

SECTION 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In general, the evidence shows that the STDF and the STDF Secretariat have delivered outputs and results to a greater extent than expected given their budget and resources. There has also been steady evolution and improvement in the STDF's core operations, based on recommendations in previous evaluations, suggestions from within the WG and initiatives from the Secretariat itself, such as on M&E and communications.

4.1.1 Overall objectives

Is the STDF delivering and responding to the needs of the intended beneficiaries?

The STDF is responding to the capacity needs of developing countries in building SPS capacities to enable and unlock trade. SPS capacity and application of standards are a major market access constraint, as both private sector and governments in developing countries struggle to adopt and implement necessary control measures acceptable to their target markets. Moreover, SPS capacity-building is not mainstreamed by donors, and is often a subsidiary activity of a wider agricultural development programme.

4.1.2 STDF structure

Is the way the STDF is organised (i.e. its governance structure and structure of the secretariat), the best and most appropriate structure for delivering outcomes?

The STDF has a somewhat unique structure, with a global partnership of SPS standards-setting and capacity-building organisations, combined with donors and some private sector partners that produce high-quality content. It does, however, need to build on these partnerships in order to better deliver and disseminate its learning to a wider audience.

4.1.3 Deliverables

Do the activities and outputs match the objectives and intended outcomes?

STDF outputs across its deliverables (coordination, knowledge, needs assessment and capacity-building projects) match the overall needs and goals of the programme. However, these are too broad and therefore it should be more focused. Moreover, it needs to consolidate its learning and present strong positions and recommendations for how all its partners (SPS capacity-building organisations, donors and beneficiaries in developing countries) should build capacity and address the on-going and emerging challenges in SPS, to make it the "go to" reference point for the latest information and know-how.

4.2 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The STDF has a strong track record of support to building trade-enabling SPS capacity, but its global impact has been constrained, in part by its size. However, as its activities and achievements identified in this evaluation have shown, the STDF has the potential and opportunity to have a much greater impact as a global thought leader and innovator, if it can better harness and use its unique structure and position, and concentrate on its strengths and use its relationships to its full extent. This will require some active reorientation of the existing structures that guide the Secretariat's work, in order to position the STDF even more clearly as a leader in SPS capacity-building and trade development. In order to do this, the evaluators have provided a number of recommendations arising from the evaluation results, together with a menu of actions that could be undertaken (though not exclusively) to achieve each recommendation. These are summarised below, with further details provided in the following sub-sections. It is understood that not all recommendations would necessarily be adopted and for those that are, they could be gradually implemented over the short to medium-term. In deciding on the implementation, the STDF should prioritise the activities and be mindful that full impact of the changes may be affected by sequencing and for sure, a change management plan will need to be developed for implementing the recommendations.

Recommendation 1. Focus all deliverables on the same key issues.

Given its relatively small budget and its global leadership position in trade and SPS, all deliverables should be innovative, and not “routine” or able to be implemented by others. To achieve this, the following should be considered:

- (i) Thematic topics should be used as the over-riding guide for all STDF activities where the STDF selects thematic topics that are current, relevant and important SPS topics that are trade enablers;
- (ii) Calls for proposals for all PPGs and PGs should only be in the agreed thematic areas, and should contribute to learning around the topic, i.e. they should be innovative, testing theories and ideas so as to contribute to existing knowledge in trade-related SPS issues;
- (iii) In addition to calls for proposals, partners and the Secretariat should be able to develop PGs and PPGs as a test bed for innovative ideas (although as with implementation, those organisations proposing PPGs and PGs should not be included in the approval process);
- (iv) Since PGs and PPGs will be learning tools, the results and impact do not end when the project ends, and therefore the STDF should build in mechanisms for concrete monitoring and follow-up of PPGs and PGs, to examine long-term effects and sustainability;
- (v) Learning from all deliverables should be embedded into best practice and guidance for developing country beneficiaries and partners, including taking the global lead in thematic topics and actively promoting learning.

