

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE PROVISION OF EUROPEAN UNION (EU) MARKET ACCESS (FRESH PRODUCE) TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR EU MARKET ACCESS TO FOUR GREENHOUSE FARMING ASSOCIATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FOOD TRACEABILITY SYSTEM FOR PEPPERS AND MANGOES.

1. BACKGROUND

1.01 The Dominican Republic (DR) is an upper middle-income country with a small, open economy that is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Economic performance has traditionally been driven by manufacturing and agriculture, although recent decades have seen a shift toward services and extractive activities. The degree of trade openness¹ in the economy is 54%, and tourism and free trade zones account for nearly 70% of its total exports. The majority (80%) of the DR population, estimated at 10.2 million, lives in urban areas².

1.02 Since the mid-2000s, the agro-food sector has accounted for 10% of Gross Domestic Product and is the third-largest employer in the DR (9.5%) after commercial services and manufacturing. The majority of producers are smallholders. The average size of a farm is six hectares and approximately 71% of producers cultivate a farm smaller than four hectares. Crop activities account for 63% of output, followed by livestock activities (20%) and both crop and livestock activities (16.3%)³. Agriculture expansion has benefited from both organic and greenhouse production, with 8.7% of agricultural land devoted to organic production. The DR is the world's largest producer of organic cocoa (153,000 hectares) and organic bananas (20,350 hectares), representing more than 30% of organic cocoa and 55% of organic banana production globally. Between 2004 and 2017, agricultural production in greenhouses grew from 200,000 square meters to ten million square meters⁴.

1.03 Food processing is also the largest and the fastest-growing manufacturing sector in the DR. In 2018, with USD3.5 billion of total value-added, the entire sector contributed to 40% of total manufacturing value-added in the country. In addition, with 135,000 employees it also accounts for 26% of total employment in manufacturing. During 2007–2018, food processing output grew at 4.7% on average, faster than local manufacturing and free trade zone manufacturing at 3.6% and 3.1%, respectively.

¹ Trade openness refers to the orientation of a country's economy in the context of international trade and is usually measured by the total sum of imports and exports as a ratio to a country's GDP.

² Dominican Republic IDB Group Country Strategy 2017–2020.

³ NEC (2015), VI Censo Nacional Agropecuario: Actividades Pecuarias, Prácticas y Servicios Agropecuarios, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, http://www.inec.go.cr/sites/default/files/documentos-biblioteca-virtual/reagropeccenagro2014-tii-008_0.pdf ONE (2016), Precenso Nacional Agropecuario 2015, <https://cenagro.one.gob.do/index.php/documentos-de-consulta/Documentos%20de%20consulta/Precenso%20Nacional%20Agropecuario%202015%20Informe%20final/detail> (accessed on 15 May 2020)

⁴ ITC/IISD/FiBL (2018), The State of Sustainable Markets 2018: Statistics and Emerging Trends, International Trade Centre, <http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/Sustainability%202018%20layout-FIN-web2.pdf>. FAO (2017), The Future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges, <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6583e.pdf>.

1.04 Compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS)⁵ standards is a major and continuing constraint to increased market access for the DR agro-food⁶ exports in key markets such as the United States of America (US) and the EU. For fresh produce accessing the US, a 2015 World Bank Trade Competitiveness Diagnostic assessment found the DR had a higher import refusal rate than neighbouring countries in the US market. When all countries exporting to the US are taken into account, the DR trade compliance performance is classified as poor. The report further found that import refusals are not a problem only with small exporters but rather a relatively widespread issue especially in the fresh fruits and vegetables sector.

