



STANDARDS *and* TRADE
DEVELOPMENT FACILITY

ENVIRONMENT MAINSTREAMING ACTION PLAN 2025-2030

February 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the STDF, environment mainstreaming means considering environmental needs, challenges and opportunities in STDF projects and workstreams. This is done only where relevant based on the STDF's programme goal of increased and sustained SPS capacity of public and private sector stakeholders in developing countries for safe trade facilitation.

This Action Plan will be implemented in a way that is cost-effective and aligned with the STDF's core focus on supporting developing countries to implement the international standards (Codex, IPPC, WOH) recognized in the WTO SPS Agreement in order to ensure health protection and facilitate trade.

WHY: Objectives of the action plan

- Enhance stakeholders' understanding of the interactions between SPS measures and the environment, including biodiversity and climate change.
- Consider relevant environmental needs, challenges and opportunities in SPS capacity-development programmes as appropriate and feasible, without diverting resources from STDF's core objective.

HOW: Pillars of the action plan

- Foster a culture of awareness and knowledge sharing on environment mainstreaming in the context of safe trade facilitation.
- Strengthen environmental mainstreaming practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of STDF-funded Projects and Project Preparation Grants (PPGs), where relevant.

WHO: Audience

- STDF Secretariat
- STDF Global Partnership
- STDF Project implementing organizations, partners and beneficiaries (including public and private sector stakeholders in developing countries)
- Other international, regional and national partners

From an External Learning Assessment on Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Change to an Action Plan

The STDF Strategy for 2025-2030 commits the STDF to develop and roll out an Action Plan to mainstream environment across the STDF's three workstreams, based on the findings and recommendations of an external assessment in 2024 of how environment, biodiversity and climate change have been addressed in STDF's work.¹ This Action Plan has been developed in this context. It reflects inputs and insights from online discussions with organizations implementing STDF projects, as well as comments received from STDF founding partners, donors, Developing Country Experts and other members of the STDF Working Group in 2025.

I. Context

Environmental issues and climate change have become major disruptors of global food systems, increasing and changing the nature, incidence and spread of food safety, animal and plant health risks, as well as transforming the way food is produced, processed, stored, distributed and traded.

For the STDF, environment mainstreaming means considering environmental needs, challenges and opportunities in STDF projects and workstreams. This is done only where relevant to the STDF's programme goal of increased and sustained SPS capacity of public and private sector stakeholders in developing countries for safe trade facilitation. This relates to the One Health approach promoted by STDF founding partners, which recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent.

SPS measures and the environment are deeply connected because SPS rules are fundamentally about protecting life and health from risks that arise in the natural world, involving plants, animals, ecosystems and food systems. SPS measures are designed to protect human, animal, and plant health, but may also intersect with environmental objectives such as biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. For example, improved monitoring, surveillance and diagnostics of plant pests and animal diseases help protect agricultural systems and natural environments from the introduction and spread of pests, diseases and invasive alien species (IAS) that may harm ecosystems. SPS regulations also support biosecurity by establishing quarantine protocols and monitoring systems that safeguard ecosystems.

Additionally, SPS measures reinforce sound agricultural and food safety practices, including the appropriate use of pesticides and effective management of plant and animal diseases. In some cases, SPS-related innovations to facilitate safe trade also achieve win-wins for the environment, including biodiversity and climate. For instance, use of biopesticides to address trade challenges linked to pesticide residues, or alternative treatments for wood packaging materials as substitutes for methyl bromide, have been shown to benefit production systems and the environment.

The "SPS Declaration: Responding to Modern SPS Challenges", adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in 2022, underlined that the SPS Agreement and its provisions are as relevant and applicable today as they were in 1995, and that they continue to safeguard the right for Members to take measures necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health. It also acknowledged that the global agricultural landscape has evolved since the adoption of the SPS Agreement in 1995, creating new opportunities and emerging challenges for the international trade in food, animals and plants.¹

Expanding international trade can accelerate the spread of pests and diseases into areas that have never faced them before, overwhelming national surveillance and response systems and leading to serious consequences, especially in developing and least developed countries (LDCs). For instance, plant pests alone destroy up to 40% of global crop production each year, with an estimated US\$220 billion in economic losses.² These losses directly threaten livelihoods, food security and the resilience of agricultural ecosystems in developing countries. As climate change amplifies pest and

