

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSULTANCY SERVICES TO FACILITATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN SELECTED FARMS AND FRESH PRODUCE PACK HOUSES/EXPORTERS

1. BACKGROUND

1.01 Saint Lucia is located in the eastern Caribbean Sea and is part of the island chain forming the Lesser Antilles. The economy is largely dependent on tourism, however, fresh produce exports in particular banana exports have also been a big contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Whilst banana exports remain a significant source of foreign exchange, the overall agricultural exports have diversified to other commodities, namely, plantains, breadfruits, mangoes, sweet potatoes, yams, and peppers.

1.02 Currently, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) are the main markets for extra-regional exports of fresh produce (excluding bananas). The existence of large diaspora and ethnic markets in major cities in Canada and the UK, such as Toronto, Montreal, London, and Birmingham have created a significant demand for fresh produce from Saint Lucia. Over the five-year period 2016 to 2020, the export earnings for mango, sweet potato, yam, and hot pepper showed an increasing trend, but there were fluctuations in export earnings for plantain and breadfruit. In 2020, the total earnings from fresh produce exports (excluding bananas) were 13.7 million Eastern Caribbean dollars (XCD), which accounted for roughly 21% of total agricultural exports^{1/} and is therefore deemed as an important export growth sector for the country.

1.03 There are opportunities for Saint Lucia to increase fresh produce exports to existing markets in the UK, Canada and CARIFORUM countries, as well new markets in the EU made available under trading agreements such as the CARIFORUM–EU EPA. Saint Lucia has therefore embarked on a programme to increase exports, as articulated in the National Export Strategy (2020–2024). This Export Strategy outlines a trade development roadmap with an overall vision “Uniquely Saint Lucian with a Global Appeal”. One of the strategic objectives is “Expanding the national productive capacity and diversifying the export basket”. Further, there is a specified Plan of Action within the Export Strategy geared towards improving the Food Industry through increasing technical knowledge in the sector. Saint Lucia has embraced a value chain approach from ‘*farm to fork*’ and will therefore seek to strengthen the capacity of the value chain actors (i.e., farmers, exporters, pack houses^{2/}) to be more productive and more compliant with international quality standards. These initiatives will all seek to build the capacity of the support service provider *inter alia* Export Saint Lucia, Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Physical Planning, Natural Resources and Co-operatives.

Value Chain Actors

1.04 The main actors in the fresh produce value chain are farmers, exporters and operators of pack houses, Export Saint Lucia, SLBS, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Physical Planning, Natural Resources and Co-operatives, and Saint Lucia Air & Seaports Authority authorised service provider [Hewanorra Air Cargo Services (HACS)].

1.05 There are a total of 744 registered farmers (549 males and 195 females distributed mostly in Regions 1, 2, 4 and 5), 15 agri-produce exporters, and 4 pack houses registered with the Ministry of

^{1/} Annual Export Trade Data (2019). Retrieved from <https://trendeconomy.com/data/h2/SaintLucia/TOTAL>

^{2/} A packhouse is a facility where fruits and vegetables are received and processed prior to market distribution. The packhouse is the site where post-harvest treatments are applied, and quality standards are monitored.

Agriculture. One of the pack houses is located in Odsan Castries and has been Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) compliant as of December 2020. This pack house is operated by the Marketing Board, a state agency established in 1967 with a mandate to facilitate and improve the production, marketing, and processing of fresh agricultural produce, for local consumption and export. The other three pack houses are currently operated by farmers' cooperatives, which purchase from members and other farmers to meet export demand. These pack houses are located in Black Bay, Belle Vue and Micoud, and are all within close proximity to the Hewanorra International Airport in the south of the island, which is the main port for fresh food exports.

1.06 Export Saint Lucia is the national trade export and promotion agency mandated to spearhead the island's national export development effort and implement the recently approved National Export Strategy. The Agency's overall objective is to increase the volume and value of exports from Saint Lucia. In this regard, efforts are being made to increase exports to existing markets and identify and secure new markets, as articulated in the National Export Strategy (2020–2024). Export Saint Lucia is therefore charged with supporting the marketing efforts of fresh produce and oversees the operations of the pack houses to ensure readiness for meeting the export markets' food safety and other market access requirements. Export Saint Lucia has successfully implemented projects with international partners including the Food and Agriculture Organisation, Compete Caribbean and the Caribbean Development Bank under the 10th European Development Fund Standby Facility.

