



MYANMAR:

Myanmar's processed food products could open the door to Southeast Asian markets

Context

Myanmar's recent membership to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has presented the country with greater opportunities for linkages to regional and international markets, especially for food exports. Despite the country's status as a least developed country (LDC), Myanmar has rarely suffered food shortages, unlike many of its peers. With the agricultural sector contributing around 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) and accounting for 70% of employment, food production is an important part of the economy.

Food exports, however, are likely to be constrained by current food safety and hygiene practices that do not comply with international and regional requirements. Myanmar lacks an effective National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) to provide necessary quality and safety assurance services, and its food processing factories employ outdated technology. In view of this situation, the Government requested UNIDO's support in strengthening and modernizing the NQI.

Main approach

UNIDO – in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) and the Myanmar Food Processors and Exporters Association (MFPEA) – is strengthening Myanmar's national capacity to provide internationally recognized laboratory testing services to food producers and exporters.

The first step in strengthening the NQI involves upgrading the capacity of key testing laboratories, namely the MFPEA's Food Industries Development Supporting Laboratory (FIDSL). The laboratories are being refurbished with new equipment to improve their ability to offer testing services to MFPEA members. In parallel, UNIDO is delivering training sessions to laboratory staff on international accreditation requirements, such as ISO 17025.

The Organization is also helping increase the country's institutional capacities related to standardization. The MoST's Myanmar

Department of Research Innovation (DRI) is being provided with training and technical support to formulate medium to long-term strategic plans for standards harmonization. In addition, the DRI calibration laboratory is being upgraded with modern equipment, its personnel is being trained and a road map for a separate national accreditation body is being established. The food inspection procedures and testing abilities of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Myanmar Inspection and Testing Services Ltd. (MITS) are also being improved with the aim of supporting them towards accreditation.

Impact and results

With a strengthened and modern NQI, Myanmar's processed food products will be better able to access markets across Southeast Asia and beyond. Four key food testing laboratories are being upgraded through technical training of staff. A pilot programme is also helping 15 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) implement food safety management systems to enable their integration into global supply chains, especially of retailers in the European Union and the United States.

At a glance

Project title: Strengthening the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) for trade in the Union of Myanmar
Donor: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)
Budget: EUR 2,650,806
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