BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS

Trade for Sustainable Development
Sustainable development matters to everyone. It is at the core of ITC’s mission. That is why six years ago we began the Trade for Sustainable Development Programme to promote sustainable supply chains as a means to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing countries add value to their products and services.

Since then, the sustainability landscape has become more complex. A proliferation of standards, codes of conduct and other sustainability initiatives create challenges for consumers, multinationals, NGOs, governments, and particularly, SMEs in the developing world.

Sustainability initiatives provide new trade opportunities, improve product quality, mitigate environmental degradation, improve compliance with social and labour standards, and boost overall competitiveness of SME exporters.

These benefits will only be fully realized with investment of financial and technical resources to identify, understand and meet these standards. This is often more difficult for small producers in the developing world.

This investment is not an option; it is a major component of business. To meet the growing demand for goods and services that are framed by these sustainability parameters, they must become a critical part of the business plan of any SME.

National and international governments are moving ahead with sustainable public procurement commitments, as are many multinational corporations. But these commitments could become lost in the web of overlapping sustainability standards, codes and sourcing policies.

Rising certification costs result in market inefficiencies. Yet the private or voluntary nature of sustainability standards is a strength, fostering innovation and an agile response to imperatives such as climate change and workers’ rights.

Our collective challenge is to harness the best of what sustainable standards offer, so that sustainable, inclusive trade becomes the norm, and not the exception.

This is why we launched the ITC Trade for Sustainable Development Principles campaign at the first ITC Trade for Sustainable Development Forum in October 2014.

The campaign is designed to encourage organizations to support core values for a sustainable society.

The first principle is sustainability. We expect organizations to promote sustainable trade practices to address social, environmental, economic, management, quality and ethics issues. These are embedded in the production, processing and trade of goods and services.

The second principle is transparency. Organizations contribute to clarity by demonstrating openness to sharing good practices, trust and inclusiveness in supply chains.

Harmonization is the third principle. We need to stop reinventing the wheel with overlapping definitions, codes and audits.

The final principle is a commitment to align work to the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We expect our partners to embody these principles. Our programme contributes to making this possible with initiatives for better transparency and institutional capacity building for compliance. Ultimately, our hope is that together we can foster convergence.

I hope you will find the following information useful in understanding the full breadth of the ITC Trade for Sustainable Development programme and how these principles can be an integral part of the sustainable development discourse.

We look forward to working with you.

Arancha González
Building sustainable supply chains

Trade for Sustainable Development Core Principles

**Sustainability**
Support and promote sustainable trade practices, with regards to social, environmental, economic and management, quality and ethics issues at stake in the production, processing and trading of goods and services.

**Transparency**
Contribute to efficiency in global supply chains by clear demonstration of openness to sharing good practices, to foster transparency, trust and inclusiveness at all levels of global supply chains.

**Harmonization**
Build on existing resources and methodologies with a collaborative approach avoiding duplication that may provoke proliferation of standards, multiplication of audits or assessment methodologies.

**Sustainable Development Goals**
Act in alignment to the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda, which builds upon the Millennium Development Goals, with a view to developing a set of global sustainable development goals.

By adhering to the ITC Trade for Sustainable Development principles, companies and institutions working with our programme are expected to embrace a set of core values to support sustainable trade.

We invite you to become a signatory today by completing the Letter of Endorsement of the T4SD Principles (http://ow.ly/IAB2O).
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Programme Components

The ITC Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Programme – a recognized and trusted global platform to build sustainable supply chains.

T4SD Global Database

A common language for standards initiatives

A credible, central and neutral repository, the global database is the foundation of the programme. It enables comparisons between standard initiatives, processes and requirements.

A common language translates the standards information into more than 1,000 data fields split into two main categories: requirements and processes.

ITC collects information on standards and conducts quality control in cooperation with standard organizations and independent experts. Each relevant organization (or its designated experts) updates the information yearly. ITC ensures continuous improvement and referencing in the database.

The global database feeds the Standards Map website.

