



All ACP Agricultural Commodities Programme

Pacific regional pre-launch workshop on the Sustainability Claims Portal, and regional sustainability initiatives including VanuGap and the Pacific Organic standard

CONCEPT NOTE (DRAFT)

Organized by:

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

30- 31 March 2010, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Background

As one of the executing agencies of the All-EU ACP Programme on Commodities, UNCTAD has designed a Sustainability Claims Portal; a web-based information system providing targeted stakeholders (EU consumers and ACP producers) with objective information on sustainability claims. The portal aims to promote a comprehensive framework and common set of equitable trading practices (economic, social, and environmental requirements) substantiating the sustainable production of agricultural products, from soil preparation and seed planting, through production, harvest, post-harvest handling, and distribution.

Following the regional Kick-off Workshops which were held in the Pacific in 2007, and a stakeholder consultation meeting, held in Brussels in April 2008, the SCP was created www.unctad.org/scp. The Brussels consultation attended by 38 key bodies involved in sustainability issues determined the content and format of the information tool - focusing on the provision of information in the short term (1-5 years) and the longer term (5-10 years). This consultation established the criteria that were required to validate sustainability claims, how this information could most effectively be gathered, and the most efficient and accessible means to disseminate it.

The portal is expected to enhance the accountability of sustainability claims related to agricultural and food products, and enable agricultural supply chain stakeholders to better understand and evaluate these claims. As a result, stakeholders will have better access to and benefit from sustainability initiatives and markets. More specifically, the portal will contribute to:

- (i)** Improved access to credible information on sustainability claims for agricultural commodity supply chain stakeholders (producers, exporters, distributors and consumers);
- (ii)** Increased access of these stakeholders to information on standards programmes and initiatives, aiming to contribute to sustainable development;
- (iii)** Review of information resources concerning sustainability claims and related sources of information (Sustainability Initiatives; Research; Policy; etc.);
- (iv)** Contribute to better communication and cooperation between all stakeholders in the areas of standards setting, inspection, certification, and accreditation; strengthening the validity of sustainability claims.

The SCP has identified the most widely recognized and respected sustainability labels currently on the European market, including Alter Eco, Max Havelaar, FairTrade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ Certified, as well as the EC public labels for organic products and products covered under the Geographical Indication distinction.

Under its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and food safety standards program, UNCTAD, conducted a national capacity building workshop on "commodities trade and development, poverty reduction, food safety standards and requirements, and food laws and technical regulations" in Port Villa, Vanuatu in November 2008. This national capacity building workshop saw stakeholders discussing private standards and sustainability labels. A key recommendation of that workshop was for Vanuatu to develop and establish a separate sustainability label, based on the Global Gap initiative. VanuGap was strongly supported by the participants of the meeting as well

as the national codex committee of Vanuatu (VNCC), however Global Gap is a private label, and UNCTAD cannot support one label above others, hence the presentation of all key sustainability initiatives.

UNCTAD would like to test the current version of the SCP and ask for an evaluation prior to the portal's official launch in the 5 regions. The Pacific region was chosen as the testing ground because UNCTAD has been involved in informal discussions with national stakeholders about the portal's development, and the possibility of collaborating on regional sustainability initiatives.

UNCTAD's main partner in the region is the Vanuatu National Codex Committee VNCC.

Objective

The workshop has 5 key objectives:

- (a) To raise awareness of sustainability claims at a global and regional level
- (b) To discuss regional certification initiatives - the development of VanuGap and the Pacific Organic Standard
- (c) To present the current version of the SCP to Pacific stakeholders, asking participants to evaluate the SCP and provide meaningful feedback on its content
- (d) To establish what information stakeholders would find most relevant and meaningful
- (e) To establish what information should be incorporated into the portal, with stakeholder recommendations expected to shape the relevance and validity of the information, ensuring the portal's long-term functionality

Expected outcomes

- Deeper understanding and enhancement of the capacity of participants in the areas of sustainability standards, certification schemes, and local sustainability initiatives.
- The results of this initial SCP evaluation will be incorporated into the second development phase of the portal.
- Identification and definition of follow up activities based on the recommendations of participants. In the case of the Pacific region, UNCTAD anticipates one requirement to be the development of a SCP sub-section, entirely devoted to Pacific issues and Pacific certification schemes. More generally, information on food safety standards may need to be more closely linked to the SCP. This issue has already been raised informally, through UNCTAD's communications with partners in various regions.

Participants

This workshop will be organized in close cooperation with one of the project's national partners, the Vanuatu National Codex Committee (VNCC). The committee will assist UNCTAD with the invitation and participant lists, contact relevant ministries, farmer cooperatives, and people working in the area of food standards.

Regional representatives will be selected from UNCTAD's well established networks and on the recommendation of the VNCC. Due to financial constraints, UNCTAD is anticipating to invite a maximum of 3 participants from the following countries: Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Papua New Guinea. These countries were identified in the kick off workshops as propriety countries, and UNCTAD would also like to invite participants from the outer islands of Vanuatu, and students from one of the biggest agricultural colleges in the country, the VAC.

Other regional stakeholders will be invited and experts in the area of private agricultural standards will be sourced. The number of participants and local experts is likely to be 30; however it may be larger if students from the agricultural college are able to participate.

A regional or international expert will be invited to provide background information on sustainability claims, private standards and their relevance to Pacific island countries, market analysis of certified products, and the possible gains for certification. Two regional experts in the fields of GlobalGap/VanuGap and the Pacific Organic Standard will be hired to present case studies on these regional certification initiatives.

Government representatives will also be invited to attend and Mr. Havo Monisale, the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Livestock and Quarantine has confirmed his participation. UNCTAD will also be seeking the cooperation of the Vanuatu Association of NGOs to ensure a broader representation of stakeholders.

Tentative Agenda

This two day capacity building workshop will focus on the introduction of the Sustainability Claims Portal to stakeholders, and on the collection of data from participants on how to improve the Portal.

The first day will focus on broader issues of sustainability, labeling systems, and the presentation of case studies from the region. The second day will be devoted to the presentation of the Portal, breakout sessions to evaluate and critique the information, and discussion of stakeholder requirements - what information would the stakeholders like to see and what would be most useful.

Breakout sessions will be organized and interactive discussion will be encouraged throughout the two day workshop. Recommendations stemming from the discussions will be shared, and a plan on how to integrate the proposed changes to the Portal will be presented (see detailed programme attached).