Recommendation 2. Re-engagement and commitment of real resources and inputs from founding partners.

The unique feature of the STDF is that its founding partners are the international SPS standards-setting bodies, international capacity-building institutions and a trade body. Therefore, the STDF needs to better use this to maximise the impact on innovation and global leadership. To achieve better engagement, the following should be considered:

- (i) Establish clarity of purpose of the STDF and the relationships and responsibilities of the different partners, so that each fully understands (and institutionally commits to) its role. (Consider using a memorandum of understanding approach which would raise awareness to highest institutional levels);
- (ii) Ensure that the future STDF strategy and work plans explicitly link to elements within founding partners’ own strategies and plans, so each founding partner (and its staff) can see the link to its own agenda and feed into institutional objectives and staff performance (ensuring better buy in and commitment);
- (iii) Establish a mechanism for the founding partners to guide the Secretariat in technical direction, approving the thematic topics and providing an SPS expert forum for discussion and exchanges on direction and scope of selected thematic topics;
- (iv) Assign Codex and IPPC as “founding members” in their own right, as these are required to be fully engaged and contribute important knowledge to STDF;
- (v) Provide secondment (funded by the STDF) to the STDF Secretariat from each of the founding partners to both engage better with headquarters and build technical capacity of the Secretariat. Secondees should be selected by the Secretariat through a competitive, open process in each organisation to ensure that high-performing staff is seconded to the STDF.

Recommendation 3. Further improve communications and monitoring & evaluation

Communicating lessons, results and impact should be core to the STDF - if the STDF is the innovator and global leader, lessons and best practice should be widely disseminated. While there have been significant improvements over recent years in terms of reporting by the STDF and communications to ultimate beneficiaries, many of the very important lessons are not yet reaching (or only inconsistently) the ultimate beneficiaries of knowledge in developing countries. To improve communications, the following should be considered:

- (i) More emphasis on measuring results and impacts (not just outputs) across all STDF activities should be made, especially when this is needed for learning. (Care should be taken not to simply target impact on e.g. the poor in the short-term, but the lesson learning that could benefit the poor longer-term);
- (ii) Explicitly define a theory of change and improved logical framework based on innovation and lesson learning for SPS issues in unlocking trade;
- (iii) Make better use of learning from all deliverables, including from PGs/PPGs, knowledge platform research and coordination efforts among partners; and make better use of existing research, especially from the founding partners, to enhance knowledge in selected thematic areas;
- (iv) Improve the provision of knowledge to ultimate beneficiaries (in developing countries) through promotion of learning to developing country governments, authorities and business organisations through, inter alia, communication multipliers (e.g. country offices of partners), interactive webinars, WG learning sessions, training courses, podcasts etc.
- (v) Make better use of lessons and best practice by partners (especially donors) in their SPS capacity-building work by strengthening interaction and promotion of STDF's work to trade and SPS capacity-building units within partners and their country and regional offices.

Recommendation 4. Build the STDF's required operational capacity.

In order that the STDF can deliver on more focused and ambitious activities (in terms of dissemination of learning), its capacities and resources need to reflect its increased workload. Without this, the STDF will not be able to deliver the desired results. To develop the functional and operational capacity of the STDF, the following should be considered:

- (i) Increase STDF Secretariat's resources, including increased staff and budgets associated with this capacity (not significant increases in PPG or PG budgets);
- (ii) Strengthen accessibility of knowledge platform so that all the good work and best practice is more easily searchable and available to beneficiaries. This will require redesigning this part of the STDF website, with clearer cross-referencing to external resources and project outcomes. It will, however, also require content that clearly guides users, possibly including online training and other media;
- (iii) Allocate staff and resources within partner organisations to work with the STDF and STDF activities to ensure that this is a core part of their jobs and not an add-on. (This also relates to the recommendation on identifying explicit links to founding partner agendas);
- (iv) Provide training and awareness for partners' staff on STDF structure and objectives and the roles of founding partners, so that engagement with their staff is more productive, efficient and fruitful, including contributions to coordination and communications activities, assessment of PGs and PPGs and contributions to knowledge platform development;
- (v) Increase participation by developing countries at Working Group level for better developing country context and potential for knowledge multipliers with RECs SPS Unit membership (resourced).

