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QUALITY AS A COMPASS

NAVIGATING TO THE SDGs

The Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP)
and its contribution to the 17 SDGs





BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A BETTER WORLD

QUALITY, STANDARDS AND THE SDGs

Quality and standards advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing practical tools that foster economic, environmental and social sustainability. Through facilitating international trade, product safety, ecological safeguarding, and innovation, rigorous quality and safety standards reduce inequalities between developed and developing countries, bolster food security, protect consumer interests, and propel technological progress, furthering the fulfilment of multiple SDGs.

Operating across different societal helices and dimensions, Quality Infrastructure (QI) elevates standards from mere technical requirements to strategic tools. At the individual level, Quality Infrastructure instils market confidence by ensuring that the needs and expectations of citizens and consumers are clearly defined, understood, and met, with future generation's interests in mind. At the institutional and state level, QI helps organizations and countries align with sustainability objectives and create more resilient, efficient, and responsible economic ecosystems.

At the international level, establishing a Quality Infrastructure System (QIS) comprising organizations, a regulatory landscape, policies, and practices, is vital for tracking progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and fulfilling global commitments like the Paris Agreement. A robust QIS enables countries to monitor, reduce, and report their carbon footprints. Harmonizing national environmental and trade goals with international standards on climate action through quality and standards paves the way for sustainable growth.

These objectives underpin the mandate of the [Global Quality and Standards Programme \(GQSP\)](#). By developing national Quality Infrastructure Systems, strengthening institutional capacities, empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and encouraging a culture of quality across economic sectors, the programme directly contributes to achieving the SDGs.



RECONCILING LOCAL NEEDS WITH GLOBAL GOALS

For over two decades, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the Government of Switzerland have supported partner countries in increasing competitiveness through quality and standards compliance. The continued and growing relevance of the latter, coupled with the solid track record, propelled SECO and UNIDO to extend their efforts within the GQSP. Since 2017, this initiative has improved livelihoods, generated employment, and advanced the SDGs by boosting the SMEs' international competitiveness and export potential in thirteen countries.

The GQSP approach is twofold. The programme develops shareable global solutions for quality and standards-related challenges through broad knowledge dissemination while tailoring needs-specific interventions at a country level.

GQSP began with localized technical assistance, helping targeted value chains overcome compliance challenges for specific products to enter quality markets. Building on this foundation, the programme's second phase tackles pressing global issues like sustainable trade and climate change.

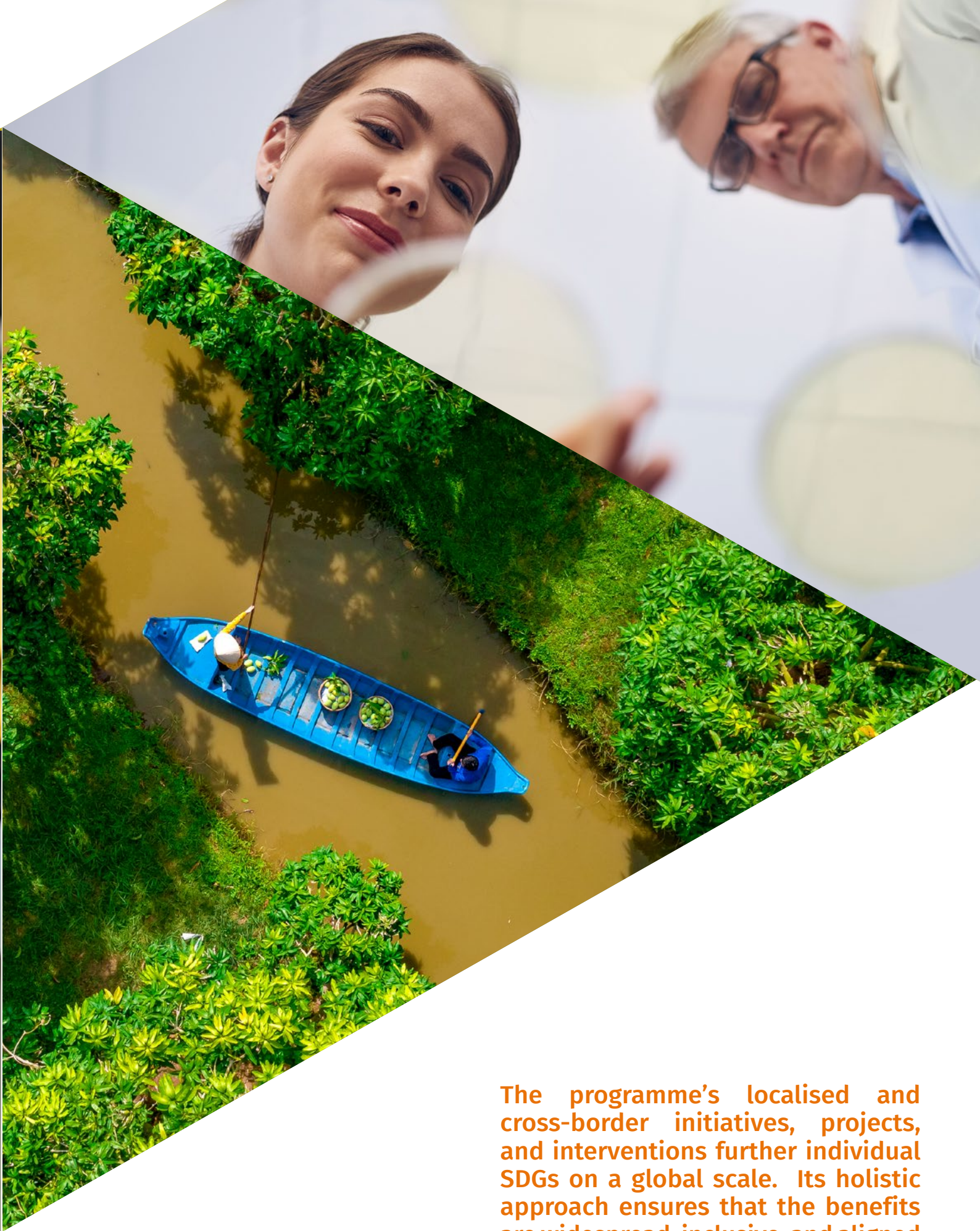
Since its inception, the GQSP has targeted 13 countries across four continents: Albania, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Ukraine, and Vietnam. At the same time, several global knowledge management tools are in the making.





