

STDF 354 PROJECT- NEWSLETTER

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Improving Safety and Quality of the Sri Lankan Fruits and Vegetables

The International Trade Centre (ITC), the Ceylon Chambers of Commerce (CCC), with the support of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are partnering with the Department of Agriculture (DOA), The Ministry of Health, The National Agribusiness Council (NAC) and the Sri Lanka Fruit and Vegetables Producers Processors and Exporters Association (LFVPPEA) and relevant private and public stakeholders in Sri Lanka to contribute to:

“Improve the safety and quality of the Sri Lankan Fruits and Vegetables” (STDF 354)

The project aims to 1) build and sustain the competence of public and private stakeholders to comply with quality and food safety international requirements, 2) improve the international, regional and national market opportunities of selected value chains of fruits and vegetables with the ultimate goal of income generation.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Trainings provided by a Plant Health Inspector

December 2015

Under the STDF 354 project, a few trainings by Mr. Sameer Bandali (UK-based Plant Health Inspector) were provided. The first training was held in January 2015, in relation to the FVO audit. The second training was in December 2015, where extension officers and research institutions staff learnt more about EU plant health import controls, inspections techniques, and methodology of sampling rates, use of good equipment, record keeping and dealing with rejection cases. These trainings aimed enhancing the skills and capacity of the government staff involved in these activities and ensures the safety of the products, both on the domestic market and international market. In addition, this will ensure the reduction of non-compliance cases of Sri Lankan fruits and vegetables and significantly reduce the number of rejections that is the major problem for the EU market.

May 2016

According to official information received from the European Commission, the Food and Veterinary Office will conduct an audit on Pesticides in Sri Lanka (September 2016). As this project is supporting the Fruits and Vegetables Sector, the project team has prepared an action plan providing support to the Registrar of Pesticides and the stakeholders under the focus, linked to the sector.

The assistance provided in overcoming this issue is in form of trainings and workshops on import controls, inspections techniques and methodology of sampling. The STDF project team has been closely following up with the Ministry of Agriculture on the rejections for the past few years and the causes, in order to minimize the latter.

As a result, the project management team decided to consult a plant health Inspector, who went to Sri Lanka to provide on-site assistance to the NPQS team. During the week-long visit, the team revised the methodology of sampling, visited pack houses and developed an action plan for corrective measures. During the visits, it was identified that the pack houses should have a better recording system in place for the incidents and corrective actions. This will also significantly improve the traceability system and assist the inspection process by the inspectors. Consequently, the mission undertaken by Mr. Bandali helped the NPQS department to both apply and improve on the above recommendations. Additionally, his advice was well received by the NPQS Department in setting up protocols for EU export pack houses to meet the requirements that will enable the department to successfully face the FVO audit.

Study tour to Thailand

Between 25 April and 3 May 2016, a study tour to Thailand was held for Sri Lankan farmers and extension officers. In total 14 best performing participants were selected and learnt about best agricultural practices applied in Thailand, especially on activities involving the improvement of safety and quality of fruits and vegetables.



The participants visited pertinent places and agencies related to the development and implementation of Good Agricultural Practices in Thailand for fruits and vegetables. They received extensive information from the Ministry of Agriculture on topics as: quality controls and GAP implementation, as well as food standard control for local and



internationally traded products. In addition to the visits to government premises, the beneficiaries had the chance to see various GAP-certified farms and HACCP-certified pack houses. Via these visits, they enhanced their knowledge on food safety and quality, best practices on production and postharvest techniques.



The last visit of the study tour was to the port in Laem Chabang, where the application of various inspection methods at the entry/exit points for importing/exporting fruits and vegetables was demonstrated.

The study tour was finalized with a wrap-up session, at the premises of the International Center for Development Communication of Kasetsart University that was partnering ITC in organizing this tour. At the end of it, participants gained valuable experience and knowledge on international food safety standards and identified trade opportunities. This information will be distributed via various information sharing channels back in the country and presentations that will be given by the participants to other applicants who could not join the tour.