Standards Map

Transparency for standards initiatives

www.standardsmap.org

This free, user-friendly website enables users to analyse standards-related data and self-assess performance. The site currently covers over 170 standards initiatives, applicable to more than 80 sectors and 180 countries.

Practitioners from many sectors and backgrounds use the website to identify relevant standards, compare information through tables and charts, and run self-assessments of their performance against standard requirements.

At the end of the assessment, a diagnostic report details areas for improvement. This report can be shared online directly with partners, certification bodies or others.

Standards Map is part of ITC’s suite of Market Analysis Tools, which have more than 450,000 registered users.

Sustainability Marketplace

Connecting businesses along sustainable supply chains

This virtual marketplace allows Standards Map users to share their diagnostic reports and profiles with buyers, traders, standards organizations, certification bodies, financiers and others.
It creates a better environment for business engagement with supply chain partners by enabling farmers, processors and manufacturers to share Standards Map diagnostic reports with buyers looking to source sustainable products and services. Standards organizations can also generate analytical reports of users who make their reports public.

**SustainabilityXchange**

**Linking communities committed to sustainable production and trade**

[www.sustainabilityxchange.info](http://www.sustainabilityxchange.info)

This new platform is available free for users, and is focused on driving sustainable agricultural value chains and trade. It is designed to empower trainers, businesses, standards organizations, NGOs and governments.

A one-stop shop of accessible information and capacity building knowledge for sustainable agriculture, forestry and aquaculture, it is designed around five services:

- Library
- Community Forum
- Directory of experts and institutions
- Events Calendar for training
- Newsroom on sustainability trends.

**Capacity Building and Research**

**Empowering stakeholders**

Producers and exporters need help to measure their capacity against potential standards applicable to their products.

The training programme is delivered through in-the-field training workshops and e-learning modules. Research is underway to develop supplier sourcing guides, contribute to ITC and other international publications, and provide market data to ITC constituents.

**Customized Platforms and Special Projects**

**Leveraging the repository of standards information to deliver supply chain solutions**

Customized platforms help our partners create synergies, saving time and resources. They are demand-driven interventions that address specific needs of project partners in their supply chains.

One example is our equivalency tool for flower growers assessing floriculture-related sustainability standards against a set of international references.

Another example is our Farm Sustainability Assessment tool, which enables farmers to assess and communicate sustainable agriculture practices to their customers in the food and beverages industry.
ITC has developed the T4SD Global Database to analyse very diverse standards initiatives. ITC collects, reviews and categorizes standards information, around their requirements and processes.

The roots of this database are some 1,000 data points, developed with technical partners and over 100 standard organizations. It is revised annually to accommodate more sectors and requirements.
Robust Data Management Protocols

The T4SD Global Database is based on a rigorous methodology to ensure global, comprehensive and neutral information on standards.

1. ITC’s T4SD team loads the information into the database using official documents provided by the standard organization. The data entry takes place through an online Data Entry Tool (DET), which facilitates the entry and further review of standards’ information.

2. An independent expert knowledgeable on the standard initiative completes the quality control review of the information entered by ITC.

3. The standard organization reviews the information entered by ITC team and reviewed by the independent expert. The review takes place through the DET, which enables the T4SD team to track and review the suggested changes made by the standard organization.

4. The suggested changes made by the standard organization are reviewed and discussed with ITC team and any changes made by the standard organization need to be supplemented with evidence taken from their official documents.

5. Once information has been approved by all parties, it is displayed on Standards Map.

6. Data is continuously updated with a full review taking place annually. Changes can be made throughout the year in case standard organizations make any changes to their standards or need to update any information in the system.
Standards Map

Transparency for standards initiatives

Standards Map offers comprehensive, verified and transparent information on standards for environmental protection, work and labour rights, economic development, quality and food safety, and business ethics.

Standards Map Helps Users to:

- Engage in sustainable production and trade;
- Review and analyse various standards’ requirements and processes;
- Learn about potential certification costs and benefits;
- Access step-by-step guidance on how to comply with requirements;
- Evaluate additional efforts to be in compliance;
- Monitor progress over time using self-assessment diagnostic reports.

