Piloting the use of vTPA Programmes to improve Food Safety outcomes in Central America

Competent authorities are increasingly considering and/or using voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programmes to better inform their risk profiling of food businesses, and more effectively target resources within their national food control systems. Using vTPA programmes can help competent authorities and food business operators to improve food safety outcomes, while allowing each to operate within their defined roles and responsibilities.

The Codex Committee on Food Import-Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) defines a vTPA programme as "a non-governmental or autonomous scheme compromising 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). CCFICS is developing principles and guidelines for the assessment and use of vTPA programmes.

The pilot project in Central America will focus on up to two value chains per country (to be confirmed during the inception phase). It 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. This will help to modernize national food control systems, move towards a risk-based regulatory framework, and make better use of scarce resources for food inspection.

This project is closely related to an STDF pilot project on the use of vTPA programmes in West Africa, benefitting Mali and Senegal [STDF/PG/665]. With a collaborative and innovative approach, both pilots will convene and connect diverse public/private stakeholders and generate experiences and learnings of relevance for national food control authorities elsewhere.

The STDF and UNIDO held a virtual discussion on accreditation and the role of vTPA programmes. The webinar took place on 9 June 2020, marking the World Accreditation Day. Click here to access the slides, and here to access e-news and video.

**STDF/PG/682**

**Status**
Awaiting

**Project Value (US$)**
$942,612

**STDF Contribution (US$)**
$619,916

**Beneficiaries**
Belize
Honduras

**Implementing Entities**
Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)