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Briefing on Aid for Trade for SPECA countries



The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) hosted on 5 May in Geneva a briefing on an Aid for Trade initiative for the countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). UNECE informed its member States on plans that would enable the SPECA countries to benefit from the Aid for Trade programme

of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The briefing was organized with support from other United Nations agencies (ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCAP and UNIDO) and multilateral organizations (EBRD, ITFC, and WTO).

Aid for Trade seeks to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to participate in and benefit from international trade. Since its inception, Aid for Trade initiatives have developed in most of the world's regions, but transition economies, including SPECA countries, have been notably absent from the discussions. However, SPECA countries share the same

challenges as many developing countries from other regions. In addition, they are all landlocked, and many are mountainous, which results in additional trading costs and difficulties.

For example, exporting one container from Tajikistan to the major global markets costs USD 3,000 on average, while it costs only USD 600 from Morocco.

In his opening remarks, Jàn Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, said "we are pleased to see this initiative launched at a regional level. UNECE is prepared to continue playing the role of catalyst and coordinator for Aid-for-Trade processes within our region by working to bring together supporting "coalitions" of interested United Nations and regional organizations as well as country groupings and international financial institutions".

Building on the findings of the first planning and preparatory meeting which took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in March 2009, the briefing profiled the "Aid for Trade Road Map for SPECA" initiative which will include national and regional needs assessments. Future steps will include the organization of the fourth meeting of the SPECA Project Working Group on Trade in Geneva on 26-27 October 2009, a regional expert's workshop and a Ministerial Meeting to take place in 2010.

For more information, see <http://www.unece.org/speca/> or contact: mario.apostolov@unece.org

Helping Africa grow and generate wealth by producing quality agricultural produce

As part of the large-scale campaign to promote its agricultural quality standards worldwide towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, UNECE in partnership with Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) held in April an International Workshop on commercial quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables for countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Africa.

Around 60 inspectors, growers and traders from Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe came to Nairobi to learn why UNECE standards are important for growers and traders and how these standards are interpreted in export markets.

Inspectors from Germany, France, the Netherlands, South Africa and the United Kingdom offered hands-on training courses on how to apply the standards for citrus fruit, peas, French beans, tomatoes, apples, cabbages and kales, aubergines and avocados. They also explained what kind of legal and technical infrastructure needed to be in place for implementing the standards. The participants visited an avocado plantation, as well as a thriving beans- and peas-growing farm.

The delegations took back home with them complimentary CDs containing the presentations and the training material, including 115 pictures of the sampled products, with explanations of defects and quality classes. Such was the enthusiasm generated during this workshop that several delegations offered to host similar workshops in their countries at the earliest opportunity.



Kenya is an important exporter of avocados



Not an official record - For information only

Helping Africa (continued)



Grading beans and peas at Nicola farm near Nairobi

Major conclusions of the workshop:

- To access export markets it is essential to comply with commercial quality standards, along with food safety, traceability and phytosanitary requirements
- Countries should incorporate standards in their national legislation and keep the legislation updated
- Countries should use the existing internationally agreed standards and related explanatory material (at both national and regional levels)
- Countries should put in place an adequate legal and technical infrastructure for implementing the standards
- Communication and promotion of standards at the national level, particularly among small-scale producers, is essential if they are to be implemented.

The next UNECE workshop on agricultural quality standards will be held in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, from 14 to 17 July.

For more information on this or other promotional workshops, contact Serguei Malanichev at info@agrstandards.org

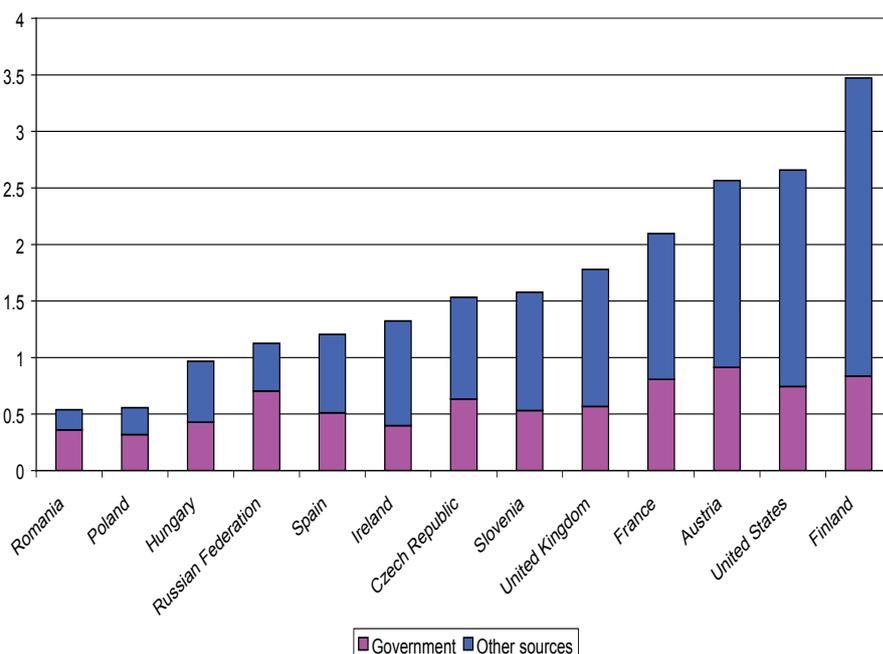
FACTS AND FIGURES

National spending on research and development (R&D) influences the potential of the economy to generate new products and production processes and the ability to effectively adopt foreign technologies. However, the link between R&D expenditure and innovation performance is complex and depends on multiple institutional, structural and policy factors that determine the efficiency in the use of these resources.

In the UNECE region, there is a significant variation across countries both in the overall intensity of the R&D efforts and in the sources of R&D spending. These differences persist even when taking into account disparities in per capita income levels. R&D spending financed from government sources (including general public university financing) shows a lower degree of variation. Countries that display relatively high total R&D intensity are generally characterised by higher R&D spending by the business sector. Therefore, encouraging greater involvement of the business sector in the financing of R&D is often a major focus of innovation policies in countries with relatively low total R&D expenditure.

Research and development expenditure

Total expenditure on research and development (R&D) and sources of financing, % of GDP



Source: OECD

Note. The data refer to the year 2008 except for France, Ireland, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom where the data are for 2007.