

# Inclusive Trade Solutions: women in SPS capacity building

## The SPS Agreement

Sanitary or phytosanitary (SPS) measures that countries put in place to protect human, animal and plant health have an important impact on agricultural production, trade and market access. The World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Agreement sets out the basic rules on food safety and animal and plant health requirements. It allows WTO Members to meet their own health standards, while making sure regulations are based on science, are the least trade restrictive and do not discriminate.



## The business case

Women play a vital role in agriculture, food production and agricultural trade in developing countries as farmers, factory processors and informal cross-border traders, generating incomes to support their households. Yet, women face more challenges when it comes to benefitting from agricultural production and trade. They are less able to access agricultural inputs, services and markets,<sup>1</sup> face higher transaction costs crossing borders as informal traders,<sup>2</sup> and are less likely to be exporters and importers.<sup>3</sup> Promoting women's access to, and participation in, agriculture and trade can support economic growth, reduce poverty and boost food security in developing countries.

Women and men along the supply chain are responsible for meeting international SPS requirements. Yet, women working in agricultural value chains face more obstacles to plugging the knowledge gap that exists on SPS issues. It makes good business sense to support women farmers, processors and traders to learn about good agricultural and manufacturing practices and food safety standards to help them produce and export safe products. In practice that means empowering women, as well as men, by building their skills and know-how to meet SPS measures through targeted training support.

## Facilitating safe trade

Trade facilitation is about getting goods moving faster across borders to boost trade flows by cutting red tape and supporting joined-up working by border agencies. STDF's research from 2014-2015 on putting in place SPS measures to facilitate safe trade looks at country examples from Southeast Asia and Southern Africa.<sup>4</sup> The research highlights recommendations to facilitate trade and women's economic participation, particularly for informal cross border traders, the majority of them women.

### Relevant research recommendations:

- Identify concrete ways to reduce fragmentation and duplication in SPS controls and streamline procedures, which would also help to formalize informal trade.
- Focus efforts (for example, to improve transparency or streamline SPS procedures) on particular value chains of importance to trade, or small and medium-sized businesses.

Informal cross border women traders in Africa face high transaction costs, from harassment to additional fees and delays when dealing with lengthy procedures and documentary requirements.<sup>5</sup> STDF's research shows that simplifying documents and procedures on SPS measures will support cross border traders to move through formal channels, promoting health protection and bringing in government revenue. This in turn will remove key barriers faced by small-scale women traders.

<sup>1</sup> The State of Food and Agriculture, FAO, 2015

<sup>2</sup> The implementation of SPS Measures to facilitate safe trade, STDF, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Unlocking Markets for Women to Trade, ITC, 2015

<sup>4</sup> The implementation of SPS Measures to facilitate safe trade, STDF, 2014 & 2015

<sup>5</sup> Women and Trade in Africa, World Bank, 2013

## The global landscape

- Women supply 43% of all agricultural labour in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>6</sup>
- Fewer women export and import. Only 1-in-5 exporting firms is led by a female entrepreneur.<sup>7</sup>

## Relevant STDF projects benefitting women across agricultural value chains

Shrimp and prawn harvesting (Bangladesh); Ginger washing (Nepal); Vegetable production (Nicaragua); Shea nut collection and sesame production (Nigeria); Cinnamon peeling and processing (Sri Lanka); Fruit and vegetable production (Thailand and Viet Nam); Collection and distribution of flowers (Uganda)

## The inclusive project effect

The participation of, and impact on, women is looked at throughout the STDF project cycle. Project applications are reviewed using criteria that identifies and addresses the needs and opportunities for both women and men. Projects are encouraged to include and report on indicators for women/men.

Across STDF's capacity building projects, the benefits for women farmers, processors and traders are captured as part of STDF's monitoring and evaluation and the project logical framework. Key lessons from an STDF project to boost safe fruit and vegetable exports, from Thailand and Viet Nam<sup>8</sup> for example, highlight the importance of promoting women's engagement from the management level down. That has meant including women as senior managers and across project teams and targeting women farmers in cooperatives for them to build up knowledge and exercise greater decision-making.



## Relevant STDF project criteria

- How are women/men involved in particular value chains of relevance to the project? For example, as producers, farmers, traders, workers in food business operations.
- What constraints (if any) do they face and how could they be addressed to take advantage of new opportunities? How are women/men expected to benefit from the project?
- Example indicators: expected increase of income among women/men farmers, number of women-headed households, number of women/men to be involved in training activities.

