The Role of Standards in Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Africa

Ms. Irina Kireeva – Expert in Technical Barriers to Trade of the EU ACP TBT Programme

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Africa = Agriculture

- Agriculture forms a dominating portion of the economies of all African countries.
- The agricultural sector remains a major sector in most African countries.
- Agriculture employs 65% of Africa’s labour force and accounts for 32% of gross domestic product.
- African continent has enormous potential, not only to feed itself and ensure food security and eliminate hunger, but also to be a major player in global food markets.
Challenges for Africa – Food Security

• In the last 30 years, Africa’s population has doubled, and its urban population has tripled.
• Agricultural production in Africa has not kept the pace with population growth.
• Despite rapid urbanisation, the rural population is growing and land pressure is mounting.
What is food security?

"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

1996 World Food Summit
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The Four Main Components of Food Security

1. **AVAILABILITY**
   There is a reliable and consistent source of quality food.

2. **ACCESS**
   People have sufficient resources to produce and/or purchase food.

3. **UTILIZATION**
   People have the knowledge and basic sanitary conditions to choose, prepare, and distribute food in a way that results in good nutrition.

4. **STABILITY**
   People’s ability to access and utilize food that remains stable and sustained over time.

**FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**
Food Insecurity – Chronic and Transitory
Things affecting food security today include:

- **Global Water Crisis** - Water table reserves are falling in many countries (including Northern China, the US, and India) due to widespread overpumping and irrigation.

- **Climate Change** - Rising global temperatures are beginning to have a ripple effect on crop yields, forest resources, water supplies and altering the balance of nature.

- **Land Degradation** - Intensive farming leads to a vicious cycle of exhaustion of soil fertility and decline of agricultural yields.

- **Greedy Land Deals** - Corporations and Governments buying rights to millions of acres of agricultural land in developing countries to secure their own long-term food supplies.
Sustainable agriculture integrates three main goals, namely:
Sustainable agricultural production involves:

1) selection of species and varieties which are well suited to the geographical location and specific conditions of the farm;

2) diversification of crops and suitable management of the soil to enhance the biological and economic stability of the farm and, at the same time, protect the soil quality;

3) efficient and human use of inputs and finally, consideration of farmers’ goals and lifestyle choices.

All these principles, in totality, constitute an appropriate management practice.
Standards and technical regulations play a vital role in selection of appropriate agricultural and management practices, as they contain technical requirements for products or related processes and production methods.

Standardisation is the open door for safety, international recognition and quality in agricultural production.
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What is a standard?

“Document approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method.”

WTO TBT Agreement, Annex 1
A government guideline saying that all eggs weighing 62 grams or more are entitled to be labelled “Grade A” is a standard (provided that eggs weighing less may still be sold).

A guideline defining what products can display a “recyclable symbol” is a standard (provided that products that do not bear the symbol may still be sold).

Examples of Standards
The use of international standards for TBT and SPS measures:

- Under the SPS Agreement, WTO Members are compelled to use international standards unless they can show a specific scientific justification based on an assessment of the possible risk.
- WTO Members may set TBT measures that deviate from the international standards for other reasons, including technological difficulties or geographical issues.
What is a technical regulation?

“Document which lays down product characteristics or their related processes and production methods, including the applicable administrative provisions, with which compliance is mandatory. It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method.”

*WTO TBT Agreement, Annex 1*
Examples of Technical Regulations

A law stating that all product packaging must be recyclable

A law stating that only safe food can be placed on the market for sale or that only companies that have implemented HACCP can be registered as FBOs
In *EC – Sardines* the Appellate Body referring back to its Report in *EC - Asbestos* set forth a three part test for determining if a measure is a technical regulation:

- the document applies to an identifiable product or group of products;
- the document must lay down one or more product characteristics; and
- compliance with these characteristics must be mandatory.
Life cycle of a standard

- Identification of needs: analysis per sector / commodity of the technical-economic feasibility;
- Will a standard provide a technical and economic "plus"?
- Is the knowledge required for drawing-up a standard available?
- Collective programming: based on needs, identify and prioritize
- Draft standard by parties of interest: experts in TCs (farmers, producers, users, consumers, traders, laboratories, etc.)
Life cycle of a standard

• Consensus of experts concerning the draft standard;
• **Validation**: consultation, at national and international level to ensure that the draft standard conforms to the general interest, judging comments and finalizing text
• **Approval**: of the text for publication as a standard;
• **Review**: to detect when a standard must be adapted to new needs;
• Following a review, a standard may be confirmed without change, be revised or withdrawn.
Special work of UNICE - Agricultural Quality Standards

UNECE through its Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its specialized sections, develops internationally agreed commercial quality standards for agricultural produce, helps with their interpretation and promotes their practical application.

In this process, UNECE cooperates with the secretariat of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure that the standard-setting process is consistent with WTO rules, as well as with standard-setting bodies, such as the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission to avoid duplication of work and divergence in standards.

Today, close to 100 agricultural standards have been adopted for the purpose of facilitating international trade.
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How standards can help and improve the management and productivity in relation to agriculture?

• Information on the needs of consumers and operators participating in standards work;
• Insight into technical developments of competitors also active in standardization;
• Reduction of risks involved in innovation;
• Influence on contents of standards;
• Global market access;
• Identification of main standardization business processes and their related key indicators;
• Identification of main processes interfaces.
Benefits of using standards:

• Rationalization and diversification of production;
• Better planning and predictability;
• Used in public and private commercial contracts regarding specifications;
• Used in the global chain as indisputable;
• Provide solutions for technical, logistics problems;
• Represent high level of technical know-how and play overall a favourable role for innovation and development of products due to transfer of knowledge
• As a result - lower costs and high quality of produce.
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CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO USE OF STANDARDS - MULTIPLICITY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE STANDARDS CONSTITUTE A BARRIER TO TRADE

• Standards and technical regulations substitute tariffs and quantitative restrictions;
• Standards require higher production costs for firms in developing countries;
• EU private standards on agricultural products are of great concern to Africa.
Thank you for your attention!

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