

Terms of Reference

Piloting the use of Third Party Assurance (TPA) programmes to improve food safety outcomes for public health and trade in Central America, and support to develop synergies with the complementary PPG in Africa

Background

1. 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.

2. 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 though in some countries, government authorities responsible for private sector and industrial development also develop and promote the use of vTPA programmes on food safety.

3. Competent authorities are increasingly taking account of and/or using information and data from using 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. Using vTPA programmes is seen to offer potential to help competent authorities and industry improve food safety outcomes, while allowing each to operate within their defined roles and responsibilities. vTPA programmes also have the potential to deliver other benefits, such as flexibility to respond to changing conditions, greater efficiency, increased buy-in by the private sector, improved compliance, etc.

4. In October 2018, the STDF Working Group approved two project preparation grant (PPG) applications to develop regional projects to pilot the use of vTPAs in selected countries, based on public-private collaboration. The application from Central America (STDF/PPG/682) was submitted by the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) and the National Service for Agrifood Health and Quality (Servicio Nacional De Sanidad Y Calidad Agroalimentaria, SENASA) in Honduras. The application from Africa (STDF/PPG/665) was 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. The applications are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

5. In approving these two applications, the Working Group agreed on the importance of ensuring linkages and synergies in the work to be carried out under both PPGs, particularly given the expected similarities and commonalities between the two regional projects to result from these PPGs (even if the individual country contexts differ). The expectation is that the two regional projects to result from these PPGs would follow a broadly similar approach, and test and assess some common

¹ CCFICS. Proposed Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes (At Step 3). Document discussed and agreed at the CCFICS meeting in Brisbane, October 2018.

elements, so that the experiences and outcomes could also be compared across the two regions and different country contexts. As such, concerted efforts will be made during the work under each PPG 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.

6. The Working Group made some recommendations to support the implementation of these two PPGs, including to: (i) clearly identify the type of information to be collected and analysed as part of the consultation process with stakeholders; (ii) consider the activities that could be delegated to TPA programmes, without compromising the integrity of national food control systems; (iii) consider the potential risks associated with the use of TPA programmes and how to address these risks. The STDF Working Group recognized the linkages between these PPGs and the ongoing work by the Codex Committee on Food Import Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) to develop "Draft principles and guidelines for the assessment and use of voluntary third-party assurance programmes."

Implementation Arrangements

7. This document sets out the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the PPG in Central America (STDF/PPG/682), which will be implemented by IICA – in cooperation with stakeholders in the two beneficiary countries (Belize and Honduras), the STDF Secretariat and other relevant organizations – and with the support of a qualified international expert/consultant.²

8. In addition to its role to implement the PPG in Central America, IICA will provide support to deliver some services related to the PPG in Africa (included in the budget below). Specifically, IICA will organize the travel of one representative from each of the three PPG beneficiary countries in Africa (Mali, Senegal and Uganda) to participate in the Global Food Safety Conference in Nice, France (26-28 February 2019), as well as the Government to Government (GtoG) and Government to Business (GtoB) meetings on 25 February 2019.³ On the margins of these meetings in Nice, IICA and the representatives from both the Africa and Central America PPGs will participate in a preparatory meeting, organized by the STDF Secretariat, to discuss work under both PPGs.

9. In implementation of the PPG in Central America, IICA will cooperate with other relevant stakeholders with an interest in the work to be carried out under this PPG, including Chile which chairs the Codex Coordinating Committee for Latin America and other countries in the region with relevant experience in the area of third party assurance programmes (e.g. Mexico). In addition, IICA will collaborate with STDF Partners (including FAO), other interested organizations (e.g. GFSI), as well as organizations in STDF donor countries (Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA and UK Food Standards Agency) that are involved in related work and/or have offered in-kind support to these PPGs.

10. In addition, IICA will consult and collaborate with the international consultant responsible for the PPG work in Africa (STDF/PPG/665) to ensure synergies, South-South cooperation and linkages between the project proposal to result from the PPG in Central America and the project proposal to result from the PPG in Africa. To facilitate this exchange and encourage dialogue among the key stakeholders involved in the work in the two regions, the STDF Secretariat will convene a small informal advisory committee, with representatives from these different organizations, to discuss the PPG work and resulting project proposals (by phone or Skype) – including IICA and representatives of the PPG beneficiaries from Central America and Africa – at key points during work under both the Africa and Central America PPGs.

² The PPG in Africa PPG (STDF/PPG/665) will be implemented by an international consultant, contracted by the STDF.

³ GFSI has committed to waive the conference registration fee for the five PPG representatives.

Purpose and expected results

11. The purpose of this PPG will be to develop a proposal for a regional project to pilot and assess how voluntary TPA programmes may be used in practice to improve food safety outcomes in Central America (Belize and Honduras), with a focus on specific commodities, products and supply chains. Subject to further discussions, the supply chains are expected to include the fruits, vegetables and grains sector in Belize, and the fruits, vegetables and/or farmed shrimp sector in Honduras.

11. The PPG will enable relevant public and private sector stakeholders in Belize and Honduras to:
- Discuss the context, needs and opportunities that exist for the private sector and regulatory authorities to make use of vTPA programmes to improve food safety outcomes in their countries;
 - Discuss and agree on the key elements of a regional project proposal including the objective, approach, logical framework, budget and timeframe, specific roles and responsibilities, assumptions and risks, implementation and management, monitoring and evaluation, etc.;
 - Agree on and commit to the specifics of their expected role and involvement in the resulting regional project.

