STDF PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Project Title	**Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programme in Central America (Belize and Honduras) to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade**
Objective	This pilot project seeks to drive up compliance with national food safety standards and regulations through better targeting of official resources to facilitate improved public health outcomes and trade opportunities. It will pilot, test, assess and learn how the voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) approach (set down in the draft Codex guidelines works in practice when implemented by government authorities in Belize and Honduras.
Budget requested from STDF	US$619,916
In-kind contribution	US$322,696
Total project budget	**US$942,612**
Full name and contact details of the requesting organization(s)	**For Belize:** Ministry of Agriculture - Belize Agricultural Health Authority Ms. Delilah Cabb Ayala Corner of Hummingbird Highway and Forest Drive City of Belmopan Cayo District Belize Tel: +501 824-4899 delilahcabb.ayala@baha.org.bz **For Honduras:** Secretaria de Agricultura y Ganadería– Servicio Nacional de Sanidad e Inocuidad Agroalimentaria Dra. Mirian Bueno Almendarez, Subdirectora General de Inocuidad Agroalimentaria Servicio Nacional de Sanidad e Inocuidad Agroalimentaria Avenida de la FAO, Boulevard Centroamérica, Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., Honduras Tel: +504 2232 623 mbueno@senasa.gob.hn
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I.   BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

1.   Relevance for the STDF

This pilot project – developed through an STDF/PPG/682 – is of relevance to the STDF for several reasons:

- This work is linked to ongoing work in the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) to develop Draft principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programmes.

- It focuses on testing, piloting and learning from the use of vTPA programmes to improve food safety outcomes in selected value chains in developing countries using the approach set down in the draft Codex guidelines (currently at Step 5). The vTPA approach aims to construct a modernized, risk-based regulatory system that is more agile and targeted, by integrating industry controls and data into regulatory plans in order to ensure the best use of available resources, and support improved outcomes. While some developed countries have moved in this direction and are making use of reliable data/information generated by vTPA programmes in different ways, this approach is not widely used in developing countries.

- It will generate practical experiences and learnings that can inform ongoing global discussions – with Codex, the SPS Committee and the GFSI-hosted Government to Government (G2G) and Government to Business (G2B) meetings – on a topic that has stimulated diverse (and differing) opinions, i.e. how in practice regulatory authorities in developing countries can cooperate with the private sector to improve food safety outcomes by leveraging vTPA programmes.

- It builds on previous work by the STDF (and STDF partners) on PPPs and is an excellent fit for STDF's role in piloting and learning from innovative, collaborative and regional projects involving diverse stakeholders.

Food business operators (FBOs) have the primary role and responsibility for managing the food safety of their products and for complying with regulatory requirements relating to those aspects of food under their control. Competent Authorities require FBOs to demonstrate that they have effective controls and procedures in place to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in food trade. As a result, many FBOs use quality assurance systems, including voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programmes, to reduce supply chain risks and confirm food safety outcomes.

Voluntary third-party assurance (vTPAs) programmes are formal, documented food safety systems to improve food safety outcomes. The Codex Committee on Food Import Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) defines a voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programme as a "non-governmental or autonomous scheme comprising of the ownership of a standard that utilises national/international requirements; a governance structure for certification and enforcement, and in which FBO participation is voluntary".[1] In most cases, the private sector develops and manages these programmes.

Over the last decade, some competent authorities are increasingly taking account of and/or using information and data generated by vTPA programmes to better inform their risk profiling of food businesses, inform the implementation of risk-based inspection and more effectively target resources within their national food control system. In 2012, an STDF/IDB publication[1] on public-private partnerships (PPPs) highlighted growing interest in public-private sector collaboration, as governments search for alternative and innovative solutions to improve compliance. Since then, the trend towards increased collaboration across regulatory authorities and the private sector has continued, particularly in developed countries. For instance, in the United States, the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)[2] highlights the increased focus on PPPs to ensure food safety. In 2017, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) issued a policy[3] enabling CFIA to use the results of private certification schemes to inform its risk-based inspection activities. Private certification was identified as one of several factors that CFIA will consider in its modernized approach to risk-based oversight. In Europe, a principle of the EU's Official Control Modernisation Programme is that all available sources of information (including data from private assurance programmes) should be taken into account by regulators. The UK, The Netherlands, Belgium and France have piloted or implemented approaches to recognize certain private assurance programmes and integrate the results of certification into their risk-based national food control systems. The UK, for example, has introduced a reduced inspection frequency (earned recognition) for compliant

members of approved assurance schemes in three areas: primary production (2006); dairy hygiene (2011) and animal feed (2014).

Some developing countries have also taken steps to pursue greater collaboration with the private sector, including increased reliance on private assurance schemes. In Latin America, for instance, in 2017 the Mexican government agency responsible for the safety of fresh and minimally-processed food products, the Mexican National Service of Health, Food Safety and Agro-Food Quality (SENASICA), announced a new public-private partnership with GFSI[4] to fulfil their common goal of providing continuous improvement in food safety management systems to ensure consumer confidence. This partnership focuses on two main aspects: (i) enabling vTPA programmes to act under Mexican regulation in addition to the Certification of the official scheme, which is expected to significantly increase the volume of officially certified products and subsequently ensure confidence in the delivery of safe food to consumers worldwide; and (ii) enhance the GFSI Global Markets Programme in Mexico. This project resulted in the publication of a voluntary Mexican standard, allowing further recognition of "GFSI" benchmarked standards.

Some stakeholders have pointed to the potential benefits (increased efficiencies, better targeting of resources for inspection, reduced inspections for better performing businesses, improved outcomes, etc.) of increased public-private collaboration including through reliance on vTPA programmes. Yet others have identified a number of important concerns (e.g. conflict of interest, free-rider problem, loss of transparency, unclear accountability). Concerns have been expressed in the SPS Committee that such schemes sometimes include standards that are more rigorous than international standards (Codex), which increases the cost of compliance and negatively affects the ability of developing countries to trade. Other concerns have been expressed about the risk of promoting dual food control systems in developing countries.

Development of Codex Guidance on vTPA programmes

In July 2017, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) decided to take forward new work to develop guidance on regulatory approaches to vTPA programmes in food safety and fair practices in the food trade. An Electronic Working Group (chaired by the UK, and co-chaired by Canada and Mexico) was established in 2018 to prepare draft guidelines for consideration by the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). The draft guidelines are currently at Step 7 of the Codex process and on track to be adopted at Step 8 in March 2021.

The draft Codex Guidelines on vTPA programmes aim to assist competent authorities in their consideration of vTPA programmes. They provide a framework and criteria for assessing the integrity of and credibility of the governance structures and the reliability of data/information generated by such programmes to support national food control system objectives. The Guidelines are based on the premise that reliable vTPA information/data may be used in general to better risk profile sectors and in some cases individual FBOs. This may lead to smarter data-driven prioritization of official resources, while FBOs participating in robust vTPA programmes may benefit through an appropriate risk-based reduction in the frequency / intensity of regulatory controls (e.g. inspection, sampling). Conversely, poorly performing FBOs, or sectors, may be subject to increased official regulatory controls based on trends identified through the information/data shared by the vTPA owner.

The draft Guidelines do not oblige competent authorities to use vTPA programmes outcomes, nor do they mandate the use of vTPA data/information from FBOs. The draft Guidelines made clear that vTPA programmes certifying to a regulatory standard are out of scope. That in part addresses fears that the role of the competent authority is being privatised (or compromised) because in such circumstances, the competent authority that has authorised the third party should already have access to the information/data generated by that programme as it is in effect part of the official control system.

STDF PPGs on vTPA programmes

It is in light of the above developments and at the request of some developing countries, that the STDF Working Group approved two project preparation grants (PPG) to develop regional projects to pilot the use of vTPAs in selected countries based on Codex principles and guidelines. This project proposal has been developed through the PPG for Central America (STDF/PPG/682), which was submitted by the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and the National Service for Plant, Animal Health and Agri-food (Servicio Nacional De Sanidad e Inocuidad Agroalimentaria SENASA) in Honduras.

As previously stated, this pilot project is closely linked to the Codex guidelines that are being adopted, i.e. the approach to be followed by the competent authorities to analyse the competence of vTPAs and thus the

reliability and possible usefulness of the information collected. The Codex guidelines remain relatively generic on how the relevant authorities can make of the data collected. During the development of this project application and across CCFICS discussions, many questions were raised on the capacity of developing countries to participate in a constructive dialogue concerning vTPAs. These questions included: i) effectiveness of accessing the information that would be of interest to developing countries (confidentiality conditions); ii) cost/benefit analysis of participating in these vTPAs for the private sector (small and medium-sized enterprises); and iii) the possible impact on the private sector through using a form of public recognition of vTPA competences. This project will help to discuss these issues and better understand the responses and options that exist for the competent authorities in Belize and Honduras. In addition to analysing these matters from the point of view of competent authorities, it will focus on current and real constraints for the private sector involved in the pilot projects and possibly identify the gaps that may potentially be addressed by the adoption of vTPAs.

A complementary PPG, submitted by the Directorate of Fisheries Resources in Uganda, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Infrastructure of Senegal, and the National Food Safety Agency of Mali, was approved at the same time (STDF/PPG/665). These two PPGs have been implemented in parallel, fostering dialogue and exchange across the key stakeholders involved in both regions, and with a large number of international and regional organizations, food safety regulators in other countries and private sector partners. This has included consultations and face-to-face meetings, including during the Government to Business (G2B) meeting in the margins of the GFSI Conference in Nice in 2019, and in the margins of Codex meetings, as well as Skype discussions.

These planned pilot projects could not be more timely given the aforementioned work in CCFICS, the current discussions between regulatory authorities and the private sector in the G2B meetings (including on data sharing and capacity building needs related to the use of vTPAs), and discussions in the SPS Committee. Given the move towards increased use of vTPA programmes in developed countries, the pilot project in Central America (and the one in West Africa) will help to test the relevance and feasibility of this approach for developing countries, where there is appetite to explore the potential to leverage vTPA programmes for the benefit of the national food control system (for instance to inform risk profiling of food businesses, improve risk-based inspection and more effectively target scarce resources), but quite limited practical experience to date. Specifically, this pilot project provides a means to test the Codex guidelines to show that the approach has broad applicability and also to gain a better understanding of the challenges in developing countries (e.g. capacity, competence and capability) that affect this approach. In addition, the pilot will help to identify where there are gaps (if any) in the existing capacity and infrastructure, and seek to find solutions to address them (if not through the project itself, then through other channels).

The results and experiences achieved through the pilots will generate learning that will have wider relevance for developing countries elsewhere, following the finalization and adoption (potentially in July 2020) of the Codex draft Principles and Guidelines. The cross-regional approach between the pilot projects in West Africa and Central America, and the engagement of diverse public and private sector stakeholders, will provide a platform, linked to the STDF's mandate, to pilot an alternative, innovative approach to improve food safety outcomes and facilitate safe trade based on public-private collaboration. By learning from the pilot project results and experiences, and disseminating them more widely, the pilot projects will also have value for food safety regulators elsewhere who may be considering the value of the vTPA approach to their national food control system (NFCS), thus creating a knowledge base and opportunities for wider impacts and scaling-up.