1.05 In the case of EU market access, fruit and vegetable exports from the DR have been repeatedly banned by the European port health authorities. This is mostly the result of produce exceeding Maximum Residue Limits (MRL)⁷ within International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures, specifically EU Council Directive Ref. 2000/29/EC⁸, and EU Commission Implementing Directive Ref. 2014/78/EU⁹. As a result of audits performed by the DR's Food and Veterinary Office in 2010, 2012 and 2015, a National Action Plan to improve compliance with EU SPS requirements was developed and implemented. This primarily included the introduction of some post-harvest treatments and pre-export inspections for selected vegetables being exported to the EU. Efforts have also been made to improve inspectors' qualifications and performance at inspection facilities. While these measures have led to a significant decrease in the number of notifications (77 stopped shipments in 2019 down from 143 in 2018) the number of notifications remains comparatively high. During the period 2015–2019, the DR had the fourth-highest number of notifications and containers rejected for non-compliance with respective SPS measures by the US and EU. Comparatively, the DR receives one notification per US\$7.1 million in exports, while Costa Rica receives one per US\$30 million, Honduras one per US\$41.9 million, Ecuador one per US\$53.5 million, and Chile one per US\$182 million¹⁰. The remaining challenges as identified in the last EU audit related to deficiencies in record-keeping (traceability); weaknesses in the value chain—including labelling and packaging standards and product quality assurance certifications—especially for bell peppers and eggplants (which are primarily grown in green houses); and lack of access to, or knowledge of SPS requirements for EU markets. Bell peppers, hot peppers, eggplants, bitter gourd¹¹ and mangoes are the top five products affected, with the EU banning exports of bitter gourd altogether.

⁵ SPS measures that governments apply to protect human, animal, or plant life or health from risks arising from the entry or spread of pests, from plant- or animal-borne pests or diseases, or from additives, contaminants, toxins, or disease-causing organisms in foods, beverages, or feedstuffs. Article 20 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) allows governments to act on trade in order to protect human, animal or plant life or health, provided they do not discriminate or use this as disguised protectionism. In addition, there are two specific WTO agreements dealing with food safety and animal and plant health and safety, and with product standards in general. These are the WTO Agreement on SPS measures and the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

⁶ Defined here as both fresh produce and manufactured/value-added products.

⁷ CODEX ALIMENTAR US international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice defines the maximum residue limit (MRL) as the highest level of a pesticide residue that is legally tolerated in or on food or feed when pesticides are applied correctly in accordance with Good Agricultural Practice.

⁸ Council Directive 2000/29/EC - <https://www.ecolex.org/details/legislation/council-directive-200029ec-on-protective-measures-against-the-introduction-into-the-community-of-organisms-harmful-to-plants-or-plant-products-and-against-their-spread-within-the-community-lex-faoc034825>

⁹ Commission Implementing Directive 2014/78/EU amending Annexes I, II, III, IV and V to Council Directive 2000/29/EC: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32014L0078>

¹⁰ Data on health notifications come from the United States Department of Agriculture, the European Union Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions – EUROPHYT and the RASFF - Food and Feed Safety Alerts of the European Union.

¹¹ Also known as bitter melon in the English-speaking Caribbean and sopropo in Suriname.

1.06 In the case of food-processing, small firms continue to be constrained in accessing international markets due to their lack of certified safety management systems such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and Global Good Agricultural Practice¹².

Greenhouse Farming in DR.

1.07 In order to facilitate the expansion of greenhouse farming, GODR has been providing special incentives for agricultural production under greenhouses in the municipalities of San Juan, Bohechío, El Cercado, Juan de Herrera, Las Matas de Farfán and Vallejuelo. Greenhouse farmers in these regions have formed associations and cooperatives to facilitate the sharing of production resources and the collective marketing and export of their produce so as to reduce their reliance on intermediaries or so-called middlemen. The collective membership of the Asociación de Exportadores de Vegetales Orientales de La Vega; Asociación de Productores Hortícolas del Valle de Constanza; Asociación de Productores en Ambiente Controlado de La Sierra; Asociación de Productores de Invernadero de San José de Ocoa; and the Cluster de Productores de Invernadero de Jarabacoa represent more than 60% of greenhouse vegetable production in the DR. The associations function as cooperatives and to date have established seedling production facilities (with the support of GODR) to supply farmers with replanting material; facilitated training in good agricultural practices and provided technical assistance to farmers seeking to develop quality assurance systems. All four associations are desirous of supporting the export of produce from their membership which would reduce the need for other intermediaries and improve returns to the farmers. A major challenge however is the absence of cold storage which contributes to diminished quality of highly perishable produce and avoidable post-harvest losses. Equally the absence of a traceability system¹³ precludes access to EU and other key markets.