12. The resulting regional project in Central America (as well as the regional project to result from the Africa PPG) will be expected to improve understanding about how different approaches to TPA programmes (including information and data generated by TPA auditors) may be used in developing countries to bolster compliance and build confidence in the country's national food control system (NFCS). For instance, how can vTPA programmes support regulatory authorities (e.g. by improving risk-profiling of food businesses, better prioritisation of resources) and the private sector (increased confidence in levels of compliance with regulatory requirements, improved food safety outcomes at industry/sector level)? How can vTPA programmes help to target inspection resources more efficiently, or to build food safety capacity of small-scale producers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to build their capacity? The work should also identify and assess the challenges facing relevant public and private sector stakeholders linked to vTPA programmes, the risks involved, and what is needed to enable developing countries to benefit from this approach.

13. In addition to the regional project proposal for Central America, IICA will deliver a short report of the work carried out under this PPG, to be submitted to the STDF within one month of completion of the PPG. This report should describe the activities implemented, the results achieved, and the key stakeholders involved and/or consulted. It should analyse and assess the feasibility, practicability, challenges (e.g. costs, affordability for SMEs, legal aspects) and different types of models of using voluntary TPA programmes, and the expected outcomes and benefits (if any) for government and private sector stakeholders, based on the in-country work. Any relevant documents, identified during the work under this PPG, should be provided to the STDF for inclusion into the STDF online Library.

Key tasks and activities

14. IICA will be responsible for the organization and implementation of all work under the PPG in cooperation with the PPG applicants in Belize and Honduras. Based on consultations and agreement with the PPG applicants, IICA will select and contract a qualified expert/consultant, with practical experience in food safety assurance and/or certification programmes and (ideally also) project development, to support implementation of the PPG in accordance with these TORs.

15. The expert/consultant to be contracted by IICA is expected to possess, as far as possible, the following qualifications and skills:

- i. At least 7 years' work/project experience working with government authorities and/or the private sector in the area of food safety, including food safety certification and/or assurance programmes, with experience in Latin America preferred.

- ii. In-depth knowledge about SPS and food safety requirements related to TPA programmes, and/or related to the selected commodities and value chains in Belize and Honduras.
 - iii. Proven ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders/experts in developing countries (including trade specialists, farmers, industry associations, and international organizations).
 - iv. Excellent working knowledge of Spanish and English
 - v. Prior experience in designing or implementing food safety capacity building projects in developing countries would be beneficial.
16. It is expected that work to be carried out by the sub-contracted expert(s), under the overall management and oversight of IICA, would include the following:
- i. Conduct preparatory desk research and identify and consult relevant public and private sector stakeholders in Belize and Honduras, in the region, and elsewhere as required.
 - ii. Collect in-country information on the selected sectors/value chains – the fruits, vegetables and grains sector in Belize, and the fruits, vegetables and farmed shrimp sector in Honduras.
 - iii. Organise meetings with national public and private stakeholders to explain the concept of TPAs and to discuss and agree on a framework for public-private collaboration in the selected value chain as part of the resulting project.
 - iv. Facilitate and report on meetings and stakeholder workshops, organized as part of the PPG in Central America, with relevant public and private stakeholders.
 - v. Participate in Skype/phone discussions of the informal advisory committee, convened to discuss the PPG work and resulting regional project proposals at key points during work under both the Africa and Central America PPGs.
 - vi. Participate in the G2G and G2B meetings on the margins of the Global Food Safety Conference in Nice (Feb. 2019), as well as a brainstorming meeting on the margins of the GFSI meeting with PPG country experts from Africa and Central America, the STDF, IICA and other partners to discuss the two PPGs and project proposals to be developed.
 - vii. Support to develop, revise and finalize a regional project document for Central America, based on work carried out under the PPG, that has the support and commitment of relevant government and private sector organizations in the beneficiary countries, as well as other relevant stakeholders.
17. The regional project proposal to result from work carried out under the PPG should:
- i. Consider the needs of relevant stakeholders (e.g. national government authorities, private sector stakeholders, etc.), as well as the national/regional options and requirements (e.g. financing, human resource needs, etc.) to improve food safety outcomes and increase exports in the selected/identified commodities and products in the selected value chains.
 - ii. Clearly elaborate, based on consultation with the stakeholders, the purpose, scope, specific objectives, and expected outcomes, outputs and activities of the proposed project, based on a coherent logical framework. The logical framework should include indicators to measure performance, sources of verification and any key risks and assumptions.
 - iii. Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all concerned public and private stakeholders, and outline a practical mechanism for project implementation and management.
 - iv. Identify linkages, synergies and complementarities to work carried out under the related PPG in Africa, including opportunities for South-South cooperation, dialogue and exchange of lessons and experiences across Central America and Africa.
 - v. Identify linkages, synergies and complementarities to relevant (past/ongoing/planned) activities and projects supported by donors and development partners, as well as ongoing work within CCFICs, and relevant STDF work.

- vi. Include a detailed estimate of the budget required to implement the proposed project and, where possible, identify possible donors and/or private sector support.
- vii. Consider cross-cutting issues related to gender and environmental aspects of the proposed project.
- viii. Include a detailed work plan and timetable for project implementation.
- ix. Identify and assess the possible risks and challenges faced in the proposed project, as well as risk mitigation strategies to ensure its success and sustainability.

18. In addition to the substantive work related to the development of the regional project in Central America, IICA will organize the travel of one representative from each of the countries benefitting from the PPG in Central America (Belize and Honduras) and Africa (Mali, Senegal and Uganda), as well as the selected consultant for the PPG work in Central America, to participate in the Global Food Safety Conference in Nice, France (25-28 February 2019) and related meetings. Organization of this travel is included in the budget estimate.

Budget and Timeframe

- 19. The total budget approved for the work to be contracted to IICA amounts to US\$73,000.
- 20. The planned starting date is 4 February 2019. It is expected that the work could take approximately nine-12 months.