2.   SPS context and specific issue/problem to be addressed

Limited resources are a driver for regulatory modernization in many countries, and the vTPA approach proposed here helps to prioritize and better target that limited resource. In Belize and Honduras, the regulatory authorities responsible for food safety face a number of ever-increasing and critical challenges. The large number of small producers and FBOs needing regulatory oversight, and increasing demands and expectations regarding the safety, quality and reliability of food products on markets, many times exceed the capacities of the regulatory agencies. At the same time, the resources available to the public sector for food control are increasingly limited. As a result, inspection resources, for instance, tend to be targeted at exported products, with much less attention to companies producing for the local market, which are not inspected as regularly as they should be. With little official data available to food safety regulatory authorities, and no access to data generated by vTPA programmes, it is extremely difficult to profile food safety risks and businesses, and set inspection priorities

accordingly, especially for FBOs that serve the local market. This creates a two-tier system, which benefits consumers in export markets at the expense of food safety in the domestic population.

The competent authorities of the applicant countries wish to explore the opportunities arising from the use of vTPA programmes to improve (not to replace or diminish) the national food control system. The use of vTPA is seen as a potential opportunity to move towards a better (more agile and targeted), modernized approach that allows greater coverage of the whole food control system on a risk-based approach. The food safety regulatory authorities have questions about how to do this in practice, about the different options that exist, possible risks and challenges, requirements, etc. While the competent authorities in the applicant countries have some experience of public private partnerships (including in animal health programmes and plant health activities), there is limited understanding on how this partnership would work in the food control system.

Additional queries from the regulators include which mechanisms would need to be in place to take account of and/or use information and data from vTPA programmes to better inform their risk profiling of food businesses, inform the implementation of risk-based inspection and more effectively target resources within their national food control system. They would like to understand what this means in practice for their authority and the way it operates. This pilot project is seen as an opportunity to learn about the different models and options that exist, and to work with other food safety regulators to better understand how the CCFICS guidance can be relevant for – and applied in – their countries.

With increasing demand of supply chains becoming more global and vertically integrated and from the perspective of the firm, vTPA programmes and related certification schemes are becoming significant features of international food trade and marketing. Their use is becoming more common in efforts to provide the necessary assurance of food safety and quality in complex supply chains. Whilst voluntary, some FBOs choose certification to vTPA programmes for commercial reasons to help facilitate and grow trade with an increased number of buyers. Certification provides the "burden of proof" that products meet certain standards. However, where multiple certifications are required by different buyers, leading to multiple audits, FBOs – especially the smallest ones – face additional costs. The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) was created to help address this issue. GFSI's benchmarking system aims to foster harmonization and mutual acceptance of GFSI-recognized certification programmes across the industry, based on the principle of ("once certified, accepted everywhere").

Most large retailers and buyers require that their suppliers use vTPA programmes to improve traceability, standardization of products from a range of suppliers, and transparency of production processes. In cases where these retailers/buyers are present in developing countries, the parent company may be in a position to offer technical assistance to its subsidiaries, thereby enabling the smaller company to implement their standards as part of an internal process. In this case, the cost of compliance is not seen as a deterrent. However, in countries (like Belize and Honduras) where these large retailers/buyers do not have a physical presence in the country, smaller companies and suppliers bear the full burden of compliance, without any technical assistance or other support.

Selected value chains for the pilot project

The pilot project in Belize and Honduras will focus on a few selected sectors / value chains. These value chains – largely employing small and medium-sized producers in both countries – have their own challenges, including limited resources and capacity. This is representative of the food sector in developing countries, where SMEs constitute approximately 90% of FBOs. Strengthening the capacity of FBOs is therefore essential to ensure that food produced for human consumption is safe.

In Belize, the agriculture and food sector is an important pillar of Belize's economy, contributing to approximately US$264.7 million in 2018 to economic output. Agriculture generates 77% of total exports, with a direct contribution to the overall GDP of over 10%. Agriculture and related activities account for 16.6% of the total employment in 2018.

In the PPG work, Belize initially identified the grains, fruit and vegetable sector. However, after additional consultations at the national level, it was agreed that poultry, beans and coconut would be prioritized These sectors constitute significantly to Belize's overall GDP with crops contributing US$107.1 million (current prices,

2018) and livestock contributing US$47.5 million (current prices, 2018). These sectors are major income earners thereby contributing to poverty alleviation, employment, and rural development and by extension ensuring food and nutrition security for Belize.

In Honduras, the agriculture sector is the most important sector for the economy. Agriculture generates more than 72% of the total exports, with a direct contribution to the GDP of over 14%. Agriculture accounts for 36% of total employment. Honduras is the main producer of aquaculture shrimp in Central America. This sector alone has an important socio-economic impact with annual exports worth over US$250 million. It generates 35,000 direct jobs, 45% of which are held by women (many heads of households) who work in processing plants.

The production of fruits (i.e. melons and watermelons) and vegetables also make an important contribution to the economy. In 2019, the fruit and vegetable sector generated export revenues of over US$110 million, with vegetables exports worth over US$100 million. Small-scale and medium-sized producers are critical to the fruit and vegetable sector. For instance, in the production of okra alone, over 1,200 small and medium producers generate more than 5,000 direct jobs, with a significant participation of women.

Therefore, aquaculture shrimp and fresh produce would be the priorities for Honduras.

3.   Links with national/regional development plans, policies, strategies, etc.

The pilot project in Central America will contribute towards the goals and objectives that have been set in national developments plans in Belize and Honduras.

Belize

Several policies, national strategies and action plans are relevant for the work of this pilot project in Belize as outlined below. Although some of these policies are in draft (such as the National Quality Policy, the Food and Agriculture Policy and the National Food Safety Policy), the components demonstrate a strong convergence in both the public and private sector on the need to improve food safety, and have a vibrant quality infrastructure, with an emphasis on the importance of safe food for all.

The Belize Bureau of Standards is the lead agency for the national quality infrastructure (NQI) system for the improvement of goods, services and processes; ensuring industrial efficiency and innovation, promoting public and industrial welfare, health and safety for all Belizeans. In 2018, a draft National Quality Policy was developed through a Caribbean Development Bank project "Enhancing Belize's National quality Infrastructure". Recognizing the importance of the National Quality Policy, the Bureau intends to finalize the policy and initiate the implementation of accompanying strategy and national action plan during the fiscal year 2020-21 through a partnership with other agencies, departments and the private sector.

The current draft National Food Safety Policy highlighted that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) face challenges complying with the requirements of voluntary third-party standards to trade in food products. These standards add complexity to the administration of food safety at the national level, especially for developing countries. To take into account the current work in CCFICS on vTPA programmes, the draft National Food Safety Policy recognizes the Belize Bureau of Standards as the lead agency for standardization and with responsibility for Third Party Assurance Schemes.

Belize's Food and Agriculture Policy, developed under the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture, recognizes the importance of safe food for all consumers. It includes pillars focused on strengthening the food control system and the national quality infrastructure of the country. The policy also speaks to the importance of a strong partnership between the public and private sector to achieve improved food safety outcomes.

In late 2013, the Government of Belize endorsed the Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprise (MSME) Policy and Strategy, and in November 2015 the National Entrepreneurship Strategy was launched. The Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), through its Small Business Development Centre (SBDCBelize) is the coordinator of entrepreneurship and MSME development in Belize, with EXPORTBelize designed to assist MSMEs to build their export capacities. The MSME Policy highlights that efforts need to be coordinated with

respect to all agencies and sectors involved in creating the enabling environment to stimulate, support and sustain MSME productive activity.

Notably, MSMEs contributes positively to 70% of the private sector employment resulting in income growth and the reduction of poverty to sustain macroeconomic growth. The recognition of the contribution of MSMEs in Belize's development is also echoed in the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) and thus several initiatives have been outlined to support enterprise development. The GSDS speaks to the improvement of Belize's quality assurance infrastructure through adherence to standards and technical requirements. It specifically reference improving the capacity of relevant service providers to support enterprises in receiving certification to access export markets as well as improving the quality of goods on the domestic market. The productive sector of Belize remains resilient, this project will result in a private and public partnership.

This pilot project, linked to its focus on public private collaboration, a strengthened national food control system, and the role of improved food safety in boosting private sector development, trade and economic growth, is coherent to and aligned with many of the priorities and areas of focus identified in the aforementioned national policy and planning documents.

Honduras

This pilot is also aligned to national policies and plans for the food and agriculture sector in Honduras. In Honduras, a National Food Safety Policy is in place since 2014. This policy establishes the need to create a National Food Safety Control System with updated and harmonized food safety regulations, under a risk-based approach. It also identifies the need to actively involve the private sector and consumers as a top priority. In the last two years, there has been significant progress towards meeting this objective. The pilot project will benefit from these developments, and contribute to further reinforcing these objectives.

Recently, SENASA signed a formal agreement with the "Agencia de Regulación Sanitaria" (Agency for Sanitary Regulation, ARSA), the competent authority in charge of controlling the quality of foods and other components of the food chain (such as additives, labelling), as well as conducting on-the-market surveillance activities. This agreement establishes the commitment of both regulatory institutions to work in close collaboration as part of the National Food Control System, based on a risk-based approach.

Under this approach, authorities in Honduras have focused their efforts and resources towards modernizing their inspection and certification system. This has included investing funds in capacity building activities for both SENASA and ARSA personnel and building joint and/or complementary risk-based inspection, surveillance and communication models. These models are planned to be implemented in early 2020 and it is expected that they will benefit not only the exporting FBOs, but also SMEs that source local supermarkets and other food stores. The current tools being developed under this model are already considering vTPA programmes as risk factor for determining inspection frequencies. However, regulators also need to know the different forms of collaboration and methods for assessing and monitoring the performance of vTPAs, data sharing, etc.

The SENASA-ARSA agreement represents an important opportunity for strengthening the National Food Control System and closing the gap between the resources that the government uses to control the exporting segments and the domestic market.

It is also planned that authorities in Honduras will update national food safety regulations in the next 2-3 years. The timing of this pilot project presents an important opportunity to assess the relevance and options to consider inclusion of vTPA programmes in future policies and regulations as a means of further strengthening the national food control system.

This pilot project will contribute actively to facilitating the Honduran government´s initiatives and future programs to modernize the food inspection system and to optimize resources while focusing efforts in areas of higher risk along the food chain.

4.   Past, ongoing or planned programmes and projects

The pilot project in Central America is closely related to the proposed pilot project for West Africa (Mali and Senegal). The two regional pilots follow a broadly similar approach, and test and assess some common elements, so that the experiences and outcomes can also be compared across the two regions and different country contexts (i.e. through the use of common metrics). Concerted efforts were made during the project preparation phase to identify and encourage linkages and synergies across the two regions, as well as to identify and encourage South-South linkages and cooperation across the two resulting regional projects. There are also linkages to emerging work led by UNIDO in other regions – notably in the Middle East and North Africa – to support food safety regulatory authorities in some countries (Egypt and Tunisia, notably) to make use of vTPA programmes as part of ongoing efforts to implement a risk-based inspection approach and strengthen the national food control systems.

BELIZE Perspective

In Belize, the STDF pilot project is seen as complementary to a number of nationally-led projects and activities.

The Ministry of Tourism in Belize recently conducted a Consumption Pattern Survey. The aim of this study was to identify the main fruits and vegetables that are among the highest consumed at the national level (not only for citizens but also tourists visiting Belize). Interestingly, the results of the 2019 survey, identified some of the same vegetables coming from the sectors that this STDF Project will support. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture to build climate resiliency, in the agriculture sector, through the Resilient Rural Program (RRP) has actively engaged in designing and implementing Climate Resilient Value (CRV) chains and road infrastructure in selected productive communities. The RRP will fund a three- mile upgrade of Maskall road, a collection centre, equipment for value added and protective structures to increase productivity among small and medium producers. Additionally the program will conduct a series of training in these communities which include: Disaster Risk Management, Value Adding Product Development, Green House and Seedling Nursing Management and Integrated Crop Management with the goal to enhance climate resilient value chains and empower farmers to make informed decisions in their production system. This national project is seen as complimentary to the STDF pilot project.