4.3 ELABORATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: FOCUS ALL DELIVERABLES ON KEY ISSUES

In order to lead thinking and innovation in SPS and control to unlock trade, the STDF should focus on new and innovative thematic issues which can be applied throughout developing countries. All its activities should focus on these few but pivotal issues, so that it can maximise learning and knowledge in these specific areas. The number of thematic issues should not be too many, given the limited resources, and should be very relevant to unlocking trade. It may be tempting to include a larger number of issues, but this would dilute its efforts. It is therefore suggested that a maximum of five thematic topics be identified, and work concentrated in those areas.

To achieve this, the STDF could consider the following:

(i) Thematic topics should be used as the over-riding guide for all STDF activities

The scope of thematic topics should be periodically reviewed and evaluated (for example on an annual basis), with some issues falling off the list when work is complete or no longer considered a priority or relevant, and new topics replacing them as they arise. The specific topics for the STDF to focus on should be decided through a clear mechanism of selection and approval, open to inputs and debate against set ambitions: that they address widespread issues and constraints in SPS in developing countries; that the issues are trade enablers; that the existing body of knowledge is lacking; and that there is potential for replicability (so learning can be applied to all or many developing countries).

To facilitate and maximise the use of expert knowledge within the Working Group, each thematic topic could be the focus of a thematic task force, comprising relevant individual experts from partner organisations (not focal points but experts in the thematic topic), donors (especially where they are national competent authorities) and beneficiaries (and outside organisations as appropriate), and driven by a member of the STDF Secretariat. This thematic task force would establish a work plan and members' research activity, and would contribute to the outputs, including briefing papers, recommendations for PGs/PPGs, manuals and guidelines for beneficiaries. There are examples where PGs are or have become thematic topics in the knowledge platform, e.g. the e-phyto project.

(ii) Calls for proposal for all PPGs and PGs should only be in the agreed thematic areas

While some activities in the past have been innovative, other activities (particularly PGs) have been more “traditional” in the sense that the method, procedure and results are well understood. For example, some activities have been aimed at immediate trade results, and could have been implemented by any donor (such as many of the value chain projects on the honey trade, which respond to increased EU demand for honey) rather than focused on fundamental issues. While these have had an impact at a project level, there is no “value addition” for the STDF to be engaged in such activities. By comparison, some project activities have been highly innovative, such as the development and implementation of the P-IMA tool (developed out of thematic work on economic analysis to inform SPS decision-making and piloted by COMESA, USDA and USAID) that provides a unique ability to prioritise SPS investments or the MRL data collection projects (STDF PGs 337, 359, 436) that enable countries and regions to participate actively in international SPS standards-setting, and really unlock trade by providing market access for minor crops.

Given the limited resources of the STDF, and the need to develop and add to learning around the thematic topics, all PGs should be restricted to areas concerning these topics. (In a situation where only five or six new projects are approved annually, under selected five thematic topics, the amount of new work on these subjects should not be diluted by other projects, even well-formulated ones). In the published calls for proposals for PGs, the thematic topics would be explicitly defined. Selection of projects would be based on innovation, contribution to learning, and the degree to which PGs test theories and ideas that can contribute to leading knowledge in trade-related SPS issues. This would require applicants to review and research the current tools and thinking to see how they can contribute, and this in itself could encourage knowledge-sharing. (During the country case study, several PG beneficiaries were unaware of manuals/tools available from the STDF that could support their own work). The ability to catalyse, clearly attribute and measure impact with smaller budgets has been demonstrated by the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF), in which “windows” are clearly communicated and are wholly thematic – often with a geographic sub-filter.²⁷

For PPGs, which have a broader function, consideration could be given to those in thematic areas (such as the case for the P-IMA tool applied in new situations), but also other factors such as leveraging funding, developing national plans for SPS, and other criteria.