Visit of Noberasco

In order to facilitate further business opportunities, ITC in collaboration with EDB¹

and CCC², under the 354 project on Improving quality and safety of fruits and vegetables from Sri Lanka, conducted a visit with an Italian dried fruits company-



Noberasco, in Sri Lanka. It took place between 15 and 18 May 2016, where a number of farms, collection centers and pack



houses were visited. This was followed by a roundtable meeting with farmers, exporters and government officials. During the roundtable meeting, Noberasco presented their company strategy, and the discussion focused on possible areas of collaboration to develop a long term project for the establishment of a sustainable value chain of dry fruits in Sri Lanka.

¹ EDB- Sri Lanka Export Development Board

² CCC- Sri Lanka Ceylon Chamber of Commerce

This was an excellent opportunity for Sri Lankan stakeholders to expand further export opportunities and better place themselves at the European market.



Two-day workshop

Right after the visit of Noberasco, ITC organized a two-day workshop for farmers, where presentations on market access and sustainability exchange was delivered. The first topic provided detailed information on market access requirements for international markets on fruits and vegetables, while the second topic is a new program developed by ITC.



During the sustainability exercise, the participants performed practical exercises on computer, among which creating a sustainability diagnostic profile of their



company or organization, using the self-assessment module of Standards Map³.

Participants were also invited to work together through concrete case studies and examples that illustrate the presenters' interventions and debates were organized in order to enable sharing of experiences and cross-learning.

NEXT KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Additional trainings for farmers**

Under the STDF 354 project, in total 20 farmers trainings were conducted in different regions on the crops with highest export potential identified by the project. The topics were on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Hygienic Practices (GHP), Harvesting methods, Post-harvest management, SPS Agreement and WTO's role on the international arena.

In addition to that, 4 more additional farmer trainings were planned. As of 1 June, 3 of the farmers' trainings have been already conducted with the assistance of leading exporters on the international food and safety requirements.

- **GAP training and certification package with DOA and SLSI**

In collaboration with the Sri Lanka Standards Institution and the DOA, simplified GAP

³ <http://www.standardstmap.org/>

certifications for farmers have been developed.

This has been done with the assistance of the FAO and will be followed up by various training with stakeholders including auditors on GAP auditing.

- **Training workshop for collectors on GAP and post-harvest practices and linkages between farmers and collectors**

In order to strengthen the capacity of farmers and collectors, additional trainings will be provided explaining the GAP and post-harvest practices.

- **Refreshment course and impact assessment of farmers**

Additional courses to train the farmers on latest updates of GAP and Pest controls will be organized.

- **Final STDF project workshop**

Between 28-29 June 2016, the final workshop of the STDF 354 project will be held. During the workshop a detailed presentation will be given on the achievements and activities held. Together with government representatives and the relevant stakeholders the next steps after concluding the project will be discussed.

In addition to that, training programmes developed by the project will be handed over the DoA, including all the training materials. The latter includes useful booklet on pesticide residues, brochures on food hazards, GAP, post-harvest practices and brochures on

phytosanitary regulations and plant quarantine, both in English and Sinhala.

OTHER ITC PROJECTS

The World Export Development Forum (WEDF), the flagship event of the International Trade Centre (ITC), will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 12-13 October 2016.



The announcement was made by Sri Lankan Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade Malik Samarawickrama, ITC Executive Director Arancha González and Indira Malwatte, Chairperson and Chief Executive of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB), during a press conference in Colombo on 5 May.

For more information on WEDF 2016, including the programme and registration, please visit <http://www.intracen.org/wedf> and <http://www.wedf.edb.gov.lk>

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Contact:

Ludovica Ghizzoni, Adviser, Export Quality Management
Email: Ghizzoni@intracen.org

Enterprise Competitiveness Section
International Trade Centre
Tel: +41 22 7300111; Fax: +41 22 7300576
Website: www.intracen.org



Lal de Silva, Adviser, National Project Manager,
Email: lal@chamber.lk

The Ceylon Chamber of Commerce
Tel: +94 11 5588800 Ext.311; Fax: +94 11 2449352
Website: www.spssrilanka.lk