BELTRAIDE, through SBDC Belize, has implemented two projects where seed capital was granted to over 60 entrepreneurs and start-ups. These interventions were sponsored by Central American Centre for the Promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (CENPROMYPE) and Chinese Taipei with the objective to strengthen the skills of the country and improve the facilitation of access to financial resources by emerging business in the MSME sector considering that access to finance continues to be a challenge for MSMEs and Entrepreneurs.

Considering the multiple challenges in acquiring financing as indicated in multiple policy documents, the establishment of a parallel business development and support Enterprise grant fund is considered crucial to facilitate enterprise and entrepreneurship development in Belize, in a consistent and sustainable manner. There is also a move to use a program approach to implement interventions for MSME clusters. Cooperation amongst firms is a necessary condition outlined in the GSDS and Compete Caribbean has issued several calls for cluster initiatives. The issue of standards and certification is also a key component in any enterprise development initiative as this is imperative for market access.

The Belize Bureau of Standards has approved a project for "Standards and Conformity Assessment Framework" for technical cooperation in collaboration with the Government of Mexico under the IX Technical and Scientific Cooperation Bilateral Program 2018-2020. The main goal of the project is for the development of an effective and dynamic implementation program for standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment (CA) in the agro-processing sector and related services specifically for honey, onion, potato, rice, and fresh whole milk. The project components include the assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of standards and conformity assessment systems for the identified sectors in Belize; assessment of relevant institutional capacities (national policies and legislative frameworks) related to these sectors and related services which must be supported by a CA framework; development of instruments to ensure the optimal use of standards and technical regulations; and assessment of strengths and weaknesses of these sectors and related services to determine GAPs in the

frame of recognized quality infrastructure (QI) services. To date, the Bureau has established formal contact with its Mexican counterpart, the Dirección General de Normas (DGN), and is in the process of creating the network with the relevant QI institutions to strengthen QI services across these sectors.

The Pesticides Control Board (PCB) launched In April 2019 the "Grow Safe, Belize" campaign for the promotion and adoption of best practices in pest and pesticide management. The objective of the campaign is to reduce reliance on the use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs); through collaboration; for the stimulation of a wider adoption of Integrated Pest Management techniques and responsible pesticide management practices, for the improvement of occupational and environmental health, and food safety outcomes. The PCB is making modest strides in the enhancement of its education and awareness-raising programmes, principally through the updating of training modules used in the institution's pesticide training and certification programme for farmers, and in the spearheading of its first Farmer Field School for pineapple farmers (in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and other partners). The PCB considers the need for farm-based investigation vital to the identification and adoption of viable alternatives to HHPs, and embraces opportunities for collaboration in bringing valuable technical assistance to the agro-productive sector.

Several elements of the aforementioned projects in Belize are linked to and coherent with the aims and scope of the proposed pilot project.

HONDURAS

In 2013 SENASA started a voluntary programme that recognizes FBOs that implement food safety assurance programmes (e.g. HACCP, GMPs, GAPs, etc.). The criteria for selecting FBOs for this programme is based on compliance with national legislation and/or international standards (i.e. Codex Alimentarius). By the end of December 2013, there were 140 FBOs included in the voluntary programme. As of December 2019, the number had increased to over 400 FBOs. These increasing numbers show the interest of the government and of the private sector in raising awareness on the importance of implementing food safety practices along the food chain. The programme, although not based on benchmarked schemes, is expected to serve as a good starting point to implement this pilot project on vTPA programmes in Honduras.

Currently, Honduras is implementing a project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food for Progress Program. This project aims at strengthening the national food control system to protect public health and to promote Honduran food products in international trade. Two of the project's components include developing technology (i.e. software) and also investing in laboratory equipment for improving SENASA's management capacities and decision-making processes, while applying a risk-based approach.

Honduras is also one of the countries included in the recently approved regional STDF PPG to develop a proposal for a food safety risk analysis capacity building programme in Latin America, based on South-South cooperation and an e-learning. This pilot project on vTPAs is likely to contribute to the risk management objectives of this future planned regional risk analysis project.

The capacity building work to be carried out under the STDF pilot project is complementary to and will further support a Codex Trust Fund (CTF 2) project to build food safety capacity in Honduras. The objective of this project is to help build strong national Codex structures to be able to fully participate in Codex deliberations and generate the data used in risk assessments to develop Codex standards, which are used as the foundations for food safety. The capacity building work to be carried out under the STDF pilot project is complementary to and will further support the ongoing Codex Trust Fund project, specifically the work and discussions that the national CCFICS subcommittee is currently leading on vTPA programmes.

At a regional level, IICA is implementing capacity building projects with the Central American Customs Union (CACU). While vTPA is not now a central focus of this work, these projects broadly seek to reduce barriers that impede trade while maintaining the health status of countries in Central America. Assuming this pilot project moves forward, IICA would work to raise and promote the topic of vTPA programmes in the larger CACU agenda.

5. Public-public or public-private cooperation

The pilot project in Central America will promote and strengthen public-public and public-private cooperation, at the national and regional level and across-regions. This would include:

- cooperation between government authorities responsible for food safety in Belize and Honduras, and private sector stakeholders (including cooperatives, FBOs, buyers, retailers, GFSI members, etc.) in the selected value chains.
- cooperation between the competent authorities responsible for food safety and other government authorities with a role in food safety in Belize and Honduras, and regulators in other developing countries in Latin America, as well as developed countries;
- cooperation between Belize and Honduras, and their (importing and exporting) trading partners on official standards, regulations, industry guidance documents;
- cooperation between international organizations (UNIDO, FAO, WBG/IFC, Codex, etc.), with regional organizations, and with other stakeholders (e.g. GFSI, COLEACP, Lloyds Register Foundation) with an interest in public-private collaboration to improve food safety outcomes.

At the global level the pilot projects in Central America (and West Africa) will engage the interested stakeholders to identify and profit from opportunities to leverage resources in support of the pilots, disseminate the results and experiences, and scale-up wherever relevant. This engagement and dialogue is expected to take place during an annual face-to-face meeting on the margins of the G2G and G2B meetings, or Codex meetings, to ensure a cost-effective approach, as well as during periodic electronic meetings.

Through this pilot project, Belize and Honduras will seek to engage proactively with food safety regulatory in the region (notably Argentina, Mexico and Chile), which have entered into partnerships with the GFSI. The Chilean Food Safety and Quality Agency (ACHIPA), the Argentinian Ministry of Agro-Industry and SENASICA in Mexico have all entered into partnerships with GFSI aimed at strengthening food safety capacity.

6. Ownership and stakeholder commitment

The pilot project was developed in close coordination with the applicant organizations in Belize and Honduras, and discussed with a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders in both countries, in order to ensure that it fits their local needs and is adapted to the local context. During the PPG missions, the following public and private sector stakeholders were consulted and expressed their commitment and support to the project.

Regulatory authorities in Belize and Honduras – the applicants – welcome this pilot project as a means to understand the different types of models of using vTPA programmes, analyse their relevance and feasibility to strengthen the national food control system and food safety outcomes, based on Codex guidance, as well as to understand how use of these vTPA programmes can support their mandates and results, for instance by improving risk-profiling of food businesses, facilitating an improved better prioritization of available resources for food inspection.

Government authorities in both countries have identified several linkages to other ongoing national-led programmes and initiatives, and believe this pilot will contribute to other development impacts in their countries, including private sector development and economic growth.

Private sector stakeholders involved in the agro-productive sectors in both countries believe this project will help to increase the competitiveness of their products in regional and international markets. They also see the potential of the project to help them achieve increased confidence in their levels of compliance with regulatory requirements, and to improve food safety outcomes at the industry / sector level.

In Belize, the following public institutions and agencies and private sector stakeholders support this project:

Public sector:

- Belize Agriculture Health Authority (BAHA)

- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Health
- Belize Bureau of Standards
- Pesticide Control Board

Private sector:

- Belize Agro-Productive Sector (BASGroup)

The BASGroup is an association of several farming groups and agro producers in Belize, established in 2000. Initially governed jointly by the Government and private sector, since 2005, the BASGroup has transitioned into a fully private-sector body and is a legally registered entity.

The BASGroup currently represents approximately 55% of the agro-productive sector in Belize. It is comprised of all the large-scale farming communities producing grains, beans, livestock, dairy and poultry, as well as approx. 40% of the citrus sector and other value-added / agro-processed crops (e.g. cacao). It includes seven large farming groups as members (i.e. Belize Citrus Mutual, Spanish Lookout Farming Community, Blue Creek Farming Community and the farming communities of Little Belize, Shipyard, Indian Creek and Neuland). Each of these members comprises dozens to hundreds of large, medium and small-scale agro-producers and agro processors, many of whom are organized into local cooperatives. The BASGroup is actively seeking to re-incorporate previous members including the sugar industry, shrimp growers, and other citrus and banana growers.

In Honduras, the following public institutions and private sector stakeholders support this project:

Public sector:

- National Service for Agricultural Health and Agri-Food Safety (SENASA)
- Ministry of Agriculture
- OHN (National Standardization Body of Honduras)
- SNC (Sistema Nacional de Calidad)
- Agencia de Regulación Sanitaria (ARSA)

Private sector:

- Federación de Agroexportadores de Honduras (FPX)
- Asociación Nacional de Acuicultores de Honduras (ANDAH)
- Fundación para el Desarrollo Rural (FUNDER)

During the development and implementation of the PPG, a number of other stakeholders have expressed interest in this pilot project, including during discussions on the margins of Codex meetings, and in the G2G and G2B meetings organized alongside the GFSI conference.

This pilot project application has been discussed with food safety regulatory officials from other countries, including Chile (Chair of CCLAC), the UK Food Standards Agency (Chair of the CCFICS Working Group that is developing Codex Guidance on vTPA programmes), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (Co-Chair of the CCFICS Working Group, and the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority to benefit from their experiences and guidance, and identify opportunities for their engagement. Ongoing dialogue with these regulatory authorities during the pilot project will provide valuable support to the regulatory authorities in Belize and Honduras, enabling them to learn from the approaches, experiences and lessons achieved elsewhere. It will also ensure alignment and coherence with the principles in the CCFICS guidelines on the use of vTPA programmes.

The UK FSA and CFIA have offered in-kind support in the form of technical expertise towards the pilot project. In addition, both the UK FSA and the VWA have agreed in principle to host a "learning visit" for food safety regulators from Belize and Honduras to enable them to observe and understand how vTPA programmes are used in practice in the Netherlands and the UK. Subject to further discussions, and based on the specific needs identified by Belize and Honduras, additional inputs my be requested from other food safety regulatory authorities, for instance:

- Support to create, develop and/or use sector-specific vTPA programmes for food safety and to integrate these vTPA programmes into food safety regulatory oversight mechanisms. For instance, the UK's Red Tractor programme[1] provides an interesting model to learn from and possibly (subject to further discussions and national buy-in) also adapt as part of the regulatory component of the pilot project (e.g. as a not-for profit organization that benefits from economies of scale to provide affordable premiums for smaller businesses)

- Expert advice, including guidance and training on implementation, maintenance and auditing of food safety practices in accordance with national and/or international/Codex standards.