EMPOWERING QUALITY, ACHIEVING THE SDGs





The programme's localised and cross-border initiatives, projects, and interventions further individual SDGs on a global scale. Its holistic approach ensures that the benefits are widespread, inclusive, and aligned with national objectives and the SDGs.



1 NO POVERTY



SDG 1: NO POVERTY

The GQSP bolsters SME competitiveness and market access to drive income growth and alleviate poverty. By supporting smallholder producers in **Ghana** in obtaining RSPO certification for sustainable palm oil production, the programme has increased their yields and improved product quality. Access to premium markets and higher prices has enabled rural families to elevate living standards and invest in education. These efforts propel poverty relief and sustainable community development in underserved regions.

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

Perfecting agricultural product quality through better standards reduces post-harvest losses and contributes to ending hunger. In **Ukraine**, the GQSP strengthens wartime-critical resilience in the berries and nuts value chains. Improving compliance with international quality and safety standards has enhanced the local food security and the competitiveness of Ukrainian exports. While ensuring local producers can access high-value markets, these measures promote sustainable production practices that safeguard livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to disruptions.

2 ZERO HUNGER





3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING

SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Philippines** faced a critical shortage of reliable protective gear. Since 2022, the GQSP has supported personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitation goods, and medical device producers to protect citizens and healthcare workers. Through national laboratory policy and SME capacity development, the programme ensures compliance with international safety standards while advancing sustainable manufacturing practices to protect public health. State-of-the-art testing facilities will secure the supply of safe and fit-for-purpose essential goods.

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION



To enhance labour force, the GQSP customizes training and capacity building to SMEs and QI institutions while emboldening collaboration between academia, industry, and governments. Supporting the first International Master's Program on Quality and Standards in **Albania** aligned the country's education with the best practices worldwide. This initiative integrated quality management, traceability and food safety, and quality assurance in curricula to address the existing gaps. Equipping graduates with specialized knowledge and practical skills tailored to the agri-food sector's needs strategically fortifies workforce competence, Albania's EU integration efforts, and sustainable industrial development.



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

By supporting women-led businesses and inclusive participation in training, the GQSP champions gender equality. In **Georgia**, where women constitute the majority of laboratory staff yet face barriers to leadership, the programme offers advanced training to certify female professionals in laboratory techniques and encourage them to launch their own practices. Training centres focused on licensing instructors are to secure the skilling of the next generation of female professionals. These efforts help close gender gaps and empower women.

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

Helping producers adopt environmental, social, and governance standards for food safety management, welfare, and hygiene increases climate change resilience against rainfall, water quality, and infectious diseases challenges. In **Peru**, the GQSP helps coffee and cocoa cooperatives improve their post-harvest infrastructure with eco-friendly coffee washing tanks that reduce water consumption and wastewater. By aligning these efforts with international water management and sustainability best practices, the programme improves water management in coffee-producer communities while promoting sustainable water resource use.

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION





SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Energy efficiency, renewable power, and carbon offsetting standards reduce power consumption, GHG emissions, and ambiguity in environmental accounting. The GQSP supports **South Africa** in integrating renewable energy solutions, such as solar-powered farms, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Producers' transition to cleaner sources plays a role in reducing the national carbon footprint. By addressing climate change and energy supply concerns, the programme improves SMEs' response to increasing natural disasters, like flooding and electricity shortages, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all.

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Through the backing of the GQSP, **Albania** strengthens fair employment practices, worker protection, and occupational health and safety towards more inclusive economic growth and decent work opportunities. Harmonizing with international standards drives the country's global market integration, innovation, and SME competitiveness. These advancements are instrumental for Albania's sustainable economic development and the EU accession process. Reconciling national policies with the EU frameworks is a foundation for long-term prosperity.