Learn More about Standards

Identify, compare and assess over 170 standards, codes of conduct, protocols and best practices.

Assess Performance

Run a self-assessment to evaluate compliance against any set of standards and their specific requirements, using an online questionnaire.

A diagnostic report charts the organization’s Roadmap to Sustainable Trade. It provides a detailed analysis of areas for improvement and can be shared online with partners.

Key Features

- An interactive and user-friendly web-based platform;
- Free access, as part of ITC’s global public goods policy;
- Four modules help users navigate through and analyse standards information.

www.standardsmap.org
1 Peru 10.08%
2 United States of America 7.57%
3 Mexico 5.15%
4 Colombia 5.11%
5 Germany 4.88%
6 The Netherlands 4.52%
7 Switzerland 4.10%
8 Turkey 3.91%
9 United Kingdom 3.62%
10 India 2.93%
11 Brazil 2.70%
12 France 2.13%
13 Spain 1.75%
14 Ecuador 1.71%
15 Egypt 1.70%
16 Viet Nam 1.48%
17 Canada 1.46%
18 China 1.44%
19 Belgium 1.22%
20 Iran (Islamic Republic of) 1.19%

Standards Map is used in 192 countries
114 000+ new users* since February 2013

* Visitors who accessed the website at least one time. Users accessing the website multiple times are counted as one visit.

Source: Standards Map Google Analytics, June 2015
Building sustainable supply chains

Sustainability Marketplace
Connecting businesses along sustainable supply chains

Identify, Review and Compare Standards

As a first step, companies, producers and organizations identify and review sustainability standards, using Standards Map.

Users can compare side-by-side the detailed requirements in graph, table and text formats.

Assess Sustainability Commitment

They can then self-assess themselves against one or more standards, using the Standards Map self-assessment module, in the form of an online questionnaire.

This assessment does not replace an actual audit. It informs businesses about their current commitment levels against requirements set forth by standards initiatives, identifies gaps and develops a progressive plan of action to address gaps.

Develop a Sustainability Roadmap

Completion of the assessment allows for the generation of a diagnostic report, which charts a Roadmap for Sustainable Trade. The roadmap provides a detailed analysis of areas where additional commitments need to be implemented.

My Account

The self-assessment reports are stored in the users’ Standards Map account. These diagnostic reports may be shared directly online with the business’ partners, certification bodies or other interested parties. It is up to users to decide whether or not their results can be made public or not.
Identify Relevant Businesses

The reports can then be shared in the Sustainability Marketplace. The marketplace provides transparency regarding business sustainability commitment. It enables small businesses to link up to traders, international buyers and others in the supply chain.

Buyers and others on the demand side of the supply chain can contact specific businesses based on their diagnostic report profiles.

Review Company Diagnostic Report

Buyers can identify and filter reports based on company name, products and services, geographic location and country destinations for exports.

It also features standards included as part of the assessment, or those for which the producer already has certification.

Customized Versions

Customized versions of the sustainability marketplace can be built to enable individual standards initiatives or businesses to review diagnostic reports based on their respective standards or codes of conduct.

Data aggregation features are in development, to allow detailed analysis of business compliance and improvements over time.
SustainabilityXchange

Linking communities committed to sustainable production and trade

A Platform to Develop Sustainable Supply Chains in Agriculture, Forestry and Aquaculture

ITC coordinates this initiative, implemented with a range of partners, to exchange information, resources and experiences.

SustainabilityXchange facilitates interaction among those in supply chains and technical assistance providers. It helps improve performance and increase participation of producers from developing countries and emerging markets in certified sustainable trade.

A One-Stop Shop

SustainabilityXchange empowers trainers, businesses and standards organizations, NGOs and governments to find high-quality capacity-building materials or reliable service providers.

Users get access to:

- Relevant documentation: Library
  Guidelines, training materials, guides, handouts, and research on quality management systems, specific sustainability initiatives or general good practices.

