovation</p>
5	<p>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.</p>	<p>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://unnex.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</p> <p>Discussions on the possibility of establishing a vetted roster 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.</p>	<p>Agricultural Standards Unit (with ESCAP)</p>	<p>December 2018</p> <p>UNECE and ESCAP: Discussions on the possibility of establishing a vetted roster have taken place. Given the differences in mandates of the two organizations and their project work, it was decided to collaborate and exchange recommendations on the most competent experts for a given task on an ad-hoc basis. This has already been on several occasions since the project closure. UNECE and ESCAP will continue to consult and exchange views on the identification of experts whenever necessary. UNNExT database of experts continues to be maintained as an open access database.</p>

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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.	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.	ESCAP	ESCAP: Implemented as outlined. Preparations for the UN Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation 2019 are on-going, with official support from Executive Secretaries of all Regional Commissions received in November 2018. Updated survey data will be made freely available at: https://unnex.unescap.org/AP-TFSurvey2017
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.	The UNNEXt website includes already a large number of case studies and policy briefs on trade facilitations measures and innovations 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.	ESCAP	ESCAP: Implemented as outlined. New case studies have been made available on UNNEXt website, including most recently a report on regional best practices in single window implementation (https://www.unescap.org/resources/single-window-trade-facilitation-regional-best-practices-and-future-development) , as well as a report on good practices to balance trade compliance and facilitation for food safety (https://www.unescap.org/resources/facilitating-compliance-food-safety-and-quality-cross-border-trade)
8	Create a centralized online training platform for standards setting, implementation and trade facilitation.	At this stage, with the implementation of the new UNECE web page structure, it is premature to anticipate the concrete structure and hosting of such a platform. UNECE will attempt to make progress and study the feasibility of such a platform by the beginning of 2019. It could be envisaged to fund the initial development with XB	Agricultural Standards Unit	June 2019 UNECE and UNESCAP: not Implemented owing to a lack of funds. Despite continued efforts, both organizations could not raise the funds to create such a platform within the set timeline. Efforts will continue also in the future and the platform might materialize in the coming years.

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		<p>funds but whatever can be achieved with regular budget funds will be taken into consideration to minimize the dependency on XB funds. In addition, partnerships and collaboration with other international organizations will be considered as a way to develop and sustain such a platform.</p>		<p>December 2018</p> <p>UNECE: So far, it has not been possible to raise the funds for the development of such a platform. Negotiations are on the way of designing a joint project with other international organizations. Given the on-going work on UNECE's new web platform, a final decision could not be taken. In addition, the lack of regular resources to fund such a platform beyond a project cycle would make its maintenance and sustainability very difficult.</p>
9	<p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Agricultural Standards Unit (with ESCAP)</p>	<p>November 2018</p> <p>UNECE: Implemented as outlined. A concluding event is included in the current projects. In addition, national ownership on ongoing projects is ensure through strong attention to sustainability mechanisms at national level and involvement of local and national stakeholders at all steps of the project implementation.</p> <p>ESCAP Implemented as outlined. A concluding event is included in current ESCAP projects (e.g., Russian funded project on pilot exchange of electronic data between Mongolia and three neighbouring countries will end with a region-wide forum in march 2019) , disseminating the work done in a few target countries to a wider group.</p>