¹ These include expanding global populations, as well as increased movement of agricultural products to address changing population structures and distributions, increased pace of innovation in tools and technologies; climate change and increasing environmental challenges and associated stresses on food production, and the growing importance of sustainable agricultural practices and production systems, including their contribution to addressing climate change and biodiversity conservation, shifting pressures due to the spread of pests, diseases, disease-carrying organisms, or disease-causing organisms, increasing threat of antimicrobial resistance for human and animal health, as well as emerging infectious diseases linked with the human-animal environment interface, especially zoonoses, and continued application of SPS measures that would constitute a disguised restriction on international trade.

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2021), *A Multi-Billion Dollar Opportunity - Repurposing Agricultural Support to Transform Food Systems*, Rome: FAO

disease pressures and heightens food safety risks, the need for effective, science-based SPS systems, based on international standards, becomes even more urgent.³

STDF's global partnership advances shared interests around safe trade facilitation and drives catalytic SPS improvements in developing countries that contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, food security and resilience to climate change in developing countries. In line with the STDF Strategy for 2025-2030, "Facilitating Safe Trade to Meet the Global Goals"⁴, the STDF supports increased and sustained SPS capacity of public and private sector stakeholders in developing countries. The Strategy recognizes that building strong SPS systems helps to protect the environment, preserve biodiversity and build resilience to climate change. It commits the STDF to develop and roll out an Action Plan to mainstream environment across its three workstreams, based on the findings and recommendations from the 2024 Environment Assessment.

This Action Plan provides simple and practical guidance on how to consider environmental needs, challenges and opportunities across STDF's three workstreams (the global platform, knowledge work and funding mechanism). It was developed in consultation with members of STDF's global partnership and project implementing organizations, considering the findings and recommendations of the 2024 Environment Assessment.⁵

II. Purpose of the Action Plan

This Action Plan aims is a simple and practical tool, designed to guide efforts on environment mainstreaming by the STDF Working Group, project implementing organization and the Secretariat.

The Action Plan is articulated around two pillars:

- Foster a culture of awareness and knowledge sharing on environment mainstreaming in the context of safe trade facilitation.
- Strengthen environmental mainstreaming practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of STDF-funded Projects (PGs) and Project Preparation Grants (PPGs), where relevant.

Pillar 1: Foster a culture of awareness and knowledge sharing on environment mainstreaming in the context of safe trade facilitation

The environment assessment found that the STDF global partnership is a trusted source of information with the ability to bring together diverse members working on SPS-related topics including environment. STDF's work on environment mainstreaming, focused around SPS issues and safe trade connections to the environment and climate change, has been considered pioneering.

In this context, the STDF's global partnership can continue to play an important role in building understanding and knowledge among members of the partnership, as well as public and private organizations in developing countries, on the linkages between SPS issues and the environment, climate change and biodiversity. It can also help project beneficiaries and stakeholders in developing countries to develop SPS capacity in ways that deliver environment co-benefits for greater impact and sustainability. Communication products highlighting the environment will do so within the context of STDF's programme goal and safe trade facilitation.

Expected outputs

- **Environmental considerations integrated as a cross-cutting issue** in STDF events and knowledge work.
- **New and updated stories/ communication materials** showcasing the results of STDF's work related to environment mainstreaming.

³ STDF Briefing Note, 2018, "Promoting safe trade, protecting the environment", https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Environment_Briefing_2018.pdf

⁴ https://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/STDF_strategy_2025-2030_Eng.pdf

⁵ https://standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/STDF_Environment_Assessment_Final.pdf

- **More STDF and joint events and knowledge products with partners** on environment, climate change and biodiversity for increased awareness of the link between these issues and SPS capacity development.