- Experts, service providers and organizations: Directory
  Easy-to-search profiles of experts and service providers with specific skill sets in sustainable agriculture and trade.

- Exchange of experiences: Community Forum
  Practitioners from various regions and backgrounds can ask questions and directly share know-how through moderated or spontaneous e-discussions.

- Capacity development: Events Calendar
  Training, workshops, seminars and conferences around the world – to be searched and shared.

- Latest news in the field: Newsroom
  Carefully curated latest news for sustainable agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and trade.

SustainabilityXchange is Powered by

Hivos, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), 4C Association, UTZ Certified and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH).

ITC developed the platform in close collaboration with Fair and Sustainable Advisory Services, Fair Access to Quality, and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.
Community
3-4 moderated e-discussions each year
and an open forum to use for issue-specific community-of-practice discussions

Library
700+ materials from more than 60 resources
and growing every day

Directory
100+ expert profiles representing over 40 organizations
and growing every day

Events calendar
Dozens of new capacity-building events each month
and an open forum to use for additional visibility of sustainability-related events

Newsroom
2000 news sources
news updated every day

www.sustainabilityxchange.info
Capacity Building and Research

Empowering stakeholders to engage in sustainable production and trade

Training in the Field

The training programme is based on T4SD web platforms. An example is a joint programme with SwissContact, that begun in March 2015. It is empowering cocoa producers in Colombia on certification related to bodies such Fairtrade, UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance.

Producers can perform self-assessments to understand areas to improve before starting an official certification process.

Self-assessment of cocoa farmers and cocoa organizations can be done online with a customized portal using the ITC Standards Map tool for the cocoa sector: www.standardsmap.org/lbcs.

A unique feature is that profiles of cocoa farmers or organizations can be automatically linked to the basic requirements of self-assessment for sustainable cocoa, Land Based Classification Standards and other relevant standards.

E-learning

To inform users about sustainability initiatives and how to use the Standards Map website, ITC developed a free online course. The first five lectures are online:

- Lecture 1: What are standards?
- Lecture 2: The world of standards – which standards are relevant to international trade?
- Lecture 3: Voluntary sustainability standards
- Lecture 4: How does certification work? The key steps to becoming certified.
- Lecture 5: The benefits and costs of sustainability standards for your business.

Future lectures will guide users through Standards Map functionalities and the Compare and Self-Assessment modules.
Research includes development of knowledge bank on sustainability standards; contributions to ITC and other publications; providing impact, market and price data to ITC beneficiaries; and participation in practitioner and academic debates.

An example is Sustainable Sourcing of Agricultural Raw Materials – A practitioner’s guide, the world’s first guide to sustainable sourcing of agricultural raw materials. The publication is the result of a joint effort by seven organizations, including ITC.

An open-source innovation tool that captures best practices and experiences from global corporations within a strategic, business-logic focused framework, the publication provides a roadmap to rolling out effective sustainable agriculture sourcing strategies.

ITC has also conducted four literature reviews:

- The Impact of Private Standards on Value Chains
- The Impact of Private Standards on Developing Country Producers
- The Interplay of Public and Private Standards
- Best Practices – When Private Standards Work

Facts and Figures

From 2009 to 2015 the T4SD team has

- completed 70+ training events
- completed 50+ webinars
- trained 2,000+ private sector participants
- trained 450+ public sector participants
- in over 50 countries

95% satisfaction rate

“GOOD and QUALIFIED trainers”
Cambodia Workshop, Phnom Penh, 2015

“WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!”
Bangladesh Workshop, Dhaka, 2015

“The workshop is a TOP NEED in building SME capacity to be independent, with self-assessment on standards.”
Ms. Ung Vanna, WOT - Natural Khmer Moringa, Cambodia

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Customized Platforms

Leveraging the repository of standards information to deliver supply chain solutions

www.standardsmap.org/fsa

SAI Platform and ITC have developed an online Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) tool that leverages the ITC Standards Map website and offers a unique platform. Users review and compare FSA against other standards, run self-assessments, monitor progress, save their reports into a private account and decide when to share results.