(iii) STDF could be allowed to develop project concepts

In addition to issuing calls for proposals, partners and the Secretariat should themselves be able to develop projects and PPGs as a test bed for innovative ideas (although, as with implementation, those who are developing ideas should not be part of the approval process). These ideas would arise from the thematic task force, which could propose concepts and ideas to be developed by appropriate partners, as assigned by the task force itself. They could either come from the general project budget or be a discreet contracting process (e.g. to take lesson learning and

²⁷ <https://www.aecfafrica.org/index.php/portfolio/competitions>

develop a manual or training for beneficiaries). A similar approach is used by [Green Growth Knowledge Platform \(GGKP\)](#), for example. As part of the benchmarking research, it was seen that GGKP organises its research programme around expert working groups led by external experts and partner organisations. The working groups meet regularly, may pursue their own funding and are neutral knowledge spaces.

(iv) Effective Follow up for lesson learning

Since PGs and PPGs are learning tools, the results and impact do not end when the project ends, as often learning and impact occur a long time after project completion (especially trade impacts). This means that the STDF Secretariat and/or thematic task force will be required to actively follow up on all projects and provide low level mentoring to ensure sustainability, tracking implementation, impact and sustainability of results and outputs that can be used to inform and add knowledge to the thematic area. This should be in addition to the normal evaluation process.

(v) Embed learning from all deliverables

While the STDF has developed and used some of its learning and developed best practice and guidance (e.g. the STDF Results Booklet, published in 2018), there needs to be a more consistent approach to this. The thematic task forces should be cognisant of directing research and better understanding of a thematic topic, with the aim of providing widespread support for developing country beneficiaries and partners, to enable them to address these issues globally. Therefore, a “solution-oriented” approach should be taken. Even if the resulting actions are simply raising awareness or increasing understanding of the thematic topic itself, this may be sufficient to have a wider impact.

RECOMMENDATION 2: RE-ENGAGE AND SEEK COMMITMENT OF REAL RESOURCES AND INPUTS FROM FOUNDING PARTNERS

The unique feature of the STDF is that its founding partners are the international SPS standards-setting bodies, international capacity-building institutions and a trade body. However, during the evaluation (and the previous evaluation), it was apparent that there were varying levels of engagement among founding partners. In most cases, although there was good will to participate, the relevance of the STDF to the partners’ overall work was not well understood. Without any relevance, there is a general lack of institutional commitment beyond a wider political agenda, and therefore no real resources or inputs are available in a consistent way. To continue to capitalise on the strengths of its founding partners, the STDF needs to be clearer as to how it is mutually supportive of their agendas.

To achieve better engagement, the following should be considered:

(i) Establish clarity in STDF purpose, relationships and responsibilities of founding partners

The STDF has now been established for over 15 years, and has grown and evolved over that time. Therefore, the purpose and objectives of the facility need to be made more explicit, including synergies and overlap with founding partners, so that each is fully aware of the scope and direction of activities. (This may also clarify issues such as the relationship between national SPS infrastructure and trade orientation). Once the “visioning” has been completed, each founding partner’s commitment should be reaffirmed at its most senior level. To cement and formalise these crucial alliances, founding partners should be asked to negotiate and sign a memorandum of understanding which will provide explicit commitment and raise awareness at the highest levels of each institution and raise awareness among middle and lower management.²⁸ While it is desirable that the MOU should be a common document, it may be necessary to adapt and amend individual agreements to the requirements of each partner. (It is better to have limited scope, but full commitment).