II.   PROJECT GOAL, OBJECTIVE, OUTPUTS & ACTIVITIES (LOGICAL FRAMEWORK)

7.   Project Goal / Impact

The overall goal of the pilot project is to improve compliance with national food safety standards and regulations for public health and trade.

The project will contribute to this goal by enabling regulatory authorities responsible for food safety in the two countries to work with each other, and other relevant public and private sector stakeholders, to pilot an alternative approach, based on public-private collaboration, and proactively investigate and learn how vTPA programmes may be used in practice to improve food safety outcomes for protection of consumers and best practices in food trade. This will be achieved through activities under three main pillars:

1. **Regulatory component**: Activities under the pilot project will generate evidence to help the regulatory authorities in Belize and Honduras better understand the options (including challenges, risks, requirements, etc.) that exist for them to make use of appropriate vTPA programmes, linked to their particular national context, the emerging draft CCFICS guidance, and the experiences of other countries that have moved in this direction. For instance, it will enable them to analyse and understand which if any changes are needed (e.g. related to food safety policy frameworks, legislation, training for regulators/food inspectors, staffing and resource allocations, support on risk management, etc.) to take into account the use of vTPA programmes in their risk profiling of business operators so that they can focus their limited inspection resources on areas of higher risk. By including targeted dialogue and mentoring activities, the pilot project will enable regulatory authorities in Belize and Honduras to benefit from the knowledge and experiences of regulators in other countries (in the Latin American region, as well as in developed countries), which will also improve collaboration on food safety overall. This component will result in a conducive enabling regulatory environment for improved food safety outcomes, based on public-private partnerships as well as improved cooperation between the diverse national authorities responsible for food safety. In this way, the pilot will facilitate efforts to introduce strategic changes to the national food control management system, based on Codex principles and guidelines.

2. **FBO component**: In addition to engaging government authorities responsible for food safety, the pilot project will improve food safety compliance of participating FBOs in the selected value chains in each country, using a voluntary TPA programme. At the outset, the pilot will assess the robustness of existing vTPA infrastructure in the selected sectors to determine whether existing scheme(s) meet the relevant criteria in the draft Codex Guidelines. If the existing scheme(s) is found to not fulfil the CCFICS draft

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[1] Established in 2000, Red Tractor is now the UK's biggest farm and food standards scheme, covering all of animal welfare, food safety, traceability and environmental protection.

criteria, the pilot will help to move it towards the required standard. In a value chain where there is not a suitable scheme, it may be necessary to develop something new. The final decision should come from the pilot countries as owners and future implementers of these approaches, following further awareness raising on the potential benefits and requirements to be able to select any of these options. The implementing organization – in collaboration with other project partners – will provide the required guidance to enable the regulatory authorities in the beneficiary countries to make an informed choice. Where relevant, GFSI's Global Markets' Programme[2] (basic and intermediate levels – i.e. pre-certification) may provide a good fit for the needs of the FBOs targeted. An alternative voluntary food safety capacity building programme may also be considered, as appropriate.

This component is expected to create win-win opportunities to build food safety capacity to promote private sector growth, open up new business opportunities, and also benefit consumers. Dialogue and mentoring/coaching will be promoted between FBOs at different levels of development (linking smaller, less developed FBOs in the pilot country with larger, more established enterprises, high-value retail chains, restaurants, etc.). This will help smaller businesses to develop their food safety systems and also promote linkages with potential buyers.

Public sector stakeholders will be engaged in this component to encourage dialogue and trust with private sector. Involving regulators and inspectors will improve their knowledge about the scope, operation and implementation of vTPA programmes, including how they might be used to improve food safety outcomes and benefit the national food control system. This is expected to help identify opportunities for the future recognition and/or greater use of vTPA programmes, while analysing the challenges and risks that exist and how to address them.

3. **Dissemination and learning component**: Based on the results achieved under the pilot project, activities under the third component will document and disseminate the experiences, challenges and learnings so that all the knowledge that is generated can be of use and value to food safety regulators elsewhere, as well as other interested stakeholders. This knowledge and learning gained through the pilot is expected to be of significant interest regionally and globally, linked to ongoing and future discussions and work, including in CCFICS and Codex more broadly, as well as during the G2B and G2G meetings hosted by GFSI on the margins of the Global Food Safety Conference. In particular, it will respond to concrete and practical questions on how public-private partnership approaches, and in particular the use of vTPA programmes, can help to support improved food safety outcomes in developing countries in a way that does not diminish or threaten the role of the official government authorities responsible for the national food control system.

8.   Target Beneficiaries

In both countries, the beneficiaries of the proposed pilot project will include food safety regulators and competent authorities, as well as private sector stakeholders involved in the selected value chains. In addition, consumers in Belize, Honduras and beyond will benefit from access to food that is safe and of higher quality.

Through the pilot project, food safety regulatory and competent authorities will benefit from cooperation with the private sector to enhance trust, build understanding about their respective roles and responsibilities in food safety, and identify areas where they can work together to improve food safety outcomes. As described above, through the pilot project, the food safety regulators in Belize and Honduras will be better able to understand if and how they can make use of vTPA programmes to strengthen the outcomes achieved by the national food control system.

In Belize, government agencies that will participate and benefit directly from the pilot project will include: BAHA; BBS; the Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture; the Pesticides Control Board and the Public Health Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health. In Honduras, the main government institutions that will benefit from the

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[2] The Global Markets programme offers a tested competency-based approach for SMEs and small-scale FBOs to gradually build up their food safety management systems, working from the basic and intermediate level (i.e. pre-certification).

pilot project will be SENASA and ARSA. In both countries, the participating agencies will benefit from capacity building activities and technical assistance, including on risk profiling and management, to improve performance and support a more efficient use of national resources for food safety management, and strengthen the national food control system in general.

In both countries, the pilot project will benefit diverse private sector stakeholders involved in the selected value chains, with a particular focus on micro and small and medium-sized enterprises. Private sector stakeholders to benefit will include farmer organizations and cooperatives, FBOs working in the selected value chains. By participating in the pilot, they will develop new competencies and improve their food safety knowledge, skills and management systems, which will help them to increase their revenues, reduce waste, increase sales to higher-value domestic markets (retail, hotels, etc.), as well as exports markets in the region and beyond.

During the inception phase of the project, the private sector stakeholders to be involved, including small-scale FBOs, as well as larger companies/buyers/retailers, etc. that would be ready to mentor and work with the beneficiary FBOs, will be identified. At this stage, detailed selection criteria for the participating FBOs will be defined and agreed upon based on discussions between the government authorities, private sector and implementing organization. They may include the following (not exhaustive):

- Some existing minimum implementation of Good Agricultural Practices and/or Good Manufacturing Practices

- Nomination of one person to be responsible for food safety management for the FBO (or a group of FBOs or very small companies)

- Evidence of clear commitment to follow the capacity building programme and implement the needed improvements

- Yearly participation / registration fee (approx. US$300, to be confirmed at the project inception)

Training activities carried out under the pilot will have value for other actors in the selected value chain (e.g. auditors, assessment and certification bodies, distributors, retailers) who will also benefit from improved food safety knowledge and expertise in FBOs.

Importantly, consumers at the country level (and in export markets) will also benefit from safer food.

Finally, the experiences, results and lessons learnt from this pilot project will have value for other developing countries that face similar challenges and resource constraints to improve food safety outcomes. It will provide evidence, learnings and good practice recommendations that other countries can use to improve how they implement Codex standards, guidelines and recommendations. This will inform and add value to ongoing and future Codex work, including in CCFICS.

(a) Gender-related issues

The project will pay attention to gender-related aspects and what they mean for the various activities and outputs. In the broad context, men are generally owners of agriculture and aquaculture farms and food businesses operations, while women tend to be involved as labour workers on those farms, in pre and post-harvest activities and in food enterprises. In some instances, women are also involved in the collection, transportation and retail sale of products.

The project will pay attention to these different gender roles, while also seeking to provide opportunities for women working in the participating FBOs in the selected value chains to develop their food safety knowledge and skills in a way that enables them to grow, for instance into new positions in their enterprises, or for women-headed businesses to expand and grow their operations and generate increased revenues. Having the potential to unlock and expand markets, not only locally but also regionally and internationally, it is expected that women involved in the project will see their economic power significantly increased.

For instance, in Honduras, women represent 45% of the workers in processing plants for aquaculture shrimp, a sector that represents some 35,000 direct jobs. Similarly, women represent a significant share of workers involved in the production, harvesting and packaging of fruits and vegetables.

In Belize, 21.2% of the workforce in agriculture is comprised of women with the majority of them working in food and agriculture processing facilities, and others involved directly as farmers.

The pilot project will generate measurable data on the gender-related aspects of vTPA programmes to improve food safety capacity and support private sector development. The analysis of different vTPA approaches will pay attention to gender and analyse the gender-related aspects. For instance, do vTPA programmes have a positive benefit on women, including women producers, women-headed businesses, women employees in the food sector, etc.? Does the use of vTPA programmes have any unintended consequences for gender? Under what conditions, can women engage and/or benefit more from vTPA programmes? Monitoring and evaluation activities will aim to track gender dimensions, and to use gender-disaggregated data, wherever possible.

9.   **Project objective, outputs and activities (including logical framework and work plan)**

The logical framework sets out the theory of change for the pilot project, with details on the outcomes, outputs and activities, as well as the indicators, risks and assumptions.

Outcome 1 Regulatory Component: Increased awareness of regulatory authorities on how to assess and use data/information generated by vTPA programme in pilot countries s

Work carried out under this outcome will be anchored on the Draft Codex Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance (vTPA) Programmes, which are intended to assist competent authorities within their national boundaries in the effective assessment and transparent use of reliable information/data generated by vTPA programmes in support of their national food control system objectives. The vTPA approach is enabled through the Codex Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems (CAC GL 82-2013) which states that "where quality assurance systems are used by food business operators, the national food control system should take them into account where such systems relate to protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade" (para 54). Within this framework, the project will analyse the political, legal, technical and economic context as well as the current capacities and practices of competent authorities regarding risk profiling and inspection.

Output 1.1: National policy papers / strategies drafted in pilot countries on implementation options for the potential use of vTPA programmes as part of the national food control system.

The policy paper / strategy would be tailored to the specific in-country context. It would be developed by staff of the national regulatory authority, with technical guidance from external experts (including selected competent authorities elsewhere that have already moved in this direction). It would be based on the learning, analysis and evidence generated under the pilot project, as well as a series of public-private training workshops and consultations to increase understanding about options for the national food control system to make use of reliable data/information generated by appropriate vTPA programmes. The analysis to assess the integrity and credibility of vTPA programmes (where they exist) would be based on the draft CCFICS guidelines so that the regulatory authority would be able to gain confidence in vTPA programmes, subject to the findings. This analysis would provide a better understanding of the nature and quality of vTPA programmes operating in the chosen sectors, and would map any relevant industry standards against the existing regulatory requirements. It would assess the robustness of the existing vTPA infrastructure in both countries, including whether existing vTPA programmes fulfil the relevant criteria in the CCFICS Guidance document (currently at Step 5). It would also identify any important gaps or issues that might need to be considered as part of the work to be carried out under the pilot project.

