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6TH FLOOR D' ANGELO AUDITORIUM OF THE MILODA ACADEMY OF FINANCIAL STUDIES

EU – SRI LANKA TRADE-RELATED ASSISTANCE

SEMINAR ON THE IMPORTANCE OF METROLOGY SERVICES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND INCREASING EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

On the 8th September, the United National Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Measurement Units Standards and Services Department (MUSSD) jointly conducted an awareness seminar on the importance of metrology in the agro export industry, the relevance of MUSSD's services for agro value chains, and complementary metrology services offered by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) and the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI) to homologate with specific measurement standards necessary to enhance export competitiveness. Joined by 76 participants from government agencies, industries, universities, conformity assessment bodies, technical experts, and consultants, the guest of honor, Mr. Chinthaka S. Lokuhetti, the Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, eloquated on the quality assurance mandates of Sri Lanka's national institutions with respect to national measurement standards, technical standards, testing, and conformity assessment, all of which are critical to ensuring (food) safety, quality, and, ultimately, the export-readiness of Sri Lankan agro products. To increase the global market share of exports, it is vital for stakeholders in priority agro-based export sectors, particularly processed food and spices, to understand the menu of quality assurance services offered by national institutions as it relates to scientific, industrial, and legal metrologies. To this end, the awareness seminar stimulated dialogue among stakeholders in the processed food and spices value chains and endorsed the application of metrology best practices on and innovative approaches to enhancing quality and food safety to strengthen Sri Lanka's export competitiveness.

In the panel discussion with different stakeholders several concerns were raised and concluding insights were shared per the below:

1. Buyers are notified on quality-related challenges by alerts for different products. A way to overcome these issues would be to strengthen testing facilities and quality assurance systems.

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2. Getting the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) scheme accredited should be an important priority of the Department of Agriculture (DoA).
3. DoA should obtain support to determine Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) for Sri Lankan produce and communicate the same to markets. An authority should regulate and enforce MRLs through a national system. An SPS Committee should be activated for testing food contaminants found in export commodities
4. Quality and safety of pesticides and fertilizers need to be checked. Testing facilities should be strengthened to do this and a system of screening market samples should be established.
5. Widening the scope of recognition is necessary, in coordination with SLAB, to accredit organizations for ISO 17065 to conduct Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and GAP audits as well as ISO 17024 for personnel certification. Reasons why organizations do not seek GMP certification need to be analyzed and addressed.
6. SLAB auditors should be trained along with international auditors to reorient toward export requirements.
7. Encourage institutes, in collaboration with the Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), to become Proficiency Testing (PT) providers in Sri Lanka for SLAB to gain recognition for accreditation in this area. It would also help to address the challenge on Certified Reference Materials (CRM).
8. Sri Lanka should be represented at CODEX Alimentarius meetings. The project will work towards encouraging participation of appropriate stakeholders.
9. The chemical metrology lead from MUSSD should be supported and complemented by different institutions that could be designated as metrology reference institutes with specific scopes.
10. An import control scheme should be established to accept accredited laboratory test reports for quality control, independent of reports from approved analysts. The scheme should be strengthened to establish a market surveillance system.

The awareness seminar was an important step towards boosting Sri Lanka's compliance capacity in meeting sector-specific and international requirements to enable Sri Lankan agro exporters to reach the EU and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) markets. The seminar was conducted within the framework of the EU-Sri Lanka Trade Related Assistance project, funded by the European Union. The EU-Sri Lanka Trade

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Related Assistance program will consider the aforementioned takeaways to apprise and shape technical assistance delivered by UNIDO.

Programme of the Seminar:

08:30 Registration

09:15 Opening Keynote

Welcome speech by Director MUSSD

Guest of Honor, Mr. Chinthaka Lokuhetti, the Secretary Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

Introduction of project by Mr. A. Jairo International Technical Expert, UNIDO

10:00 Networking & Tea Break

Interaction among the program partners & stakeholders

10:20 Introducing Metrology

An overview of metrology and its importance for trade. The National Metrology Institute as apex national body. International perspectives on metrology for Sri Lanka.

Villamil Jairo International Technical specialist expert UNIDO

11:30 Metrology services and relevance to Agricultural Value Chains

Elaboration on existing metrology services for agro products in Sri Lanka, international market requirements, and benefits of maintaining measurement standards.

Mr. Indika Dias Assistant Director, MUSSD

12:30 Lunch break

At the venue

13:30 ITI and testing services supporting export of spices and food

ITI testing services for diverse product sectors, services for quality assurance of agricultural products (spice/food, packaging, environmental, others). Potential areas for establishment of measurement standards for spices/food value chains.

Dr.G.A.S. Premakumara, Director General/CEO, ITI

14.30 SLSI quality assurance services for spices and food value chains

Discuss quality management systems and technical standards for agricultural value chains, highlight importance of maintaining best practices for production processing and exporting, and elaborate border control measures for export assurance of spices/food.

Mr.Gamini Dharmawardena Director General /SLSI,

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15.30 Industry views – Panel discussion

Industry leaders to highlight testing requirements and challenges regarding exports to the EU and SAARC markets. Identify measurement standards requirements to maintain quality requirements (spices/food) in the EU and SAARC markets.

Panel members: MUSSD/ITI/SLSI/EDB/CCC/TSC/SLFPA/University

Moderator: Mr.L.H.D.Bandusoma Actg. Director SLAB

16.30 Concluding remarks on the way forward –Quality Infrastructure Expert, UNIDO and Director, MUSSD

16.45 Closing Ceremonies

Mr. Geoffrey Visser, a quality infrastructure expert from UNIDO, served as an expert commentator throughout the seminar presentations.



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Guest of honor, Mr. Chinthaka S. Lokuhetti, the Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce



Dr. Jairo Villamil-Diaz,
International Technical Specialist, UNIDO

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Mr. Indika Dias, Assistant Director, MUSSD



Mr. Geoffrey Visser, Quality Infrastructure Expert, UNIDO

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