(ii) Ensure STDF strategy and work plans explicitly link to founding partners own strategies

Many of the issues and the challenges set out above around limited inputs by founding partners to the STDF have been a result of founding partner staff not understanding how the STDF contributes to the institutions’ (or their own) work plans and strategies. This means that contributions to the STDF are largely seen as additional to the mainstream activities of the partner and its staff. This necessarily limits those inputs. To strengthen and enhance the founding partners’ inputs into the STDF, the STDF must contribute tangibly to their workstreams and objectives. Moreover, once these links have been made, each founding partner can assign individual staff members, and the STDF can become

²⁸ It is strongly recommended that these MOUs be restricted to founding partners, as they are integral to the STDF. While other partners and donors may come and go, the essence of the STDF is based around its founding partners.

part of their mainstream work. To do this, founding partners need to bring their own work plans, strategies and ideas for synergies and complementary activities to STDF strategic planning sessions. The STDF strategy and work plan should then explicitly detail and reference the link to the founding partner's own plans. This will institutionalise inputs from staff members and ensure better and more consistent buy-in, and, hopefully, increased inputs (especially on development of thematic understanding).

(iii) Establish a mechanism for the founding partners to guide the Secretariat in technical issues

The founding partners are technical experts in the SPS arena, and should be more involved in detailed technical issues outside the working group environment. This could be a light structure, but should carry some weight, so that the founding partners can, for example, be afforded the opportunity to debate and discuss technical issues over a period of time, to ensure that decisions are not taken in haste in the working group (or on the basis of who shouts loudest). This mechanism should, at a minimum, discuss the annual selection of thematic topics and perhaps also undertake a technical review and pre-approval of PGs/PPGs prior to working group meetings. The mechanism should meet more frequently than the working group (e.g. three times per year, in line with WTO SPS committee meetings), and in the form of an executive committee of founding partners to guide the Secretariat in technical direction. Alternatively, lessons from the Green Growth Knowledge Platform²⁹ could be replicated to establish a focal point group of technical coordinators from each partner organisation that would work on a regular basis with the STDF, advising on the technical direction and informing the STDF about new projects and priorities from each organisation.

The founding partners (including SPS standards-setting bodies) should drive the thematic and wider STDF agenda as the focus, the uniqueness and the original STDF mandate is based on their expertise. Whilst this risks some differences with some donors (who may have specific priorities), the STDF itself is now mature enough to set out its agenda clearly, with goals, targeted outcomes and impact across thematic interventions and accept some donors may choose not to fund this, whilst others will agree. So long as a more transparent approach is taken, the STDF is robust enough with a good reputation to enable it to sell its ideas.

(iv) Assign Codex and IPPC as “founding members”

The position of Codex and IPPC is unclear due, in part, to their “being housed” at FAO. However, these are separate entities (membership organisations) in their own right, with independent viewpoints. The three international standards bodies (the so-called three sisters) are the backbone of the STDF and therefore, it is a vital message to all these bodies that they are equal and contribute in their own right.

(v) Provide secondment (funded by the STDF) to the STDF Secretariat from each of the founding partners

To facilitate closer engagement between STDF and the headquarters of each founding partner, it is suggested that a reserved position or secondment to the STDF Secretariat from each founding partner is established, running for a fixed term. This would not only create technical linkages, but it would also enhance the capacity of the Secretariat itself and ameliorate the resourcing issues highlighted in this evaluation, which are the subject of Recommendation 4. To avoid this being an administrative burden to the respective partners, the STDF should fund these secondments under a contract with each partner (so staff would continue to be employed by their own organisation, and enjoy benefits of employment with it). These secondees would be “employed” within the STDF Secretariat and report directly to its Head. Secondees should be selected by the Secretariat through a competitive open process in each organisation to ensure that only high-performing staff is seconded to the STDF.

RECOMMENDATION 3: FURTHER IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS AND MONITORING & EVALUATION

These activities are intrinsically linked, as it is important that effective lesson learning and results are monitored and measured, and that these lessons and results are effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders. While there have been significant improvements over recent years in terms of reporting of activities and communications, much of the very important lessons coming out of STDF activities are not yet reaching (or only inconsistently) the ultimate beneficiaries.