Actions

- **Promote dialogue and experience exchange** on safe trade facilitation and environment mainstreaming in collaboration with STDF's founding partners, other members of the partnership and environment-focused organizations (e.g. UNEP, CBD, GEF, or Biodiversity International). This includes leveraging the STDF Public-Private Partnership and the SPS Electronic Certification Advisory Committee (ECAC), STDF regional links and joint initiatives (e.g. knowledge products and events).
- **Include a dedicated agenda item on environment in Working Group meetings** to share updates on STDF's and partners' work regarding environment mainstreaming in SPS capacity development.
- **Enhance visibility** of STDF's work related to environment, climate change and biodiversity on the STDF website, STDF annual reports, social media and other channels, in the context of STDF's programme goal and based on the STDF Communication Plan.

Pillar 2: Strengthen environmental mainstreaming practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of STDF-funded projects and PPGs

The external assessment found that while the STDF Secretariat has efficiently utilized limited resources and staff in mainstreaming environment into project development and reporting, the tracking and reporting of environmental results of its projects could be improved. The assessment recommended enhancing the visibility of environmental aspects in STDF projects where applicable and relevant, through the identification of environment-targeted outputs and/or activities. This Action Plan takes a pragmatic approach to environment mainstreaming where relevant and applicable as part of STDF's programme goal. It sets out systematic approach to integrate environmental considerations throughout the lifecycle of STDF's safe trade facilitation projects and promote positive spillovers as relevant.

Expected outputs

- **Better integration of needs, opportunities and challenges** for environment mainstreaming in STDF-funded projects, where applicable and relevant.
- **Improved monitoring, reporting and promotion of learning** from project results related to the environment, climate change and biodiversity conservation.
- **Project applications forms and project review templates** facilitate environment mainstreaming.
- **Increased awareness, understanding and capacity of project implementers** to mainstream environment into STDF-funded projects.

Actions

- **Develop a checklist** with guiding questions to help project implementers better understand the needs, opportunities and challenges for environment mainstreaming across the project cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and learning), and to integrate these effectively into STDF-funded projects.
- **Conduct a preliminary screening** of potential environmental issues during the design and review of new project applications, using the STDF checklist for environment mainstreaming (see Annexe III).
- **Develop an "STDF environment marker"** to categorize STDF projects based on the extent to which they address environmental needs, challenges and opportunities in the proposed activities and outputs. For consistency with the approach used for gender mainstreaming, the STDF environment marker will consist of three scores.

- **Assign a score** based on the STDF environment marker to project proposals, and review these scores during project implementation, as appropriate.
- **Improve monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** of project results related to environment, climate change and biodiversity based on the STDF MEL Framework. This includes identifying relevant project and programme-level indicators, collecting data and other evidence (e.g. success stories) and considering environment-specific results and spillovers in STDF ex-post evaluations.

III. Timeline

This Action Plan accompanies the STDF Strategy 2025-2030, supported by the STDF MEL Framework and STDF Communication Plan. It will be reviewed and updated as relevant, based on the results achieved and the lessons learned, in collaboration with the STDF Working Group.

IV. Delivery

This Action Plan will be implemented in a way that is cost-effective and fully aligned with the STDF's focus on SPS capacity development and safe trade facilitation. Implementation of the activities above will be integrated into ongoing work, without diverting budget from STDF's workstreams. Any other resource needs will be considered by the STDF Working Group as part of the approval of annual work plans and/or project applications.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I- KEY PILLARS AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

PILLARS	EXPECTED OUTPUTS ⁶
Foster a culture of awareness on environment mainstreaming in the context of safe trade facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental considerations integrated as a cross-cutting issue in STDF events and knowledge work. • New and updated stories/ communication materials showcasing the results of STDF's work related to environment mainstreaming. • More STDF and joint events and knowledge products with partners on environment, climate change and biodiversity for increased awareness on the link between these issues and SPS capacity development.
Strengthen environmental mainstreaming practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of STDF-funded projects and PPGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better integration of needs, opportunities and challenges for environment mainstreaming in STDF-funded projects. • Improved monitoring, reporting, and promotion of learning from project results related to the environment, climate change, and biodiversity conservation. • Project applications forms, and project review templates reviewed to promote and facilitate environment mainstreaming. • Increased awareness, understanding and capacity of project implementers to mainstream environment into STDF-funded projects.

⁶ Progress on these outputs will be monitored and measured through the indicators in the STDF MEF Framework. The updated MEL Framework will soon be available on STDF's website.