Export Promotion and Food Security.

1.08 The responsibility to develop policies for the sustainable and competitive development of the agrofood industry falls across different ministries and agencies. The National Development Strategy (NDS) 2010–2030 (Law 1/2012), led by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development defines the guiding principles for medium and long-term support to the agricultural sector. Increased financing and technical assistance for farmers and producers are the main policy levers for increasing the quality of local production and promoting exports. As a complement to the NDS, the Ministry of Agriculture is leading the sustainable agriculture agenda that prioritises export promotion and food security outlined in the Strategic Agricultural Development Plan 2010–2020. The strategic plan is built around three main objectives: increasing productivity and competitiveness; promoting agricultural exports; and strengthening self-sufficiency.

1.09 VICOMEX manages the implementation of all international trade agreements and has assumed direct responsibility for advancing the EPA implementation process.

¹² Global GAP is a farm assurance program, translating consumer requirements into Good Agricultural Practice. The standard was developed using the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) guidelines published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and is governed according to the ISO/IEC 17065 for product certification schemes

¹³ Traceability is a system in which fruits and vegetables can be traced from the field to the buyer by lot through unique codes.

VICOMEX serves as a focal point for private and public sectors on issues related to the application of international trade agreements. It is the authority with the power to coordinate with other governmental institutions and trade partners on matters related to the management and implementation of commitments from trade agreements signed by the country. Hence, VICOMEX is responsible for all general and technical issues that lead to the timely and adequate application of trade EPA.

1.10 ADOEXPO is a not-for-profit public-private alliance created in 1972 by Presidential Decree No. 2374, to promote the export sector and develop the strategies necessary for the promotion of Dominican exports. ADOEXPO, is comprised of 290 exporters, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises within a wide range of sectors from fresh products, to agro-industrial, and services. It has evolved as the premier institution in the country for the promotion, defense and orientation of the export sector, including contributions toward the development of export policies of the DR. ADOEXPO also plays a relevant role in capacity building, conducting regular training sessions, diplomas, seminars, courses and workshops on issues of importance to the export sector.

1.11 VICOMEX and ADOEXPO in collaboration with the Dominican Agribusiness Board (Junta Agroempresarial Dominicana JAD) have undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at: (1) improving the ecosystem for food safety; and (2) enhancing market access for agri-produce. They endeavour to work together to collect information to identify the needs of exporters and establish the measures and solutions that allow them to take advantage of opportunities in the international export market.

2. OBJECTIVES OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

2.1 The objective of this assignment is to enhance the capacity of four greenhouse farmers' associations to improve EU market access for peppers and eggplants through training in post-harvest handling techniques and the development and implementation of an appropriate food safety management and traceability system.

3 SCOPE OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES.

3.1 The Consulting firm (the consultant) is required to undertake all the necessary actions to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Project in a timely manner, with the supervision of the Project Coordinator.

The tasks will include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Attend a virtual briefing with VICOMEX, ADOEXPO and greenhouse farmers' associations.
- (b) Prepare a workplan for undertaking the assignment.
- (c) Prepare analysis for the four identified greenhouse farmers associations. Analysis will include assessment of operations and compliance with internationally recognised food safety management and traceability systems.
- (d) In keeping with the findings in (c) above, develop detailed recommendations and action plans for the greenhouse associations.