SAI Platform enables stakeholders to assess their farm sustainability using the Standards Map FSA platform, which allows users to:

- Review and compare FSA against other standards;
- Use filters to remove questions not relevant to their farming situation and answer questions that pertain to their country’s legislative requirements;
- Run a farm sustainability self-assessment and see results online;
- Monitor progress over time;
- Save their reports into a private account;
- Decide whether to share the results.

www.standardsmap.org/fsi

The Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) unites over 25 international organizations in the flower-growing sector and is supported by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH). From retail to grower, FSI covers the entire supply chain in the floriculture sector.

The FSI equivalency tool quickly reviews and compares standards. It enables transparency across the supply chain.

The joint ambition of the FSI members is to have 90% of their flowers and pot plants sustainably produced and traded by 2020.

ITC’s role is to contribute to the development of the FSI Equivalency Tool, which builds on the T4SD global database and assesses sustainability standards that operate in the floriculture sector against a set of international references.
With the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council and European Union support, ITC has customized a tool for farmers, agricultural consultants, processors, traders, exporters, associations and policymakers to analyse standards and regulations. Drawing upon the ITC Standards Map website, users review and compare Fiji standards and regulations against other regional and international certifications.

**Delhaize Group**

Delhaize Group and ITC developed a private platform that enables the Delhaize Group and its operating companies to assess sustainability standards against the Delhaize Group’s standards and sustainability strategy.

**ITC and the Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP)**

ITC and the Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) have a joint portal to analyse sustainability standards, codes of conduct and company audits against GSCP Reference Codes. Suppliers perform self-assessments against GSCP social and environmental reference codes.

**AIM-PROGRESS**

AIM-PROGRESS reduces duplication of supplier assessments. Member companies have responsible sourcing programmes that may include site assessments (audits) of suppliers. To reduce audit duplication and costs, companies using the Mutual Recognition mechanism recognize supplier audits of other companies.

ITC and AIM-PROGRESS are developing a benchmarking tool that supports mutual recognition among companies.

**The Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)**

The Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) is an initiative for companies committed to improving working conditions in factories and farms worldwide. It joined ITC to customize a self-assessment tool for producers to assess their social performance against BSCI requirements.

**Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool**

Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool is part of a larger project of the German government, Quality Check: Sustainability Standards, to increase the transparency of standards. Data in the SSCT is sourced from the ITC T4SD database.

The first result is a consumer-oriented web portal, www.siegelklarheit.de.

A portal for public procurement that links the assessment to the EU Guidelines for sustainable public procurement will soon be launched.

**Basic Criteria for Sustainable Cocoa** (Lineamientos Básicos para un Cacao Sostenible – LBCS) is an online tool developed with the Switzerland State Secretariat of Economic Affairs and the Swiss Foundation for International Development Cooperation, in the framework of the programme Promotion of Export and Production of Fine and Aromatic Cocoa of Colombia (Coexca). LBCS brings cocoa producers up to speed on sustainability issues.
ITC works with the UN Global Compact and other organizations to build the Integrated Sustainable Agricultural Programme (ISAP).

This platform enables smaller farmers and SME agribusinesses, including suppliers in larger chains, to be recognized as participants in the global food system.

It bridges the gap between governments and businesses, enabling them to work together to contribute more effectively to achieving global food security.

ISAP offers a framework for partnerships to advance sustainable agriculture, especially family farmers and SMEs that anchor domestic production, handling and processing of food in line with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Business Principles.

The principles, launched in September 2014, respond to calls for a common language and framework to achieve food security through sustainable agriculture.

They build on commitments made at the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, and were developed through over 20 consultations with more than 1,000 businesses and stakeholders around the world.

Several thousand actors figure critically in global and regional supply chains. Most are essential to the resilience of the food sector in their countries. However, smaller actors typically cannot afford certification or do not have the incentives to do so.

ISAP bridges a crucial divide by registering smaller farmers and SMEs in the global food system and by acknowledging the rights and responsibilities that this position entails.