1.07 SLBS was established by the Standards Act (1990) and also responds to the mandate given under the Metrology Act (2000). The mission of SLBS is to strengthen the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI)^{3/} in order to contribute to the advancement of the national economy, support sustainable development, promote health and safety of consumers, protect the environment and to facilitate trade. SLBS serves as the national enquiry point and notification body under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), as well as the national contact point for the Codex Alimentarius Commission. SLBS is also a party to the International Plant Protection Convention. SLBS develops national standards that support trade, and also provides conformity assessment services (inspection, testing, and certification) in keeping with technical regulations, to guarantee food safety^{4/}. The organisation is also ISO^{5/} 9001:2015 certified^{6/}. SLBS has successfully implemented projects with international partners. More recently, the Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN) Project funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, is being implemented in collaboration with the British Standards Institute. The main objective of the CSN Project is to promote the use of standards as a tool to increase intra-commonwealth trade and to strengthen the quality infrastructure in Commonwealth countries. As a part of this project, SLBS implemented a train the trainer programme on the requirements and implementation of two international standards: ISO/IEC 17025:2017 – General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories; and ISO 15189:2012 Medical laboratories – Requirements for quality and

^{3/} National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) refers to the ecosystem of public and private institutions together with the policies, legal and regulatory frameworks and practices needed to guarantee quality, consumer safety and protection for the environment, which are required for the production of goods and services and to facilitate trade.

^{4/} Food safety refers to routines in the preparation, handling and storage of food meant to prevent foodborne illness and injury. Safe food handling practices and procedures are thus implemented at every stage of the food production life cycle in order to curb these risks and prevent harm to consumers. To be effective, prerequisite programs such as pest control, traceability and recall, record keeping, hygiene and sanitation need to be developed and implemented.

^{5/} ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) and IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) – both organisations develop joint international standards.

^{6/} ISO 9001:2015 is an international standard dedicated to Quality Management Systems (QMS). It outlines a framework for improving quality and a vocabulary of understanding for any organisation looking to provide products and services that consistently meet the requirements and expectations of customers and other relevant interested parties in the most efficient manner possible.

competence. This helped to create a pool of trainers to drive the wider human resource capacity developmental agenda to support a national quality infrastructure.

1.08 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Physical Planning, Natural Resources and Co-operatives is the WTO enquiry point on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) matters. The Ministry has a certification programme for farmers; however, the programme presently focuses on the registration of farmers, rather than on certification to food safety standards such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP), which were developed as national standards by SLBS in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. Currently, there are approximately 250 banana farmers certified to GAP, however, for the non-banana farmers, the programme has not moved beyond the registration of farmers, due to lack of training and certification of farmers in the required food safety standards. Both SLBS and the Ministry of Agriculture collaborate and provide training in food safety standards and certification. The Ministry will be a key partner for this Technical Assistance (TA) intervention.

Importance of Food Safety Standards

1.09 The WTO Agreement on SPS Measures outlines basic rules for food safety and plant health standards, and therefore Member Countries are encouraged to implement acceptable standards to protect consumers from food-borne illnesses. Food safety is also important financially, due to the high costs associated with the consequences of failing to comply with food safety standards, such as, product recalls, rejection, or interceptions of exports at borders, public health costs related to issues arising from contaminated products entering the food chain, and also the fallout resulting from a lack of consumer trust of products.

1.10 It is against this background, that SLBS is providing capacity support towards strengthening the national food safety regime. SLBS is using a four-step building block approach to addressing food safety requirements. Step 1 covers the minimum hygiene, and some food safety requirements that are mandatory for food businesses and a condition for registered farmers to operate. Step 2 outlines prerequisite certification programmes (such as GAP^{7/} and Good Manufacturing Practices [GMP]^{8/}), that are voluntary and support market entry for exporters. Steps 3 and 4 outline advanced food safety certification schemes based on customer requirements in export markets (e.g., HACCP^{9/}).

Challenges with Food Safety in Fresh Produce Export Sector

1.11 There are several challenges being faced by fresh produce exporters that limit their ability to complete Steps 1 and 2 as previously outlined, which will better enable them to increase exports. These include:

- (a) Limited understanding of farmers (excluding banana farmers) in product selection, production planning, GAP, and GHP (such as use of pesticides and fungicides) to meet quality requirements of the export markets (EU and North America). This is due to difficulties experienced by the farmers to attend face-to-face training sessions and to

^{7/} GAP standard certification addresses requirements pertaining to the following aspects of farm management: Pre-Harvest Management, Harvesting of fresh produce, Post-Harvesting, Storage and Transportation, Health and Safety of Workers.

^{8/} GMP standard addresses requirements pertaining to the following aspects: General Food Safety, Pest Control, Storage Areas and Packaging Material, Operational Practices, Employee Practices, Equipment and Equipment Cleaning, General Cleaning, Buildings and Grounds, Supplier Control.

