

Terms of Reference
for the Evaluation of the UNECE project “Strengthening national capacities of the CIS countries to implement ECE agricultural quality standards” (E236)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project “Strengthening national capacities of the CIS countries to implement ECE agricultural quality standards.” It will also consider the impact and sustainability in terms of the quality and output of the seed potato laboratories and their capacity to serve as multiplier agencies in the CIS and the sustainability of the outputs after the project’s conclusion.

II. Background

The UNECE project “Strengthening national capacities of the CIS countries to implement ECE agricultural quality standards” (E236) was funded by the Russian Federation and was implemented by the UNECE from October 2014 to February 2018.

The overall objective of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the CIS countries to produce quality agricultural products, strengthen the implementation of UNECE quality standards in the region, and support the broader UN-wide goal of ensuring food security and nutrition for all.

The objective of the project was to be achieved through the following strategy:

1. Procurement and installation of required equipment in a biotechnological laboratory to produce healthy seed potatoes under clean phytosanitary conditions in the northern region of Arkhangelsk, Russian Federation including training on the use of the equipment for implementing ECE standards. The production of in-vitro virus-free source material (microplants and microtubers), which would meet the requirements of the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, is only possible by means of modern biotechnological methods under the sterile conditions of a biotechnological laboratory. The equipment will be purchased through the UNOG and shall belong to UN until such time as ownership thereof is transferred, on terms and conditions mutually agreed upon between the country and ECE.
2. Developing guidelines and recommendations on traceability in the food sector. Setting up an operational traceability system, as a pilot, at one of the poultry-processing enterprises in the Russian Federation. Disseminating the results across the CIS region;
3. Developing internationally recommended guides for potato growers and inspectors on how to cultivate quality seed potatoes to produce high yields without contaminating the soil;
4. Developing explanatory brochures on the ECE standards for persimmons and dried apricots to improve the marketing quality of these products of particular economic importance for the Central Asian countries;
5. To support the breeding and testing of new varieties of soya resistant to disease and unfavourable climatic conditions through field visits by experts. This activity is a continuation of cooperation between ECE, Switzerland and the Russian Federation.

III. Scope

The evaluation will include the full period of the project implementation from October 2014 to February 2018. The evaluation will cover the contribution of UNECE throughout the project period with a special focus on the implementation and results of the final phase in Shushary, Leningrad Region in 2017.

Gender aspects will be also covered by the evaluation, taking into account guidance provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group on the matter, and as outlined in the UNECE Evaluation Policy (2014).

IV. Issues

The evaluation will seek to report on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. Key questions that the evaluation seeks to answer include:

Relevance

- To what extent were the project's achievements consistent with the UNECE mandate to support member States in building their capacity to implement the relevant agricultural quality standards?
- To what extent did the project serve the needs of its main beneficiaries?
- To what extent were the project's objectives achieved? To what extent were the project outputs relevant to strengthening the capacity of the Shushary Laboratory to implement the standards and serve as a multiplier point?

Effectiveness

- What impact did the project have on seed potato cultivation in the Russian Federation?
- What positive and/or negative spill-over effect did the project have in other CIS countries?
- What were the main reasons, if any, for not achieving the effect desired?

Efficiency

- What was the input/output ratio of the project?
- Was the chosen project strategy the most efficient for achieving the desired output?

Impact

- To what extent did the project activities contribute to raising awareness in the Russian Federation and the CIS of the relevant UNECE standards?
- To what extent did international technical assistance mobilised by the UNECE in the framework of the project contribute to building and strengthening the institutional capacity of the Shushary Laboratory?
- How does the Shushary Laboratory support the advancement of the standards in the Russian Federation and CIS? Are there areas for improvement?

Sustainability

- To what extent is the Shushary Laboratory developed with technical support under the project fit for self-sustained performance?
- To what extent does the Shushary Laboratory continue to perform after the completion of the project?
- How are the practices promoted in the context of the project being followed in the Russian Federation and the CIS at present?

V. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out utilising various means of assessment, including:

- A desk review of all relevant documents related to the mandate for and design of the project, monitoring and relevant evaluation reports, and other related information
- A tailored electronic questionnaire will be designed and executed by an external evaluation consultant, with the guidance of the UNECE project manager. It will seek information that would allow addressing the questions listed in section IV.
- Interviews with selected and key stakeholders of the project, both within the UNECE Secretariat, beneficiary member States, and other stakeholders identified by the UNECE project manager. The interviews will take place via phone and skype. The UNECE project manager

will provide the contact details.

The UNECE project manager will support and further explanation to the evaluation consultant when needed. The evaluation consultant will submit a **report** on the results of the evaluation based on these terms of reference.

The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance and quality assurance on all matters relating to the evaluation design and methodology, including of the draft final report.

VI. Evaluation Schedule

Develop a timetable for the following phases of the evaluation:

- A. Preliminary research: March 2018 (by evaluation consultant)*
- B. Data Collection: questionnaire and interviews by evaluation consultant (by evaluation consultant): Fourth week of March - April 2018*
- C. Data Analysis: First week of April 2018 (by evaluation consultant)*
- D. Draft Report: End of April 2018 (by evaluation consultant)*
- E. Final Report: May 2018 (by evaluation consultant)*

VII. Resources

An external evaluation consultant identified through the UNECE evaluation roster will be hired to conduct the evaluation. The evaluation will be managed by the UNECE Project Manager in the Market Access Section of the Trade subprogramme. The UNECE Programme Management Unit will provide guidance on the evaluation design and methodology, and quality assurance of the evaluation report in line with the UNECE Evaluation Policy (2014).

Additional stakeholders, including the senior staff of the Leningrad Region Branch of the Federal State Budgetary Institution “Russian Agricultural Centre” (Shushary Community of St. Petersburg) under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, as well as any other subjects involved in project implementation will be invited to share experiences, as appropriate.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE evaluation policy. The results of the evaluation report will be used to report to the donor on the results of the evaluation, and inform the design of future relevant projects. The evaluation report and the management response will be made publicly available on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for Evaluators

The evaluator should have:

- Good knowledge and experience of evaluation, project management, social and demographic statistics
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations
- Proficiency of written and spoken English with a working knowledge in Russian