Self-declaration is an important first step to sustainability for smaller farmers and SMEs to prepare them for more exacting standards as their enterprises grow, whether voluntary, mandatory, national or international.

The ISAP application is built on the foundations of the ITC Standards Map. ISAP’s objectives are to:

- Give small farmers and SMEs access to technology and capacity building;
- Provide food and agriculture multinational corporations visibility in the lowest tiers of their value chains to identify challenges, risks and opportunities;
- Give policymakers granular information on local producers and contributors to enhance the resilience of domestic food sectors;
- Align food and agriculture standards to reduce audit fatigue and code duplication from both demand and supply sides.

Core Functionalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engage</th>
<th>Collect Data</th>
<th>Farmer Support and Solutions</th>
<th>Analyse Compliance &amp; Performance</th>
<th>Integration &amp; Business Services</th>
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</table>
| - Communicate ISAP’s vision, mission and farmer/grower expectations. Introduce the value proposition for participants.  
- Enable registration and gather profile information.  | - Collect basic, and later more detailed, data on the farmer’s/grower’s operations.  
- Tailor questions by farmers/growers – crop, geography or sector.  | - Provide farmers/growers information about their performance against standards referenced in ISAP.  
- Recommend leading practices and provide rich content to assist the farmer/grower.  | - Review answers and evidence provided to discern compliance and gauge maturity.  
- Identify and summarise farmers/growers risk profiles based on answers and attributes.  | - Execute processes that span system boundaries.  
- Provide data exchange services to partners and authorized agents.  |
Partner Reflections

FTT is Secretariat to the Sustainable Tourism Certification Alliance Africa, which ITC supports to help effect mutual recognition between the various responsible tourism standards of southern Africa.

As Secretariat to the Sustainable Tourism Certification Alliance Africa, Fair Trade Tourism is promoting the harmonization of sustainable tourism standards in Africa through use of the ITC Standards Map. Thanks to collaboration with ITC, there is increased cooperation between sustainable tourism certification schemes. We are improving their capacity to provide accessible and credible certification services to the tourism industry. ITC’s support has been valuable in expanding the awareness and reach of sustainable tourism certification in Africa.

Donor Reflections

ITC and Swisscontact Colombia initiated a joint programme in 2015 to empower cocoa producers and raise awareness around basic sustainability issues required by international certifications. Partnerships have been established with local cocoa organizations (such as APROCASUR in Santa Rosa de Bolivar, Colombia), and technical experts working in the producer organizations that are closely connected to the cocoa farmers.

By using the self-assessment tool developed by ITC and Swisscontact Colombia, we will be able to bring cocoa producers step-by-step up to speed. Producers will be able to perform self-assessments that allow them to get a first diagnostic of areas in which they need to improve before starting an official certification process. Additionally, the tool provides visibility of what we are doing well about sustainable practices to potential buyers. This will increase access, as well as our bargaining power in international markets.

The self-assessment of the cocoa farmers and the cocoa organizations against the Basic Criteria for a Sustainable Cocoa (Lineamientos Básicos para un Cacao Sostenible – LBCS) can be done online using the Standards Map tool customized for the cocoa sector.

SECO is a proud and committed partner and sponsor of T4SD since the programme’s beginning in 2009. We are strongly convinced that voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) are an effective and powerful tool to strengthen sustainability along global supply chains. However, guidance and transparency on VSS are needed to help all actors in the supply chain, from farmers in the developing world to intermediate processors and traders to the ultimate buyers such as retailers and brands. Informed decisions need to be made given the context of increased complexity and proliferation of VSS.

The T4SD Programme has successfully met this demand for increased transparency and has become a sought-after tool for various key stakeholders. Core to T4SD is its neutral position on VSS and its global public goods nature, making it possible to impact a wide range of actors in a positive way.