9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The GQSP reinforces quality infrastructure institutions and service providers, cultivating innovation and industrial development. By bolstering technical capacity and conformity assessment services in **Vietnam**, the GQSP allows tropical fruits producers in the Mekong River Delta and Central Highland to comply with international standards and access high-value export markets. Such interventions foster industrial innovation, nurture resilient infrastructure, and square local businesses with global value chains. With its contribution to inclusive and sustainable industrialization, the project advances SDG 9.

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

By providing equal market access and expansion of opportunities to targeted SMEs, including those in rural and disadvantaged areas, the GQSP reduces inequalities. The programme in **Moldova** aids small-scale producers and rural enterprises in meeting international standards to access global markets. By augmenting the national quality infrastructure and providing customized training in the meat, poultry, and eggs value chain, the programme reduces economic inequalities between urban and rural areas. These efforts empower disadvantaged communities and champion equitable economic opportunities.

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES





SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

With buildings consuming significant energy, the GQSP enhances urban sustainability in **Ukraine** by improving the energy efficiency of wooden windows. Enabling producers to measure the thermal performance of their products and optimize design accordingly are the first steps in building long-term industry resilience. Vital for the country's "green reconstruction" efforts and the EU accession agenda, this initiative strengthens the construction sector's capacity to meet sustainability standards and rebuild Ukraine.



SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

The GQSP promotes standards compliance and sustainable production practices among SMEs. By supporting circular economy initiatives like eco-design and waste management in Colombia's chemical sector, it helped to reduce environmental impacts and reintegrate 645 tons of waste monthly into value chains. Circular economy indicators showed improvements, including a 50% reduction in water consumption and a 33% reduction in energy use thanks to process standardization. Strengthened national technical capacity enabled 53% of value chain beneficiaries to access advanced markets aligned with international standards. This initiative contributes to more sustainable consumption and production patterns, ensuring products meet the latest safety and environmental standards.





13 CLIMATE ACTION



SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Incorporating ecological soundness into quality standards reduces environmental impact and stimulates climate resilience. In **South Africa**, the QOSP equips the indigenous essential and vegetable oils value chain with tools to conserve biodiversity. By training producers in climate-responsive smart-farming technologies, popularising solar-powered production, and reinforcing SMEs' awareness of market and environmental requirements, the programme empowers the country to reduce carbon footprints and adapt to climate challenges. Its comprehensive approach encompassing renewable energy transitions and sustainable bio-trade practices addresses climate change, energy shortages, and biodiversity loss while enhancing industry competitiveness.

SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

Through production, consumption, market access, supply chain, food security system, competitiveness, certification, and investment activities, the QOSP enables fishery and aquaculture pathways to sustainability and healthy marine ecosystems. By solidifying small-scale producers of shrimp, milkfish, and seaweed in **Indonesia**, the QOSP enhances the sustainability of fisheries and promotes marine ecosystem protection. Supporting their technical regulations and international market requirements compliance boosts sustainable production and product quality while safeguarding biodiversity. At the same time, public-private partnerships like Seafood MAP warrant that the lessons learned are shared across the community.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER





SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

The GQSP focuses on mitigating the environmental impact of livestock farming, a significant contributor to land degradation and biodiversity loss in **Costa Rica**. The initiative espouses sustainable land management, fostering the preservation of ecosystems vital to Costa Rica's rich biological diversity. Training producers emphasizes sustainable livestock practices that minimize deforestation, protect soil quality, and reduce methane emissions, which ultimately preserves the land resources and the indigenous species. This approach helps safeguard Costa Rica's ecosystems, ensuring that agricultural practices are consonant with biodiversity conservation

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

The GQSP bolsters institutional trust and governance through transparent, inclusive, and accountable quality infrastructure reforms. By sponsoring collaboration among government, private sector, and international stakeholders, the programme promotes fair trade, supports the rule of law, and enhances institutional capacity. These efforts advance peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, aligning directly with SDG 16.



**17**PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS

SDG 17:

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

With a strong focus on partnerships and global knowledge creation, the GQSP fosters collaboration among international partners, public institutions, and the private sector to achieve shared sustainability goals by strengthening national, regional, and cross-continental synergies. UNIDO assumes thought leadership in shaping a future-ready Quality Infrastructure by integrating with global networks like the International Network on Quality Infrastructure (INetQI) and developing innovative tools such as the Quality Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (QI4SD) Index. The QI4SD Index provides a comprehensive framework to measure and analyze a country's quality infrastructure readiness to support sustainable development, enabling targeted interventions and progress towards achieving the SDGs.





QUALITY & STANDARDS DRIVING THE SDGs



Quality and standards play a pivotal role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing a comprehensive framework that fosters economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The quality infrastructure system, comprising organizations, policies, and practices, is crucial for enhancing the quality, safety, and environmental soundness of goods, services, and processes. Quality Infrastructure serves as a fundamental tool for achieving the SDGs, bridging the gap between technical requirements and strategic sustainable development goals.

By fostering an enabling environment, creating strong institutions and supporting both SMEs and larger industries, the GQSP not only reconciles local needs with global challenges but also provides a powerful pathway towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, ensuring a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all.





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