To improve communications, the following should be considered:

²⁹ For further information, access: <http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org>

(i) More emphasis on measuring results and impacts (not just outputs) across all STDF activities

Measuring results and impact are not only vital for monitoring and evaluating the overall facility, but also for assessing the effectiveness of specific activities and lesson learning. Recent improvements in reporting against objectives have been widely praised among STDF partners, especially donors, but reporting is largely on activities rather than results or impact. This in part is due to the long-term nature of the objectives, so the only short-term indicators are outputs. However, if the STDF is to focus more on innovation and lesson learning, a more systematic and comprehensive assessment framework is needed that demonstrates success and equally highlights failures (which is important for lesson learning). Therefore, in defining the results, an overall theory of change targeting innovative approaches to unlocking trade in SPS infrastructure in developing countries is needed.

(ii) Explicitly define a theory of change and improved logical framework

In order to provide a clear results framework for innovation and lesson learning across all deliverables, a theory of change should be developed that clearly defines how the STDF will contribute to improving SPS issues in order to unlock trade and improve market access. Accompanying this, a logframe with clear results indicators should be created, based on this theory, to enable effective M&E of the facility. While it is important that the facility moves to a more results-management-based approach, care has to be taken in the selection of meaningful indicators. Trade indicators are notoriously difficult to assign in any meaningful way within the short or even medium-term, and are even more difficult to attribute given the wide range of other factors. This is especially the case when considering SPS frameworks. For example, without compliance a business cannot export, but simply by enabling an exporter to have access to compliance does not mean that the business will actually undertake the necessary control procedures to enable to it export. Moreover, this is only one part of export competitiveness that determines ultimate trade impact.³⁰ Therefore, the fact that SPS infrastructure issues are addressed effectively does not guarantee increases in trade, and vice versa. Time and effort are needed to determine proxy results and impact indicators that reflect the specific results desired, through innovative approaches to unlocking market access (market access being the impact, rather than assumed trade).

(iii) Better use of learning from all deliverables

There have been examples of really good learning from all deliverables in STDF, including from PGs/PPGs. However, the use of lesson learning has been inconsistent. The Zimbabwe PPG, which was not carried forward, is a case in point. The technical aspect of commodity-based trade (CBT) as a theory was proved to be possible, but the enablers around it, such as animal quality, an animal movement permit system and the administrative capacity required, were missing. The learning point was about sector-wide transformation, and this was lost from the PPG outcome.

Lessons need to be consistently extracted from deliverables and used in building knowledge. (To some extent, this currently only occurs on an ad-hoc basis, as PPGs/PGs do not align with all thematic topics). With a more strategic approach and focus, the STDF should “mine” lessons from all deliverables, particularly PGs and PPGs but also coordination and events, to feed back into the knowledge platform on selected thematic topics.

(iv) Improvement in the provision of knowledge to developing country beneficiaries

The ultimate beneficiaries of the STDF’s work should be developing countries. However, with the exception of PPGs and PGs, there is very little evidence that developing countries (companies, competent authorities or government policy-makers) either access or are able to access the wealth of information made available through the STDF. For example, during the country case study in Uganda, it emerged that existing PG beneficiaries were unaware of plant inspection manuals developed by the STDF with IPPC (STDF/PG/350). Not only were they interested in using these nationally, but they had also been involved in discussions at EAC to develop common plant protection guides. Despite this, no EAC governments had mentioned the available resource. This implies a need for improved promotion of learning to developing country governments, authorities and business organisations through, inter alia, communication multipliers (e.g. country offices of partners), interactive webinars, working group learning sessions, training courses and podcasts etc.

³⁰ Other competitiveness factors include material costs, internal costs control, product design, outbound logistics, export marketing (and luck) in order to export.