T4SD has demonstrated a keen ability to continually develop their tools and partnerships to respond to the dynamic developments in the VSS area. For example, T4SD is now working to become the leading market data repository on VSS. SECO is very happy to continue this exciting journey together with T4SD and we welcome more partners to join us.
BMZ has supported the T4SD Programme since its inception in 2009 and provided feasibility and scoping support to the project as early as 2008. We are pleased to support this key programme of ITC as it provides needed transparency on voluntary sustainability standards while improving the decision-making abilities of a variety of users.

The programme is fully in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in terms of poverty reduction, food security, gender equality and the sustainable management of environmental resources. T4SD’s innovative approach, the Standards Map, enables producers – especially SMEs – to increase their productivity, resulting in more income, overcoming market access and better understanding the sustainability gaps in international supply chains.

The German government builds on T4SD data for its consumer information website, www.siegelklarheit.de, which was launched in February 2015 with a current focus on textile standards. We would like to encourage other countries to engage in similar types of projects, taking advantage of the data of standard systems contained in the T4SD database.

The EU values the work of ITC’s T4SD project as a contribution to the implementation of our trade and development policy. **T4SD’s work on sustainability standards, notably the support provided to producers in the developing world, provides an important contribution to those wishing to move up the value chain and respond to the demands of European consumers** by providing products that meet various sustainability and ethical guidelines.

By providing this information for free to producers, as well as tailored face-to-face support, T4SD supports the use of market incentives to drive the adoption of positive social and environmental production practices in the countries with which we trade.

This is consistent with the EU trade and development policy, reshaped by the 2012 Communication on “Trade, Growth and Development”, which puts particular emphasis on the integration of sustainable development into the EU’s trade policy. This includes the recognition of the positive role of private-led sustainability schemes, such as fair and ethical trade, to foster inclusive growth and sustainable development in developing countries with which the EU trades. Through these, businesses of all sizes can play a role in promoting sustainable production, trade, and consumption patterns.

The EU supports the uptake of fair and ethical trade by providing EU support to activities such as T4SD, which provides free information to consumers and to producers in developing countries on sustainability schemes and the requirements for products to be allowed to display the related logos. These schemes typically concern labour conditions related to certain products or the environmental impact thereof. Being part of such schemes can be an effective way for producers to differentiate their product, have greater bargaining power over them and gain price premiums.

We take the view that the key benefit of private sustainability schemes lays the very fact that they are a market mechanism providing information on the sustainability of products, thereby allowing consumers to take action and make buying decisions according to their values and principles. This encourages businesses to adopt behaviours or adapt their production processes or sourcing in order to meet consumer expectations. It also allows for a fast and flexible reaction of consumers to new products entering the market.

Because of these strengths, the EU does not want to rank or regulate private-led sustainability schemes. We don’t want to take decisions on behalf of consumers or to slow the process down while reviewing a standard, or its evaluation and monitoring procedures. However, it is important to ensure that consumers can understand the criteria underlying each scheme, to be able to make these informed choices with the confidence that they are receiving accurate information. We therefore focus our energies on trying to improve the flow of information about sustainability standards and T4SD plays a key role in this regard.
Hivos has joined forces with the ITC’s T4SD Programme and other partners to bring to life a new knowledge-sharing platform, SustainabilityXchange, since 2013.

The idea of SustainabilityXchange was originally conceived by Hivos and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, and we were pleased to welcome ITC’s T4SD programme on board as one of the implementing partners next to FAQ and Fair&Sustainable. The platform fills an important need for knowledge-sharing on sustainable production and trade in developing countries to move towards sustainable economies and inclusive societies.

It was the sharing of knowledge of how to produce healthy food, that opts for diversity, robustness and transparency, that led Hivos to invest in this initiative. There is growing evidence that that we need to cool the climate instead of heating it, feed the land instead of depleting it, and that we must distribute our food more equitably. Across the world Hivos works on ambitions projects with progressive partners. With SustainabilityXchange we hope to reach and inspire people around the globe to work towards a green economy which is a fair economy without expiry date.

Catherine van der Wees
Programme Officer
Green Society
Hivos

FSC is an independent, non-governmental, not for profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world’s forests.

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