The national policy paper / strategy would consider the required steps for the pilot countries to be able to follow the principles of the Codex guidelines, based on the gaps and needs identified during the environment scan. It would : i) analyse the potential risks associated with the use of vTPA programmes, and how to mitigate and manage them; ii) clarify the current structure of the food regulatory system, describing the capacities and practices of competent authorities related to the selected value chains; iii) explain the recognition process and

the related institutional and legal framework that should be in place for competent authorities to evaluate and recognize vTPA programmes; and iv) outline the type of M&E mechanism that competent authorities can use for ongoing monitoring of recognized vTPA programmes.

Activities:

- Conduct virtual meetings/webinars to enable officials from the pilot countries to learn and openly engage with food regulators from other relevant countries (e.g. Canada, Mexico, the Netherlands, UK) on how they have implemented vTPA programmes as part of their NFCS, including the challenges faced, experiences, results, etc. These virtual meetings (with interpretation) will be open to all relevant and interested officials from government agencies in the pilot countries, which will raise knowledge about the use of the vTPA approach and help to increase buy-in and commitment for the pilot project.

- **"Learning visit" of two government officials from each of the pilot countries, plus one person from the implementing organization (5 persons in total) to observe, discuss and understand how food safety regulators in other countries make use of reliable data and information from vTPA programmes as part of their national food control system**, based on Codex principles and guidance. Regulators in the UK and The Netherlands have agreed to host such a "learning tour" in principle subject to further discussions to agree on the specific programme, timing, etc.

- **Conduct environment scan / review on the national food safety system.** This scan / assessment will look at the existing institutional framework for food safety, roles and responsibilities, relevant legislation / regulations, inspection procedures and capacity, existing vTPA programmes being used in the selected value chains in the country (including GFSI benchmarked schemes, while recognizing that the CCFICS Guidelines do not promote any one scheme over another) , etc.. It will identify and compare any existing vTPA requirements (standards) in the selected value chains against the national/international requirements (as per Section G of the draft CCFICS guidelines).

- **National workshop for government officials in pilot countries to increase understanding and knowledge about different regulatory approaches and options to make use of data generated by vTPA programmes as part of their national food control systems.** The workshop would invite selected experts from selected developed (e.g. Belgium, Canada, France, Netherlands, UK, US) or developing countries (Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, etc.) to share their experiences on their approach to assess and use data/information generated by vTPA programmes as part of their national food control systems. This would help to increase understanding in the pilot countries about any capacity gaps or challenges (e.g. related to the institutional arrangements, legislative framework, staff competency) to be addressed or considered during the pilot project.

- **Develop a process / roadmap for competent authorities in pilot countries to evaluate and recognize vTPA programmes, to complement their national food control system:** The aim would be to identify needs and requirements (e.g. regulatory changes, new knowledge/skills/training, operating procedures, investment needs, potential partnerships, etc.) for the government authority to make use of vTPA programmes as part of the official food control system.

- **Mentoring/coaching** to enable officials from regulatory authority in pilot countries to engage in regular exchange (by Skype) with selected regulators in other countries making use of vTPA programmes.

Output 1.2: Risk-based inspection capabilities piloted for selected value chains

The pilot project will support the regulatory authority to develop and implement a risk-based inspection approach for the selected sectors/value chains. Use of a vTPA programme would be one of the factors considered during the risk profiling. The outcome may be to divert official resource away from some exporting FBOs if through the use of a vTPA programme(s) they are able to demonstrate good compliance rates (even if they would still need an official certificate if the exported products are of animal origin). In this case, the role of the regulator would shift slightly as resource is used to monitor the performance of the vTPA programme (where it overlaps with national food safety requirements) allowing the relevant government authority to reduce its

official inspection frequency and divert resource to higher risk sectors (whether FBOs serving the export or local market).

Activities:

- Assess and review existing government inspection procedures (frequency, risk profiling, etc.) in the selected value chain/sector

- Identify the needs and requirements in different areas (legislation, risk profiling, operating procedures, information and data exchange, technology/IT, human resources, etc.) to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a risk-based inspection approach in the selected value chain that takes into account (based on the country context) the particular vTPA approach/model selected by the government.

- The project will further analyse the effective capacity and conditions for competent authorities to access information relevant for risk profiling. Key issues to be addressed will consider i) what types of data could effectively be shared by VTPAs, ii) under what conditions, ii) analysis of confidentiality clauses, practical and/or legal limits to such sharing, iv) position of operators concerning such sharing, and v) capacity of competent authorities and operators to take charge of and make use of such information and data (including any technology / IT requirements, issues, etc.).Training for government inspectors on risk-based inspection practices. This may involve developing and setting a standard for government inspectors/auditors to build capacity in this area (for instance, if relevant and applicable, the Government might, for example, look to set a standard that aligns with the standards used by vTPA auditors).

- Training for government inspectors and auditors on vTPA programmes, with the inclusion of a session on accompanied audits

- Workshops on data sharing between vTPA owners and authorities , including sharing of experiences of regulators from other countries on how to integrate such data / information into risk profiling models.

Outcome 2: Improved food safety compliance of FBOs in selected value chains based on the use of a voluntary food safety capacity building programme

Public and private sector stakeholders in the pilot countries will be engaged on the development and/or deployment of a customized (voluntary) food safety capacity building scheme for the selected value chains. Existing vTPA programmes (even if not yet fully functional or completely fulfilling the criteria in the draft CCFICS Guideline document) that are already being used in the selected sector / value chains will be used as a starting point (rather than seeking to build new vTPA programmes from scratch). Depending on the country context and needs, the voluntary programme that is used in the pilot project may differ. The GFSI's Global Markets' Programme (competency-based, step-wise, aimed at supporting small-scale FBOs to improve their food safety management systems at the basic and intermediate levels) is likely to be a good fit for many of the small-scale FBOs covered in the pilot project, particularly those selling to domestic or regional markets that usually do not require certification. As appropriate, an alternative voluntary food safety capacity building programme may also be considered by the regulatory authority. The pilot project will focus on what is needed to move these vTPA programmes in the selected sectors towards the standards set out in the Codex Guidelines.

Regulators will be involved as observers to ensure their understanding about the scope, operation and implementation of the selected vTPA programme. This will help to promote dialogue and trust between the public and private sector on food safety compliance. It may also encourage and/or identify opportunities for the government to recognize and/or adopt this voluntary scheme at a national level to support food safety capacity building. In addition to public-private dialogue and cooperation, this component of the pilot project will promote dialogue and mentoring/coaching between FBOs and enterprises at different levels of development (i.e. linking smaller, less developed companies in the pilot country with larger, more established companies, high-value retail chains, restaurants, etc.) to help smaller businesses develop their food safety systems and also promote linkages with potential buyers.

Output 2.1: Voluntary food safety capacity building programme developed and piloted among food business operators from selected value chains

The voluntary food safety capacity building programme may focus on primary production and/or manufacturing, as relevant to the selected value chain in the pilot countries. It will be developed/adapted based on existing experiences and lessons in the development and rolling out of similar voluntary food safety capacity building programmes targeted at FBOs. Building on existing materials, additional modules will be developed as required for localization and to meet the needs of buyers, based on the specific context in Belize and Honduras (including existing agri-food production and sales to high-value local/regional markets, as well as exports). Available training resources and tools (including UNIDO training materials on GMPs, IFC's Global Markets Toolkit, etc.) will be used and customized as necessary. The localisation of the scheme in the pilot country will be achieved through a PPP engaging the food safety regulators, industry / private sector association, vTPA programme owners and members, and all other relevant parties involved.

During the project inception phase, the applicants and implementing organization will further reflect and decide on the key sectors to be targeted, in consultation with relevant private sector stakeholders. This decision should consider the market demand (high value retail / domestic or export) for FBOs in the different sectors considered to make use of different vTPA programmes. It should also ensure that the FBOs consulted have the necessary information to make a conscious and informed choice on food safety capacity building options / programmes that will be genuinely beneficial to them.

The pilot project may help some of the more advanced FBOs to reach certification (i.e. beyond the pre-certification basic or intermediate level within the Global Markets programme), if the conditions are right and the resources are available. However, in keeping with the voluntary nature of the TPA programmes, FBOs involved in the pilot will not be required to obtain certification, and certification of FBOs is not a specific objective.

As part of this output, national financial institutions in both countries will be made aware of the pilot project so that they may also be able to consider participation in the pilot project as part of their assessment of eligibility for financing – for instance by considering more favourably funding requests from participating FBOs (based on their ability to meet the selection criteria for participation in the project). In Belize, discussions are underway with the World Bank on micro-financing for farmers, through national financial institutions, and opportunities will be explored to harness these options to help participating FBOs get the financing they need to upgrade their food safety management systems/infrastructure, etc. in parallel to capacity development and training on skills, competencies, etc. In Honduras, national financial institutions (e.g. The Honduran Bank for Production and Housing - BANPROVI[3]) will be approached and considered as a potential financing option for FBOs.

From the start of the pilot project, particularly under Outcome 2, outreach and communications will be important for visibility purposes in order to encourage farmers to commit to the process and also sensitize consumers to the production practices utilized to produce safe food. Efforts will also be made to align small-scale producers and FBOs with local supermarkets and tourist destinations within the pilot countries, creating new market opportunities with higher prices for better products that can demonstrate food safety and quality.

Activities:

- During the inception phase, the project will develop selection criteria for FBOs to participate in the pilot training and mentoring. Linkages between less developed companies and larger, more established FBOs, high-value retail chains, restaurants, etc. will help smaller businesses develop their food safety systems and create linkages with potential buyers who will be encouraged to purchase from FBOs that are using vTPA programmes to improve their food safety management systems in order to be compliant with national regulations.

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[3] http://banhprovi.gob.hn/BANHPROVI/produccionS.html

- Conduct targeted value chain mapping in the pilot countries focusing on compliance issues along the value chain to get a better understanding on the different food safety schemes (regulatory and private) that are currently applied and used in the value chains.

- Localize / Adapt the voluntary food safety capacity building scheme for the pilot countries based on existing international best practices (e.g. GFSI Global Markets programme, basic and intermediate levels). The adapted vTPA programme will be localized to the country context and may, as relevant, integrate additional components (not included in the GFSI GMP) required by the local market. The localisation will include also all needed guides for assessment and auditing taking into consideration the role of the regulatory bodies.

- Conduct joint training-of-trainers (ToT) programmes for food safety practitioners from the public and private sector on vTPA programmes. ToT programmes will target auditors from certification bodies, as well as inspectors from local agencies and local food safety experts and professionals. This may include specialized training for local auditors to raise their competencies and capacity.

- Deliver training to selected food business operators and establish linkages between FBOs and buyers (including high-value retail and hotels/tourism in the country, as well as multinational companies and other buyers in export markets).

Outcome 3: Increased awareness of food safety regulators on the application of vTPA approaches in other countries

Output 3.1: Regional and global events on vTPA programmes organized with the participation of pilot countries Activities:

- Regulators from Belize and Honduras will be invited to participate in an annual pilot project meeting (with the implementing partners, other relevant public/private stakeholders, STDF Secretariat, etc.). This meeting will be organized on the margins of another planned meeting, for instance, the annual G2G and G2B meeting prior to the GFSI Global Food safety Conference or a Codex meeting. This will facilitate regular dialogue and exchange on the implementation of the pilots, encourage the development of a network of practitioners from developing countries on the topic of vTPAs, identify opportunities for linkages and synergies with other relevant future programmes, activities, etc. It will also enable the regulators involved in the pilot countries to engage with and receive additional guidance and inputs from food safety regulators elsewhere.