ANNEX II - STDF ENVIRONMENT MARKER

Score	Description
LEVEL 1 – Projects with limited potential for environment mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects with limited scope for considering environment and biodiversity conservation and/or adaptation/mitigation to climate change in the proposed activities/outputs/outcomes (following the initial screening based on the STDF checklist). Projects with minimal risk of causing adverse environmental impacts.
LEVEL 2 – Projects with moderate environmental mainstreaming interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects with moderate scope for incorporating environmental and biodiversity conservation and/or adaptation/mitigation to climate change into the proposed activities, outputs, or outcomes (based on the initial screening in line with STDF checklist). At least one output specifically dedicated to environment, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and/or biodiversity conservation.
LEVEL 3 – Projects with major environmental mainstreaming interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects where environment and biodiversity conservation and/or adaptation/mitigation to climate change are of major importance with these issues addressed across the project, with more explicit environment results expected at the outcome level. Several targeted activities or outputs designed with clear objectives to advance environmental and biodiversity conservation and/or adaptation/mitigation to climate change, specifically within the framework of safe trade facilitation.

**ANNEX III - CHECKLIST FOR ENVIRONMENT MAINSTREAMING IN STDF-FUNDED PROJECTS
I- PROJECT DESIGN AND PLANNING PHASE**

Guiding questions
1. What are the potential environmental contributions of the proposed projects?
2. Are there any risks linked to environment (e.g. extreme weather events, soil degradation/erosion, limited rainfall, etc.) that may affect the delivery of project activities and expected results?
3. Are there any risks that the project could create possible negative impacts (e.g. agricultural residues, animal waste, greenhouse gas emissions, loss of biodiversity, etc.) – If yes, which adaptation/mitigation measures could be adopted?
4. Which groups might be affected by the project's environmental impacts, and what are their environmental needs, challenges and opportunities?
5. Are there national, regional policies or international regulations of key destination markets addressing environmental issues that are relevant to the proposed project?
6. Who are relevant stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of environment, Ministry of Blue Economy, local NGOs, research organizations, private sector entities, etc.) that play a role in mainstreaming environmental considerations in the project's sector or region? Have they been consulted during the project's formulation? Are there environmental permits required from local authorities? Are there partnership opportunities with these stakeholders to support environment mainstreaming in the project?
7. What existing or recent initiatives related to environmental mainstreaming have been undertaken in the project's country/region? What were their results, and are there any relevant lessons to apply to the proposed project?
8. Do project implementers and other stakeholders have expertise in environment mainstreaming? If not, are there opportunities to build such capacities within the project?
9. Is there any potential synergy between environment mainstreaming and other cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender) within the project?
10. Have any environmental assessments been conducted in the sector or value chain of interest for the project? If so, how can their findings inform the project proposal in terms of environmental risks and opportunities?
11. What are the possible entry points for integrating environmental considerations into the project activities? Have relevant indicators for tracking these outcomes been identified and included in the project logframe?

II- PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING PHASE

Guiding questions

12. How were environmental considerations integrated into the project during the relevant reporting period? Which project stakeholders were involved to ensure appropriate attention was given to environmental aspects, and how did their involvement occur (e.g., through consultations, participation in the project steering committee, or collaboration on specific activities, etc.)?

13. Do the progress reports submitted via LogAlto include substantive results related to environmental indicators and activities? Were case stories showcasing best practices collected and shared with the STDF and other relevant stakeholders?

14. Were any challenges encountered in integrating environmental considerations into project activities? If so, what were they, and how can similar challenges be avoided or addressed in the future?

III- EVALUATION AND LEARNING (DURING AND AFTER PROJECT COMPLETION PHASE)

Guiding questions

15. To what extent, and in what ways, did the project contribute (directly or indirectly) to environmental conservation, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and biodiversity preservation? Were these outcomes recorded in the project's final report and end-of-project assessment?

16. Have lessons learned and best practices related to environmental mainstreaming been analysed and documented? Are these results likely to be sustainable?

17. To what extent, and in what ways, did the project create (including inadvertently) adverse impacts on the environment, climate change, or biodiversity conservation? Have any lessons been identified for mitigating or avoiding such impacts in future interventions?