- (e) Design and Implement a Quality and Safety Management System for four farmers associations.
- (f) Provide post-harvest training. Course content will include inter alia modules on the following with relevant reading materials:
 - (i) Introduction to post harvest biology and technology in horticultural crops
 - (ii) Scope of preservation in Dominican Republic
 - (iii) Maturity indices and ripening
 - (iv) Pre-harvest factors affecting quality on post-harvest shelf life of fruits and vegetables
 - (v) Causes of deterioration of harvested fruits and vegetables
 - (vi) Pre-cooling and pre-storage treatments
 - (vii) Methods of storage and artificial ripening, facilities and equipment, management of environmental conditions, including, controlled atmospheres
 - (viii) Packaging methods, materials and technology
 - (ix) Site selection and unit layout for fruit and vegetable processing unit
 - (x) Site hygiene / sanitation, insect and pest control
 - (xi) Chemical preservation, heat and cold preservation and processing
 - (xii) Enzymes in food industry
 - (xiii) Food spoilage
 - (xiv) Transportation of horticulture products
 - (xv) Food safety assurance, standardisation, inspection, quality evaluation and control
- (g) Upon completion of this course participants will be able to identify, understand and implement critical post-harvest technology and handling issues.
- (h) Administer graded evaluation/examinations as necessary to provide certification of course completion at the end of each training session.

Traceability System

- (a) Hold consultations with the farmers' associations to gain an understanding of the context and determine the internal and external needs for the development of a traceability system for peppers and eggplants. The consultations should also be used to determine the appropriate traceability standard to be used and the extent to which the systems can be technology driven.

- (b) Conduct at least two sensitisation seminars to build awareness of traceability systems for farmers.
- (c) Analyse the existing supply systems for peppers and eggplants from field to port for its gaps.
- (d) Draft product flow charts for each chain, analyse each step for its traceability aspects, and make suggestions for a traceable chain of custody. This includes analysis of operations at bulk buyer level.
- (e) Prepare an analysis report, critically describing all steps in the supply chain that are relevant for the traceability system.
- (f) Develop a coding system from source and area of origin to bulk buyers allowing traceability of the product from buyer to source—the system should be based on the unique code already used by the Department for Food Safety.
- (g) Develop applicable traceability documents using the same coding system for every step identified; the traceability documents and coding system must allow identification of the product, the volume, the quality, the producer, and the area of origin. The coding traceability system shall be generic to accommodate also other products.
- (h) Prepare a manual describing the traceability system for the products; the manual shall contain a supply chain map for every product.
- (i) To propose a management system of persons at key steps to operationalise the traceability system; the management system shall be part of the manual.
- (j) To identify and train key persons along the supply chain on the utilisation of the documentation.
- (k) To carry out verification tests on the documentation and traceability tests, including verification of the volumes traded and documented.
- (l) Identify the data that needs to be traced and define the parameters of traceability.
- (m) Review the data that is recorded and already in place for production management, customer relations, marketing, and accounting. Compare with the specifications of the external requirements and the standard of choice.

4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

4.1 The Consultant will report to the Project Coordinator and will be required to submit/deliver the following in Spanish and English:

Deliverables	When
A Draft Inception Report containing a detailed work plan and schedule.	Two weeks after commencement of assignment.
A Revised Inception Report within one week of receiving comments on the draft Inception Report.	Three weeks after commencement of assignment.

Gap Analysis, Recommendations and Action plans for each participating greenhouse farming association.	12 weeks after commencement of assignment.
A draft Final Report that provides details of the assignment, including activities performed, results obtained, recommendations and follow-up actions required.	24 weeks after commencement of assignment.

5 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The consultant will undertake the tasks related to this assignment in a maximum of 90 days over a period of 15 months and should report to the Project Coordinator.

6 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

6.1 The consulting firm should appoint a key expert with the following qualifications:

- (a) A University degree and Lead Auditor certification from a recognised auditor registration authority.
- (b) A higher-level diploma or equivalent qualifications in agriculture, with specialization on food and trade standards and production processes.
- (c) At least ten years' work experience in implementing HACCP in the food industry. Experience in the Caribbean Region and/or in a developing country will be an asset.
- (d) Experience in agricultural-agro-industry is desirable.
- (e) Excellent command of written and spoken English and Spanish.
- (f) Proven Experience (ten years) in training for quality and safety standards implementation.