- Organize a regional workshop on the use of vTPA programmes linked to CCFICS guidance, under the concept of South-South cooperation. This workshop, organized at the end of the pilot project, will gather public and private sector representatives from Belize, Honduras and other Latin American countries to take stock of, share and disseminate results, experiences, learnings and good practices. It would be planned on the margins of an existing regional meeting (such as CCLAC) to reduce costs.

- Develop knowledge and communication products to disseminate experiences, results, lessons and good practices that emerge from the regional pilot project (e.g. case studies, short film, other materials) to use in the dissemination process.

- Support food safety regulators from Belize and Honduras to share their experiences and lessons on vTPA programmes, data-sharing, etc. more widely with other regulators and stakeholders at the regional and global level. For instance, information sessions and side-events may be organized on the margins of CAC meetings, CCFICS meetings, SPS Committee meetings, etc.

Attached:

(i)   **A logical framework** summarizing what the project intends to do and how, what the key risks and assumptions are, and how outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated (Appendix 1).

(ii)   **A detailed work plan** indicating the start and completion date of the project, as well as sequence in which activities would be carried out (Appendix 2).

(iii)   **Terms of Reference** (TORs) for key national/international experts to be involved in implementation of activities included in the work plan.

10.   Environmental-related issues

For primary production related component of the proposed project such as the horticulture sector, a better control and usage of pesticides will have an impact not only for consumers from the public health perspective, but also on the reduction of occupational hazards for the operators and finally also have a positive impact on the environment.

For FBOs engaged in food processing, improved control of products used in the cleaning and maintenance of building and equipment is also expected to have a positive impact on the environment.

Climate change is an increasing concern in Belize and Honduras. Linked to changing climate, due to drought in 2019, the agriculture sector in Belize lost about 50% of its production. Likewise, in Honduras, over 60% of grains (i.e. corn) and pulses (i.e. red beans) were lost to drought in 2019 and the shrimp production was reduced by 3.5% due to low rains in the first semester of 2019. In this context, the Ministry of Agriculture in Belize suggested that a critical criterion for selecting farmers to be covered under this project should be the identification of climate change resilient strategies in their production system.

11.   Risks

A risk matrix is presented below. Continuity of involvement of the public and private sector will be important to contribute to the success of the project.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation strategy
Lack of political commitment and high-level support for food safety improvements in the pilot countries	Low	High	Ongoing efforts to advocate and increase awareness among political and other high-level decision-makers about the importance of the necessary support to improve food safety capacity in both the public and private sector, linked to national and regional objectives, trade, job creation and economic growth, etc. This will help to build awareness and commitment for any food safety regulatory adjustment required at the national level to strengthen implementation of a risk-based approach, including for any changes that might be required to legislation, food safety inspection, etc.
Lack of understanding among staff of the food safety regulatory body and other relevant government authorities about vTPA programmes, and/ or a tendency to perceive these programmes as threatening	Low/medium	High	The PPG work in the pilot countries created some understanding about the role of vTPA programmes, and how they might potentially be used to support evidence-based decision-making at competent authority level. During the pilot project, ongoing dialogue and communications on the potential benefits (and possible risks), and sharing of experiences from other countries, would help to increase awareness about vTPA programmes and how they might be used (in a non-threatening way) to leverage value for the national food control system. This will create a situation that facilitates the use and/or recognition of vTPA programmes by the governments in the pilot countries, should the government decide to move in this direction
Commitment and capacity of FBOs to make and sustain the necessary investments (resources, time, staffing) to improve their food safety management systems	Low/Medium	Medium	FBOs to benefit from the pilot project will be selected using pre-identified criteria. Cost-sharing will help to select FBOs that are truly committed, and that understand and are more likely to be able to manage the ongoing costs to improve food safety. Improving record-keeping of participating FBOs will help to monitor and track the benefits of investments in improved food safety capacity (e.g. reduced rejections, less waste, increased revenues, increased sales to higher-value customers), which show the value and financial return of making the investment in food safety, and why this positively impacts revenues and profits. At the inception phase, options will be explored for the participating FBOs to access complementary finance/grants, etc. from other sources (e.g. local financial institutions banks,

			other projects/NGOs, national government agencies, etc.).
Lack of food safety services, particularly certification bodies, at a local level	Medium	Medium	In case there is a very limited number, or no certification bodies operating at local level, competent authorities might face the issue of no data being available for better risk-profiling of sectors
Market demand for high-quality and safe food	Low	Medium	Outreach and advocacy to buyers, large companies active in the country (local supermarkets/retail, hotels, etc.) will increase awareness about the efforts of the participating FBOs help to improve food safety management systems. This will create opportunities for the participating FBOs to sell more to these higher-value customers, etc.
Climate change induced weather events (floods and drought) or other natural disaster, negatively affects food and agricultural production in the pilot countries	Medium	Medium	The pilot countries will incorporate criteria related to climate and the environment (e.g. use of climate resilient production practices to mitigate against floods and drought) as part of the overall criteria to be used to select farmers / producers to benefit from the project. Food safety regulatory authorities will engage / dialogue with other government authorities leading on climate change adaptation, resilience and mitigation to benefit from their knowledge, expertise and ongoing work.
Continuation of the Covid-19 Pandemic	High	High	The implementation approach and workplan will be reviewed and adapted in the inception phase given the ongoing risks related to COVID-19. Concerning the different studies planned to be implemented during the start-up phase, the project will facilitate remote collaboration between local and international experts given the current travel restrictions. COVID-19 has pushed the status quo into a new reality where the number of remote/online meetings is starting to increase, creating opportunities for more sustainable exchanges between the different actors. Covid-19 has created an increased awareness of hygiene measures, which may contribute to increased interest in food safety. The project will seek to use and develop these trends and re-adjust as necessary the project work plan to ensure progress and deliverables despite the possible continuation of travel restrictions. This may include attention to remote (virtual) expertise, increased use of local consultants, etc.

12.   Sustainability

The Governments in Belize and Honduras are keen to ensure sustainability from the outset. The project will pilot and innovate a new approach to improve food safety outcomes, based on public-private partnership. The active

commitment and close engagement of the regulatory authorities, as well as other relevant parts of Government, will help to ensure that the findings, learnings and recommendations generated through this pilot can result in outcomes that are followed up by relevant Government agencies at the national level for longer-term sustainability and impacts.

Initiatives will be put in place to help to harness greater commitment from the participating companies. Inclusion of a financial contribution from the participating private sector entities in the pilot countries is expected to ensure greater commitment and improve sustainability. Such incentives may include a mix of the following (to be further discussed and agreed upon during the inception phase): i) payment of a registration fee by participating FBOs at the start of the project; ii) financial contribution as a form of commitment – this could either be a fixed fee (e.g. US$300/company, to be confirmed) or pro-rated depending on the size/revenue of the enterprise).

In addition, the introduction and use of a badge or label – linked to use of the vTPA programme promoted – would create branding and recognition, which would create an additional incentive for participating FBOs. Such a badge/label/banner would differentiate those recognized as following good food safety practices, from other companies that do not. Over time, this would be expected to promote good practices and improve food safety in other enterprises, and it would make it easier for consumers to distinguish higher quality products on the market.

One of the most important selection criteria for farmers/FBOs wishing to participate in the project will be a commitment to invest the resources needed to improve food safety. This commitment will reinforce the sustainability of the project. It is also expected that the participation of farmers and FBOs in the project will open new local, regional and international markets, which will demonstrate the financial returns from improved food safety systems and encourage sustainability.

Finally, it is expected that the project will strengthen the existing public-private collaboration on improving food safety and fair-trade outcomes, where issues will be early identified and receive attention both from the private sector and the regulators and consequently increasing the sustainability of the project

III. BUDGET

13.   Estimated budget

See appendix 3.

14.   Cost-effectiveness

Improved use of limited resources has been one of the main drivers pushing countries to make use of data and information from vTPA programmes as part of their national food control systems. The Codex Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems foresee competent authorities taking into account quality assurance systems in their national food control systems. As the draft CCFICS Guidelines outline, reliable vTPA information / data may be used in general to better risk profile sectors (and in some circumstances individual FBOs), which is expected to lead to smarter data-driven prioritization of official resources, while FBOs participating in robust vTPA programmes may benefit from an appropriate risk-reduction in the frequency / intensity of regulatory controls. On the other hand, poorly performing FBOs may be subject to increased controls.

This pilot project provides a cost-effective approach to test and learn – in a limited number of sectors – how the approach outlined in the draft CCFICS Guidelines (expected to be adopted in July 2020) works in practice in selected developing countries. The benefits of the pilot project, and learning generated, will be of relevance, and interest for developing countries globally, as well as Codex members more broadly, which will ensure that the project experiences and results have much wider value (i.e. beyond the two participating countries).

Implementation of the pilot project by a regional organization, located close to the two pilot countries and with substantial expertise and previous work in both countries, will further enhance cost-effectiveness. In addition, and importantly, cost-effectiveness will be assured through the engagement and involvement of food safety regulatory in other parts of Latin America, and beyond, in order to learn as much as possible from their previous experiences (positive and negative).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION & MANAGEMENT

15.   Implementing organization

IICA is proposed to implement this pilot project in Central America (see letter in Appendix 5). IICA has a track record of successfully implementing STDF projects in Latin and Central America, and has the experience and expertise required to implement this pilot project.

IICA will implement the project in close cooperation with the applicant organizations in Belize and Honduras. Consultants may be contracted by IICA – based on the specific expertise and skills required – to support the implementation and delivery of the project outputs. Detailed ToRs would be prepared prior to the recruitment of consultants. These consultants would be expected to have the relevant technical skills, prior experience in working with regulatory authorities and/or the private sector on the use of vTPA programmes, language skills, etc. For the regulatory component, consultants will need to demonstrate expertise and experience working directly with food safety regulatory authorities in other countries that are making use of vTPA programmes. Consultants will be expected to have an excellent knowledge of Codex standards and to be knowledgeable about the ongoing work in CCFICS. The project applicants would be expected to approve any consultants selected. IICA has also budgeted a project field coordinator, (US$15,000/year) for three years, to support practical support, coordination and reporting on a day-to-day basis.

16.   Project management

A small committee comprising the key stakeholders involved in the project – notably representatives of the applicant organizations and the implementing organization – will convene regularly (virtually, and face-to-face if possible on the margins of any project workshops / meetings, etc.), to review and oversee the implementation of the project, address any unexpected challenges, issues, share experiences from the country activities, etc. The STDF Secretariat will be invited to participate in these meetings, wherever appropriate and possible, to help ensure synergies and information exchange with the pilot project in West Africa. Other stakeholders (such as UNIDO, the implementing organization for the proposed pilot project in West Africa) may be invited to participate in these meetings as observers, as relevant and useful.

At a country level, a Steering Committee will supervise the management and implementation of the project activities at the national level. This Committee will include representatives of all relevant government departments, as well as the private sector.

III REPORTING, MONITORING & EVALUATION

17.   Project reporting

As Implementing Organization, IICA will be responsible for reporting under the project and submission of reports to the STDF Secretariat. An inception report will be produced within three months of launching of the project, and a final report will be produced at the end of the Project. In-between, progress reports will be produced every six months and will provide the basis for systematically monitoring progress made and give recipients an opportunity to make substantive comments on any anticipated issues that require attention.

These reports will provide the basis for systematically monitoring progress and give all the stakeholders involved an opportunity to make substantive comments on any unanticipated issues that require attention.