(v) Better use of lessons and best practise by partners (especially donors)

Developing country beneficiaries are not the only ones targeted. Development of SPS diagnostic tools, best practice and trends in emerging critical, trade-enabling issues, and STDF findings are of interest to other STDF partners, including founding partners and donors. Many donors fund value chain and SPS capacity programmes themselves, and it should be hoped that they would utilise tools, findings and best practice developed by the STDF. However, there is no evidence that they use the knowledge or the project preparations generated by the STDF. This is also true of founding partners. During the country case study mission in Uganda, neither founding partners, nor most donor partners, were aware of any of the current or previous STDF activities in that country. When the extent and areas of support were highlighted, several of them indicated that the activities were closely aligned with their objectives, and they would have been interested in tracking these products, analysing lesson learning and even following up on activities. The STDF needs to develop internal systems of communications that provide access to STDF knowledge and activities that may be relevant. However, this needs to be done in a consistent and meaningful way. Whether it can be undertaken directly through the STDF Secretariat or through founding partner focal points should be explored, to determine the most efficient method.

RECOMMENDATION 4: BUILDING THE REQUIRED OPERATIONAL CAPACITY OF STDF

The evaluation concluded that the STDF is delivering successfully, in large part due to the efficient and effective operations of its Secretariat. This recommendation is about enabling the STDF and the Secretariat to be more selective, coherent and consistent in its activities, focusing on a set of thematic areas. However, to deliver such innovative programmes with effective lesson learning, coordination, knowledge and adequate dissemination requires intensive resources. For the STDF to deliver more focused and ambitious objectives, its capacities and resources need to reflect the increased work load.

To develop the STDF's functional and operational capacity, the following is recommended:

(i) Increase STDF Secretariat resources

The STDF Secretariat is currently under-resourced for its current workload; continuing at this level is unsustainable. There is therefore an urgent need for it to be adequately resourced, including increasing staff numbers, increasing the level and seniority of staff to reflect its high-level tasks, and providing the associated budget. This does not imply significant increases in PPG or PG budgets. No more than a 50% increase in PPG/PG allocations would be sustainable, given the support in preparation and required follow-up. It is clear that an increase in staff is needed, including the recommended secondees from founding partners and at least one dedicated communications expert and one M&E expert as part of staff. This would represent expanding the Secretariat to 16 full time staff, comprising the six existing positions, seven secondees and three additional positions (M&E, learning and communications). It should be noted that expanding the remit of the STDF and its staffing would require more senior staff, especially at management level, as well as staff seniority and skills development. Moreover, if some or all of our recommendations are adopted, then the role and status of the STDF Secretariat would be elevated and therefore, there is a case for raising the grade levels of all existing staff, and especially those of the head and deputy head whose grades should not only match the responsibilities, but also be senior enough to enable coordination, discussion and liaison with STDF partners at an equally senior level.

In addition, funding for small consultancies and external advice would be needed for the Secretariat to access specific skills needed, e.g. in gathering or synthesising learning for thematic work, or developing new tools, guidelines or manuals.

(ii) Strengthen accessibility of knowledge platform

The STDF knowledge platform is a key resource and value of the STDF itself. However, it does not exist in any "branded" form, so that when discussing the platform with stakeholders, it was not well understood. Specific sections of the STDF website should therefore be called a knowledge platform, with a searchable function. This needs to be user-friendly so that beneficiaries can quickly access the know-how they want and need and best practice manuals, briefings, trainings and links to other sources on SPS topics can be easily retrieved. For example, the STDF project on Capacity-Building Tools for IPPC Standards (STDF/PG/350) produced seven manuals, but to access these, the beneficiary must first know about the project, then find the reference, and only then they can gain access to these documents. These manuals should be easier to access via the STDF knowledge platform, referenced by topic, not project. A user interface is required that allows the user to define the point of interest at the early entry point, rather

than try to second-guess a solution and search for that. For example, the ITC Standards map³¹ is a good example of a tool with a simple entry point interface that could be reviewed.

However, to do this requires resources to organise and promote this work, and as mentioned in staffing, a learning expert is required to consider how all information and know-how from STDF deliverables can be made more accessible and useable to ultimate beneficiaries. Note this should become easier to do if the STDF was focused on specific core thematic topics.