^{9/} HACCP certification includes management support of HACCP, review of written HACCP Plan, execution of the HACCP Plan on the plant floor, and verification of HACCP Plan.

further pursue certification. Other difficulties, some of which are being addressed by the Ministry of Agriculture, include use of modern-day farming technology, access to, and ability to navigate virtual devices, timely information on market access changes in export markets and access to finance.

- (b) Absence of a cold chain for fresh produce. Currently, there is no cold storage facility at farms. Non-refrigerated trucks are used to transport produce to pack houses, which also do not have cold storage capacity. The ports do not have cold storage facilities, and therefore any delays in shipping, can lead to increased respiration rates, water loss, reduced weight, and decreased quality of produce. This results in spoilage, food loss/waste and higher incidence of rejects. Some of these issues will be ameliorated through the facilities proposed in the designs of the new Hewanorra International Airport.
- (c) Some exporters or pack houses are not compliant with internationally accepted food safety standards, such as absence of GMP or HACCP. This is due in part, to infrastructural deficiencies at the pack houses, such as: absence of stainless-steel washing areas, insect meshing and traps, and lavatories; lack of drying and sorting racks; lack of roller conveyors; and inadequate lighting structures.
- (d) High cost of implementation and compliance with international standards requirements. This includes limited technical and financial support to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to implement quality standards (e.g., HACCP).

2. OBJECTIVE

2.01 The objectives of this consultancy are to provide technical support towards the implementation of the GAP standard in selected farms, and the implementation of the GMP standard in selected exporters/pack houses towards certification.

3. EXPECTED RESULTS

3.01 The following results are expected:

- (a) Five selected farms prepared for GAP standard certification.
- (b) Three selected pack houses/exporters prepared for GMP standard certification.

4. SCOPE OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

4.01 The Consultants will perform the following activities to achieve the stated objectives of the consultancy assignment.

- (a) Conduct inception meetings with representatives of SLBS, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Production, Fisheries, Physical Planning, Natural Resources and Co-operatives. Export Saint Lucia and beneficiary farmers and pack houses/exporters.
- (b) Collect and review all relevant background documents from the beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters.

- (c) Conduct gap assessments of each of the beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters against the respective standards.
- (d) Develop documentation as required by each standard (GAP, GMP) for the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters.
- (e) Conduct training in procedures and processes required by each standard (GAP, GMP) for the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters.
- (f) Conduct internal audits against each standard (GAP, GMP) for the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters.
- (g) Assist the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters to close-out non-conformances.
- (h) Assist the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters to prepare for certification application.
- (i) Prepare a final engagement report on the implementation of each standard (GAP, GMP) for the respective beneficiary farms and pack houses/exporters.

5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND DELIVERABLES

5.01 The Consultants will report to the Project Coordinator and will be required to submit/deliver the following:

Deliverable	Timeline
Inception Report and Work Plan	Two weeks after commencement of assignment
Gap assessment reports for each of the beneficiary farm/exporter against the respective standards	One week after completion of site visit
Standard Documentation as required by each standard	Four weeks after completion each gap assessment of each of the beneficiaries
Internal Audit Reports outlining non-conformances to the respective standards being implemented by the beneficiaries	Two days after the completion of the audit at each beneficiary facility
Final Engagement Report, outlining implementation challenges, lessons learned and recommendations	One month before contract closure

6. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

6.01 Consulting firm with the following expertise:

- (a) Key Expert 1 – Food Safety Management Systems Facilitator/Consultant (GAP Standard)
- (b) Key Expert 2 – Food Safety Management Systems Facilitator/Consultant (GMP Standard)

- 6.02 The team should collectively possess the following qualifications and experience:
- (a) Master's Degree in Natural Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, or any other related discipline.
 - (b) Certification as a trainer and/or auditor of food safety management systems.
 - (c) At least ten years' experience working in the Agricultural sector or with a quality institution.
 - (d) At least five years' experience in facilitating the implementation of the respective food safety management systems in organisations.
 - (e) Successful track record of assisting organisations to achieve certification in food safety management systems.
 - (f) Experience with the trade and export of agricultural commodities from the CARIFORUM region to EU markets.
 - (g) Working knowledge of the Saint Lucian agricultural sector would be an asset.
 - (h) Strong analytical, communication and interpersonal skills.

7. SUPERVISION OF THE CONSULTANT

7.01 The consulting firm will report to the Project Coordinator. Export Saint Lucia will facilitate the work of the consulting firm and make available all studies, reports, and data relevant to the Project.

8. DURATION

8.01 It is estimated that this consultancy will require 70 person-days over a period of 9 calendar months.