18. Monitoring and evaluation, including performance indicators

The logical framework shows the indicators that will be monitored at the result/output level. The project budget includes provision for an independent end-of-project assessment – prior to the project end date – that will provide data for assessing the project results, reporting on indicators at the result and purpose level. This end-of-project assessment will be contracted by IICA, and attached to the final project report.

IICA will set aside funds for M&E, based on its internal procedures. This will include attention to undertake a baseline survey at the project inception, to help track and measure the results of the project at mid-term and at the end of the project (using the key performance indicators in the logical framework). As part of the M&E framework for this project, IICA will monitor on an ongoing basis implementation of annual workplan, levels of beneficiary participation and physical delivery of the intended project outputs.

Ensuring adequate record keeping of the participating FBOs will be crucial to be able to track the performance achieved, particularly under the FBO component.

It is expected that M&E will make use of a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The indicators will be further improved at the inception phase if the pilot project is approved):
- Implementation of government risk profiling of FBOs taking into account vTPA
- Number of government inspectors trained in vTPAs
- Number of vTPA programmes recognized, and/or MOUs/agreements in place
- The number of FBOs enrolled in the project
- Increased compliance of participating FBOs with national food safety regulations
- Improved food safety management systems in participating FBOs (measured through their ability to implement a vTPA programme, as well as reduced food/product losses, reduced market rejections, increased sales to high-value domestic markets, regional and/or international markets, etc.)
- Increased trust between the food safety regulatory authority and participating FBOs (measured through a survey, qualitative case stories, etc.)

19. Dissemination of the projects results

The results, experiences and lessons learnt from the pilot project will be published and widely disseminated different media including print/web (e.g. leaflets, blogs, news articles in the pilot countries, IICA and STDF websites, etc.), as well as outreach at relevant regional and global events (CCLAC, IICA, Codex, GFSI, G2B, etc.). Feedback and experiences will be shared at meetings in the pilot countries, as well as at other relevant regional meetings (e.g. CCLAC, CARICOM), discussions and side events at international events (e.g. CCFICS, CAC, GFSI meetings), as well as workshops organized by STDF partners (e.g. FAO, WBG, IFC) working on food safety capacity building. They will also be widely shared using the Codex and STDF websites, and the GFSI blog.

A short film may be produced to illustrate the results achieved by the project, with special attention on lessons learnt from the new cooperation and partnership between the private sector and the regulators in the use of vTPAs to improve food safety and trade outcomes.

In the beneficiary countries of Belize and Honduras, communication of the results will be planned with the full engagement of all partners involved, which will also help to profile the importance of improving food safety capacity for domestic health and trade, and recognize the improvements made by participating FBOs. Belize and Honduras are part of the Central American Integration System (SICA), which provides a mechanism to further disseminate and share the experiences of this pilot project within the region. An improved, practical understanding on the use of vTPA programmes, based on evidence, is also expected to be very relevant to the Central American Customs Union (CACU).

An STDF Advisory Group would be created comprising of representatives of the pilot countries, regulators from other countries in Latin America and elsewhere with experience/expertise in the use of vTPA programmes, the

implementing organizations for the pilot projects in Africa (UNIDO) and Central America (IICA), and any other interested public and private sector stakeholders (Codex, COLEACP, FAO, IFC, GFSI, etc.). This group would meet annually face-to-face on the margins of an existing global meeting (e.g. GFSI conference/G2B, Codex meetings) to: i) review project progress, share experiences; ii) identify linkages and synergies with other relevant ongoing/planned activities and leverage financial or other in-kind support towards the pilot project, iii) identify opportunities to further disseminate the experiences and results and opportunities for scaling-up, etc.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1:   Logical framework (see attached template)

Appendix 2:   Work Plan (see attached template)

Appendix 3:   Project Budget (see attached template)

Appendix 4:   Letters of support from organizations that support the project request

Appendix 5:   Written consent from an STDF partner that agrees to implement the project *OR* evidence of the technical and professional capacity of another organization proposed to implement the project.

Appendix 6:   Terms of Reference for key staff involved in project implementation

APPENDIX 1: Logical Framework[4]

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Goal: Improved compliance with national food safety standards and regulations for public health and trade			
OBJECTIVE: Improving compliance with national food safety standards and regulations for public health and trade	# of FBOs with economic gains (additional sales) Baseline: Target: X # of people living below the poverty line who have access to products of guaranteed quality Baseline: X Target: X # of additional jobs created and jobs retained in selected sectors Baseline: X Target: X	Survey on the sales of the selected FBOs prior to the project activities and during project closure Survey on the number of firms with an increase in exports, Statistical report on export Survey on the number of people employed prior and after the interventions among the selected enterprises, national statistical bureau	**Assumptions:** Pilot countries have the political will to define the potential way forward for the application of the Codex guidelines on the use and application of data generated by vTPA programmes. **Risk:** Lack of political will from competent authorities to use information for improved / data-driven regulatory decision-making. **Means to address:** The project will enhance awareness of regulators on the potential benefits of integrating available data in their decision-making on risk profiling.

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Outcome 1: Increased awareness of regulatory authorities on how to assess and use data/information generated by vTPA programme in pilot countries	Cumulative number of new policy papers / strategies on vTPA validated by policymakers Baseline: 0 Target: 2 An # of competent authorities strengthened in its regulatory decision-making for risk-profiling Baseline: 0 Target: 2 # of regulators from pilot countries engaged on the vTPA programme Baseline: X Target: X	Minutes of Meeting on the validation of policy papers Progress / final report on the number of competent authorities List of participants / attendance sheet on the meetings	**Assumptions:** Policy-makers and regulators committed to work with international partners and examine how new approaches (based on the use of information from vTPA programmes) can be used in practice to inform food security policy and decision-making at different levels. **Risk:** Lack of resources and existing infrastructures at local level to establish a conducive enabling environment for the use of data used from vTPA programmes. **Means to address:** The project will define the required additional resources and support the governments in defining required follow-up actions in parallel with this pilot project and beyond.

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Output 1.1: National policy papers / strategies drafted in pilot countries on implementation options for potential assessment and use of data generated by vTPA programmes as part of the national food control system	# of national policy papers / strategies drafted / prepared to define roadmap / process for the possible application / utilisation of data from vTPA programmesBaseline: 0 Target: 2# of workshops / consultative session for policy formulation organizedBaseline: 0 Target: X# of analyses produced to scan local enabling environmentBaseline: 0Target: 2# of capacity building provided on best practices as per Codex guidelines & principles (biannual mentoring / coaching provided) Baseline: 0Taget: X	Draft policy papers are available Minutes of the meetings of the policy formulationReports available on the enabling environments Memo of the mentoring sessions	**Assumptions:** The relevant stakeholders (competent authority, vTPA owners, certification bodies and the private sector) are willing to work together, actively involved and able to contribute to the design of the national policy/strategy document. **Risk:** Relevant stakeholders are excluded from stakeholder consultations, do not trust each other and/or are reluctant to support cooperation between the public and private sectors. Government authorities are unwilling to support the proposed policy on vTPA programmes. **Means to address:** The project will conduct an environmental scan to map all relevant stakeholders with an interest/role in vTPA programmes and will actively seek to involve them from the outset of the intervention.
Key activities	**Activity 1.1.1:** "Learning visit" of two government officials from each of the pilot countries (4 persons in total) to observe, discuss and understand how food safety regulators in other countries make use of reliable data and information from vTPA programmes as part of their national food control system.		
	Activity 1.1.2: Conduct environment scan/review on the national food safety system, looking at the existing institutional framework, vTPA programmes being used in the country if any, etc. – in the selected value chains and compare against the national/international requirements		
	Activity 1.1.3: National workshop for government officials in pilot countries to increase understanding and knowledge about different regulatory approaches and options to use vTPA programmes as part of their national food control systems		
	Activity 1.1.4: Develop a process / roadmap for competent authorities in pilot countries to assess and/or make use of data generated by vTPA programmes, to complement their national food control system		

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
	Activity 1.1.5: Biannual mentoring/coaching to enable officials from regulatory authority in pilot countries to engage in regular exchange (by Skype) with selected regulators in other countries making use of data/information generated by vTPA programmes		
Output 1.2: Risk-based inspection capabilities piloted for selected value chains	# of assessments on national inspection capacities producedBaseline: 0Target: 2# of capacity building provided on risk-based food inspection and vTPA programmes Baseline: 0Target: X# of national workshops organized on data sharing Target: 2	Reports on national inspection capacities availableProgramme of the capacity building events and workshopsList of participants	**Assumptions:** Inspectors have a better understanding of the differences between official inspection and certification compared to third party audits. **Risk:** Relevant competent authorities might struggle to apply /scale up the gained knowledge for other value chains. **Means to address:** The project will assess the competences of inspectors as part of activity 1.2.2 and support the government in developing proposals for additional capacity building from internal or external resources.
Key activities	**Activity 1.2.1**: Assess and review existing government inspection procedures (frequency, risk profiling, etc.) in the selected value chain/sector		
	Activity 1.2.2: Identify the needs and requirements in different areas (legislation, risk profiling, operating procedures, information and data exchange, human resources, etc.) to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a risk-based inspection approach in the selected value chain that takes into account particular vTPA approach/model selected by the government.		
	Activity 1.2.3: Train government inspectors on risk-based inspection practices		
	Activity 1.2.4: Train government inspectors and auditors on vTPA programmes, with the inclusion of a session on accompanied audits		
	Activity 1.2.5 Conduct workshops on the possibilities of data sharing between vTPA owner and authorities and share experience of regulators from developed countries (e.g. UK, Canada, etc.) how to integrate them into risk profiling models		

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Outcome 2: Improved food safety compliance of FBOs in selected value chains based on the use of a voluntary food safety capacity building programme	# of food business operators with improved food safety management practices Baseline: 0Target: X$ of new investments leverage from the private sector to improve food safety practicesTBC# of protocol / guideline for voluntary food safety capacity building programme recognized by the GovernmentBaseline: 0Target: X	Survey of participating food business operatorsGovernment document on the adoption of the voluntary food safety capacity building programme Website of the competent authorities	**Assumptions:** The developed voluntary food safety capacity building programme will provide additional data on the compliance capacities of food business operators and improve the understanding of the decision-makers on risk profiling of the selected value chain sector. **Risk:** There is a lack of commitment from the private sector to use the developed voluntary capacity building programme to allow decision-makers to use the data for improved regulatory decision-making. **Means to address:** The private sector will be included in the development process of the local application of the Codex Guideline to clarify potential misunderstandings or receive consent on information / data sharing.

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Output 2.1: Voluntary food safety capacity building programme developed, customized and piloted among food business operators from selected value chains	# of assessment on value chain gaps in terms of food safety compliance produced Baseline: 0 Target: X # of toolkits and guidelines produced / customized Baseline: 0 Target: X # of capacity building activities on vTPA programmes provided Baseline: 0 Target: X	Reports on value chain gaps available Toolkits and guidelines are publicly available on the competent authority's website Programme and participant list on the ToT training available Progress report	**Assumptions:** Competent authorities and food safety practitioners are in a position to implement the voluntary food safety capacity building programme, and food operators are interested in engaging in this programme to improve their food safety practices and capacities. **Risk**: Lack of financial resources and thereby willingness from the private sector to improve their food safety management systems. **Means to address:** The project will select enterprises based on their readiness to invest in the upgrading of their operation.
Key activities	**Activity 2.1.1:** During the inception phase, develop selection criteria for FBOs to participate in the pilot training and mentoring.		
	Activity 2.1.2: Conduct targeted value chain mapping in the pilot countries focusing on compliance issues along the value chain including analysis of the conditions, reservations and specific problems of FBOs to participate in the vTPA approaches.		
	Activity 2.1.3: Localize / Adapt / Develop a voluntary food safety capacity building programme for the pilot countries based on existing international best practices		
	Activity 2.1.4: Conduct joint training-of-trainers (ToT) programmes for food safety practitioners from the public and private sector on vTPA programmes		
	Activity 2.1.5: Deliver training to selected food business operators and establish linkages between FBOs and buyers (including high-value retail and hotels/tourism in the country, as well as multinational companies and other buyers in export markets).		