(iii) Allocation of staff and resources within partner organisations

The STDF is a partnership, so in addition to adequate resources being allocated within the STDF Secretariat, staff and resources need to be allocated within partners, in order to maximise the relationships and promote the STDF. A specific commitment is needed from all partners to allocate staff time linked to STDF work plan implementation. The STDF would no longer be just the STDF Secretariat staff, but also a wider network of partner staff, allowing it to draw on wider expertise and capacity as necessary (e.g. partner staff attending meetings/conferences/seminars on behalf of/representing the STDF, although in these circumstances, costs should be borne by the STDF). For clarity and easy access, a directory of STDF experts within partner organisations could be developed, giving STDF Secretariat direct access/contact to them (while always, of course, informing/copying in the focal points for the purpose of information and coordination).

(iv) Undertake training and awareness for partners' staff

Within the working of the STDF, the Secretariat relies on inputs from partners, particularly founding partners. With the adoption of the above recommendations, this would increase. However, in general founding partners' staff is often not aware of or engaged with the STDF, and are not fully aware of its objectives or the role of the activity they are being asked to comment on or provide inputs to (e.g. the validity of a PG or information for a thematic policy brief). To improve this engagement, core founding partner staff needs to be trained so their contributions are more productive, efficient and fruitful, including contributions to coordination and communications activities, assessment of PGs/PPGs and contributions to knowledge platform development. The STDF Secretariat should therefore plan (at least) annual workshops for founding partner staff, to raise awareness and clarify roles and intentions of the STDF workstreams.

(v) Increased participation of developing countries at the working group level

Currently, developing country interests and beneficiaries are represented at STDF working groups and other fora by "developing country experts" from each region. Selection of these experts is based on nominations from working group members, and although contributions from these experts have in many cases been valuable, there is a lack of effective representation and limited scope for multiplying knowledge or information. Therefore, it is suggested that these experts are either replaced or supplemented by SPS officials from regional organisations, with a mandate to develop members' SPS capacity and with direct links to beneficiaries in most developing countries. There is then the potential for contributions from these regional representatives to be based on inputs previously gathered from their constituents, and for a channel through which the STDF can reach out to ultimate beneficiaries to be established. This would require additional costs to finance the participation of 13 Regional Organisations (either an additional 13 members joining the working group if developing country experts are retained, or an additional seven if they are replaced). To make sure that Regional Organisation participation is effective (including preparations and post-workstream dissemination to member countries), Regional Organisation participants will need capacity-building and guidance (and perhaps mentoring), as well as some resources for regional activities. Given the resource limitations of the STDF Secretariat, training and capacity-building of these Regional Organisations should be contracted out, for example to CABI. To provide outreach resources for regional organisations, a contract could be drawn up between the STDF and each Regional Organisation, in the form of a kind of contribution agreement whereby staff time is provided by the organisation, and travel and regional outreach expenses provided by the STDF.

³¹ <http://www.standardsmap.org/identify>

Table 2. Regional Organisations

Africa	Americas	Asia Pacific
1. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) 2. Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) 3. East African Community (EAC) 4. Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) 5. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 6. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 7. Southern African Development Community (SADC)	8. MERCOSUR 9. Andean Community 10. CARICOM	11. ASEAN 12. SAARC 13. Pacific Island Forum

There have been discussions regarding the expansion of the STDF to including technical barriers to trade (TBT) or the establishment of a parallel organisation based on the STDF. Following the 8th Triennial review of the WTO TBT Agreement, it was recorded that *“WTO members agreed on almost thirty recommendations that will improve the way members deal with standards, regulations and trade in the TBT committee. The triennial review recommendations are contained in G/TBT/41 [...] Technical assistance: Members agreed to explore the feasibility of either expanding the present Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) to encompass measures covered by the TBT Agreement, or setting up a separate and dedicated TBT development facility.”*

Although there are many similarities and indeed overlap between SPS and TBT, there are also many significant differences. Moreover, the current challenges of the STDF and the scope of recommendations mean that the STDF is not the appropriate vehicle for TBT capacity-building activities targeting developing countries. However, any organisation developed to coordinate TBT capacity building would need to work closely with the STDF in those areas.