## The local solutions

### Raising the profit margins for women ginger farmers in Nepal<sup>9</sup>

*"Our women's group produces a truckload of ginger. Ginger farming has supported us to save for the future of our children. If we had washing plants, we would be so happy."*

**Chandra Kala Rai**  
President, Ginger Cooperative Female Group, Illam

Cultivating ginger is a way of life for farmers, many of them women, in the remote mountain areas in the East of Nepal. It is also becoming a profitable business venture with opportunities to break into export markets in Bangladesh, Japan, the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates.

A public-private partnership was set up in 2012 for the benefits of trade to reach the region's rural communities, backed by the

Standards and Trade Development Facility and the Enhanced Integrated Framework. Before, post-harvest losses were high and farmers sold unwashed ginger at low prices. Most trade was informal, and there was no way to demonstrate the safety and quality of production.

Farmers and cooperatives worked with producer and traders' associations, and government to find ways to add value along the ginger value chain and increase returns on ginger exports. A new ginger washing facility is going to support 8,000 ginger-producing households. Over 2,000 farmers – most of them women, such as the Ginger Cooperative Female Group, Illam – have been trained at field schools on good agricultural practices. That has led to post-harvest losses being cut by 30%, higher profit margins and an increase in farmers' incomes by over 60%.

### Supporting women flower workers in Uganda to keep the supply chain safe<sup>10</sup>

*"The use of biological agents improves the health and safety of women who work in the greenhouse by reducing exposure to pesticides and its health risks. Of the 8,500 direct workers in the flower sector, 80% are women who have an income for their families."*

**Esther Nekambi**  
Programme officer, Uganda Flower Exporters Association

Flower producers in Uganda faced heavy losses with the growing interception of cut flower exports to the EU. Getting the right tools and knowledge on phytosanitary measures necessary to keep the flower supply chain safe was the solution.

A strong public-private partnership was created between the Department of Crop Protection and the Uganda Flower Exporters Association and hands-on practical training and study tours were rolled out between 2012 and 2015. Over 100 scouts across the flower sector and 10 inspectors were trained by the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence. There was a significant increase in awareness on phytosanitary issues in relation to export to the EU and improved compliance with international phytosanitary standards for the production and export of flowers for the European market. Numbers of interceptions due to plant pests fell from 34 in 2013 to 18 in 2014 and to less than 5 in 2015. The livelihoods of the majority women workers and their families dependent on the flower industry in Uganda stand to benefit as exports to the EU continue.

<sup>6</sup>The State of Food and Agriculture, FAO, 2015  
<sup>7</sup>Unlocking Markets for Women to Trade, ITC, 2015  
<sup>8</sup> www.standardsfacility.org/PG-326

<sup>9</sup> www.standardsfacility.org/PG-329  
<sup>10</sup> www.standardsfacility.org/PG-335

## The STDF vision

The STDF is working to advance the Sustainable Development Goals through its vision: Sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and environmental protection in developing countries



## The STDF approach

Across STDF's work, women and men are being supported to develop knowledge and skills that add value to food and agricultural products and open up access to domestic and export markets. Sustainable Development Goal 2 on agriculture and food security highlights the importance of women's equal access to knowledge, markets and opportunities for value addition. STDF's global partnership is working to build capacity on SPS issues with its knowledge hub and grassroots projects that reach women and men farmers, processors and traders across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Who's involved?

- 5 Founding partners: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), World Trade Organization (WTO)
- Donors: Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, United Kingdom and the United States
- Developing Country Experts
- Other organizations: CABI, IICA, ITC, OECD, OIRSA, UNCTAD, UNIDO among others
- Project partners: public and private sector, including developing country governments, regional and international organizations, NGOs and universities



## Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA)

STDF's P-IMA<sup>11</sup> framework supports better decision-making in developing countries on how to choose between competing investments to build SPS capacity and boost agri-food exports. Countries can use P-IMA to work with public and private sector stakeholders to discuss SPS investment needs, apply decision criteria to prioritize investments and support SPS planning and resource allocation.

### **Relevant decision criteria to prioritize options for SPS capacity building:**

*Impact on employment; poverty; vulnerable groups (for example, women); local food security*

By using social impact criteria focusing on vulnerable groups, in particular women, when looking at products and export markets, the tool helps to make sure that any impact on women is embedded in the discussion and decision-making process. Including evidence of the impact on women involved in agri-food products and exports can highlight the value of investing in SPS capacity building, improve SPS planning and decision-making and mobilize funds for SPS projects.

<sup>11</sup> User Guide on Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access (P-IMA), STDF, 2015