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Outcome 3: Increased awareness of food safety regulators on the application of vTPA approaches in other countries	# of actors gaining awareness / knowledge on evidence-based policy-making through the utilisation of data generated by vTPA programmes Baseline: 0 Target: X	Lists of participant for workshops / events Feedback / surveys of food safety regulators (Qualitative indicators TBC)	**Assumptions**: Relevant stakeholders are able to participate in relevant international events to gain further understanding on the best practices how to apply the Codex Guideline and share their own experiences on the application of the Codex guideline. **Risk:** There is a lack of understanding on the principles and guidelines of the Codex guideline and how the pilot projects support the countries towards its application. **Means to address:** The project will engage stakeholders in sharing experience and support key regulators to be engaged with regulators played a key role in the development of the Codex Guideline.
Output 3.1: Regional and global events on vTPA programmes organized with the participation of pilot countries	# of regional workshop / Steering Committees / GFSC side event / CCFICS meeting / SPS committee organized Baseline: 0 Target: X # communication tools (case studies, blogs, presentations, fact sheets, videos) developed on the project Reference information: 0 Target Objectives: X	Programmes of regional workshop, GFSC, SPS Committee, CCFICS meetings and side events Websites of relevant organizations: GFSI, WTO, UNIDO, IICA and Codex Alimentarius	**Assumptions:** Relevant stakeholders are able to participate in relevant international events to understand better best practices on how to implement the CCFICS guidelines and share their own experiences on its application.Regulators in the pilot countries are ready to learn from the use of the vTPA approaches by other countries. Developing country regulators participate in global events, share experience and dialogue. **Risk:** Lack of engagement from competent authorities in developed countries who already piloted the application of vTPA. **Means to address:** Key stakeholders (competent authorities and vTPA owners) will be identified in the inception phase in order to engage with them in the dissemination or exchange of experience / knowledge.

	Indicator	Sources of verification	Assumptions
Key activities	**Activity 3.1.1**: Regulators from Belize and Honduras will be invited to participate in an annual pilot project meeting (with the implementing partners, other relevant public/private stakeholders, STDF Secretariat, etc.).		
	Activity 3.1.2: Organize a regional workshop on the assessment of vTPA programmes and the utilisation of their data linked to CCFICS guidance, under the concept of South-South cooperation		
	Activity 3.1.3: Develop knowledge and communication products to disseminate experiences results, lessons and good practices that emerge from the regional pilot project (e.g. case studies, short film, other materials) to use in the dissemination process		
	Activity 3.1.4: Support food safety regulators from Belize and Honduras to share their experiences and lessons on vTPA programmes, data-sharing, etc. more widely with other regulators and stakeholders at the regional and global level. For instance, information sessions and side-events may be organized on the margins of CAC meetings, CCFICS meetings, SPS Committee meetings, etc.		

APPENDIX 2: Work Plan[5]

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Output 1.1 **National policy papers / strategies drafted in pilot countries on implementation options for potential assessment and use of data generated by vTPA programmes as part of the national food control system**												
Activity 1.1.1: "Learning visit" of two government officials from each of the pilot countries (4 persons in total) to observe, discuss and understand how food safety regulators in other countries make use of reliable data and information from vTPA programmes as part of their national food control system.	X											
Activity 1.1.2: Conduct environment scan/review on the national food safety system, looking at the existing institutional framework, vTPA programmes being used in the country if any, etc. – in the selected value chains and compare against the national/international requirements.		X	X									
Activity 1.1.3: National workshop for government officials in pilot countries to increase understanding and knowledge about different regulatory approaches and			X	X								

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[5] Please shade or otherwise indicate when the activity will take place.

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
options to use vTPA programmes as part of their national food control systems.												
Activity 1.1.4: Develop a process / roadmap for competent authorities in pilot countries to assess and/or make use of data generated by vTPA programmes, to complement their national food control system.			X	X								
Activity 1.1.5: Biannual mentoring/coaching to enable officials from regulatory authority in pilot countries to engage in regular exchange (by Skype) with selected regulators in other countries making use of data/information generated by vTPA programmes.			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Output 1.2 **Risk-based inspection capabilities piloted for selected value chains**												
Activity 1.2.1: Assess and review existing government inspection procedures (frequency, risk profiling, etc.) in the selected value chain/sector.				X				X				X
Activity 1.2.2: Identify the needs and requirements in different areas (legislation, risk profiling, operating procedures, information and data exchange, human resources, etc.) to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a risk-based inspection approach in the selected value chain that takes into account particular vTPA				X								

approach/model selected by the government.														
Activity 1.2.3: Train government inspectors on risk-based inspection practices.				**X**										
Activity 1.2.4: Train government inspectors and auditors on vTPA programmes, with the inclusion of a session on accompanied audits.									X					
Activity 1.2.5: Conduct workshops on the possibilities of data sharing between vTPA owner and authorities and share experience of regulators from developed countries (e.g. UK, Canada, etc.) how to integrate them into risk profiling models.										X				
Output 2.1 **Voluntary food safety capacity building programme developed, customized and piloted among food business operators from selected value chains**														
Activity 2.1.1: During the inception phase, develop selection criteria for FBOs to participate in the pilot training and mentoring.	X													
Activity 2.1.2: Conduct targeted value chain mapping in the pilot countries focusing on compliance issues along the value chain including analysis of the conditions, reservations and specific problems of FBOs to participate in the vTPA approachesto		X												
Activity 2.1.3: Localize / Adapt / Develop a voluntary food safety capacity building programme for the pilot countries based on existing international best practices.		X												

Activity	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Activity 2.1.4: Conduct joint training-of-trainers (ToT) programmes for food safety practitioners from the public and private sector on vTPA programmes.			X									
Activity 2.1.5: Deliver training to selected food business operators and establish linkages between FBOs and buyers (including high-value retail and hotels/tourism in the country, as well as multinational companies and other buyers in export markets).			X	X								

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Output 3.1. **Regional and global events on APTv programmes organized with the participation of pilot countries**												
Activity 3.1.1: Regulators from Belize and Honduras will be invited to participate in an annual pilot project meeting (with the implementing partners, other relevant public/private stakeholders, STDF Secretariat, etc.).	X				X				X			
Activity 3.1.2: Organize a regional workshop on the assessment of vTPA programmes and the utilisation of their data linked to CCFICS guidance, under the concept of South-South cooperation.								X				X
Activity 3.1.3: Develop knowledge and communication products to disseminate experiences results, lessons and good practices that emerge from the regional pilot project (e.g. case studies, short film, other											X	X

materials) to use in the dissemination process.													
Activity 3.1.4: Support food safety regulators from Belize and Honduras to share their experiences and lessons on vTPA programmes, data-sharing, etc. more widely with other regulators and stakeholders at the regional and global level. For instance, information sessions and side-events may be organized on the margins of CAC meetings, CCFICS meetings, SPS Committee meetings, etc.	X				X				X				

APPENDIX 3: Budget (US$)

	Unit (No. days per country)	Fee	STDF	In-kind Belize	In-kind Honduras
OUTCOME 1: Increased awareness of regulatory authorities on how to assess and use data/information generated by vTPA programme in pilot countries			**184,335**		
Output 1.1 National policy papers / strategies drafted in pilot countries on implementation options for potential assessment and use of data generated by vTPA programmes as part of the national food control system			**77,835**		
International expertise (20 days @ USD600/day per country)	**20**	**600**	24,000		
Expertise of in-country regulatory authority (25% of annual salary of 3 officers per country)				55,500	41,940
International travel			10,000		
DSA (up to 20 days per country)	20	200	8,000		
In-country travel			4,000		
Workshop [sensitization] expenses (meeting room, pencils, coffee …)				2,500	2,500
Workshop regulatory environmental scan				2,500	2,500
Learning visit to understand how food safety regulators in other countries (UK, The Netherlands) are making use of vTPA programmes (2 regulators per country, and 1 official from IICA)			31,835		
Travel Costs (5 participants)			13,750		
DSA (at 384/day, 3 days) (5 travelers)	3		5,760		
DSA (at 413/day, 5 days(5 travelers)	5		10,325		
Other expenses			2,000		
Output 1.2 Risk-based inspection capabilities piloted for selected value chains			**106,500**		
International expertise (30 days @ USD600/day per country)	30	600	36,000		
International travel (2 trips at USD4,000)			8,000		
DSA (up to 30 days per country)	30	200	12,000		
In-country travel for international expert			4,000		
Local expenses for government inspectors [1st training]				$6,600	$7,464
Workshops, Trainings, etc. [1st training] including costs of participation for food safety regulators from other countries with relevant expertise (approx. 12,000/country)			24,000		
Local expenses for government inspectors/auditors [2nd training]				$6,600	$7,464
Local expenses for government inspectors data sharing workshop				$6,600	$7,464

Project Field Coordinator 50% for Outcome 1 (USD 15000/year full-time)			22,500		
OUTCOME 2: Improved food safety compliance of FBOs in selected value chains based on the use of a voluntary food safety capacity building programme			**137,300**		
Output 2.1 Voluntary food safety capacity building programme developed, customized and piloted among food business operators from selected value chains			**137,300**		
International expertise (35 days @ USD600/day per country)	35	**600**	42,000		
Expertise / time of in-country officials (5% of annual salary over 3 years for 18 inspectors from Belize; 5% of annual salary over 3 years for 30 inspectors in Honduras)				54,000	105,000.00
International travel			8,000		
DSA (up to 35 days per country)			14,000		
In-country travel for international expert			4,000		
Conduct Joint ToT (3 days) for 30 persons per country (10 government inspectors, 10 private sector, 10 auditors) : 9 x 600 x 2			10,800	$6,600	$7,464
Deliver first batch of trainings and pilot their applications for 20 FBOs (2 FBOs per trainer x 3 days of training / country): 60*300*2			36,000		
Project Field Coordinator 50% for Outcome 2 (USD 15000/year full-time)			22,500		
OUTCOME 3: Increased awareness of food safety regulators on the application of vTPA approaches in other countries			**109,000**		
Output 3.1: Regional and global events on APTv programmes organized with the participation of pilot countries			**109,000**		
International travel (regulators from pilot countries): three meetings in total over three years for two persons, at 3,000 per trip			18,000		
DSA (250 USD/day) for up to 22 days for 2 experts (one from Belize and one from Honduras) to attend relevant regional / international events			11,000		
Regional workshop (air tickets, DSA for 10 participants @4,500 per person)			45,000		
Communications			35,000		

Project implementation and management			**132,925**		
IICA expertise/time			34,700		
M&E (USD 8000/year)			24,000		
Project inception and final workshops (2@12,500 each)			25,000		
End-of-project assessment			20,000		
Travel / mission costs by IICA (2 trips per year for 1 person)			12,000		
Miscellaneous expenses (4% of total for outcomes)			17,225		
Sub-total			**563,560**		
Overhead costs (10%)			**56,356**		
Total			**619,916**	**140,900**	**181,796**