

# Trading Towards a Sustainable Future

Newsletter on the Project for Fostering the Development of “Green” Exports Through VSS

## Project Update

Towards the end of 2018, the UNCTAD project-[“Fostering the Development of Green Exports through VSS”](#) completed several country studies on the preparedness of stakeholders towards the effective use of VSS as a tool to spread green exports. These studies, illustrated in a form of value-chain analysis, have identified motivations, opportunities as well as challenges specific to different stakeholders of coconut-oil value chains in Vanuatu and the Philippines, and organic coffee value chain in Lao PDR. The outcome of these studies - policy options and recommendations - will be discussed at the national multi-stakeholder meetings with a view to develop a concrete plan of action.

These studies have piloted the use of the ‘VSS Assessment Toolkit’. *~Read further to learn more*

## Feature Country: Philippines

The Philippines is an archipelagic country located in Southeast Asia. Situated in the western Pacific Ocean, it consists of about 7,641 islands. It is also one of the countries where the coconut sector remains an important source of economic and particularly rural development. Coconut is one of the traditional industries with enormous potential not only to contribute to economic prosperity and poverty reduction, but also to developing a green economy.

Domestically, the important role of coconut for millions of Filipinos is evidenced by the huge amount of land and human resources devoted to the sector. There are coconut areas in 68 out of 79 provinces (*Continue in Page 2*)



## VSS Assessment Toolkit, A web-based tool launching in 2020



Given the different priorities among actors of the value-chain in relation to VSS, some of them tend to be excluded from the benefits of VSS certification. Since there are no systematic ways to visualize the different needs and challenges faced by the different stakeholders, the VSS Assessment Toolkit was designed to measure the beliefs, opinions, outlooks and perceptions of actors and stakeholders within specific value chains of export-oriented products.

The Toolkit provides a simple and easy means to identify VSS-related challenges and opportunities specific to different actors within a value chain.

### For Academics & Donors

The toolkit provides an initial contribution to envisage principal perceptions behind the adoption of VSS among smallholder producers and other actors in the value chain.

### For Policymakers

The visualization of motivations will not only identify power and perception asymmetries but also contribute to the detection of areas where policy could play a role in mitigating the issues.

The knowledge gained from the analytical outcome of the Toolkit helps policymakers identify and implement policy actions required to build up productive and export capacity to effectively respond to the growing market demand for green and sustainable products.

This in turn would help countries work in the direction of achieving their SDGs, specifically on food security (SDG2), decent employment (SDG 8), gender equality (SDG5), environmental conservation (SDG 12, 14, 15) and global partnership (SD17).

## Philippines (continued from page 1)



Photo taken at the UNCTAD Special Meeting on VCO Study, held at the Dept. of Trade & Industry in Makati City, Philippines on 19 February 2019.

... and about 331 million coconut trees in 3.3 million hectares of land, accounting for 30% of total farmlands. There are about 3.5 million coconut farmers who comprise 20% of the country's poor and are working in coconut farms in 1,195 municipalities.

Being one of the pilot countries to conduct an in-country analysis using the VSS Assessment Toolkit, the "Assessment of Organic Certification in the Coconut Oil Value Chain in the Philippines" also features barriers and opportunities of certifying coconut oil in the Philippines, especially in relation to global exports.

The "UNCTAD Special Meeting on VCO Study" was held in Makati City, Philippines on 19 February 2019, together with representatives from the Philippines Coconut Authority, Asian Development Bank, and United Coconut Association of the Philippines, among other stakeholders. Ensuing this meeting, it was agreed that a multi-stakeholder platform on organic/sustainable coconuts will meet within the framework of the **Second World Coconut Congress (2WCC)**, which will be held on **28-29 August 2019 in Manila**, in partnership with the 2WCC organizer, United Coconut Association of the Philippines (UCAP).

### VSS Assessment Toolkit: Be the first to know about it!

The VSS Assessment Toolkit was created to guide users conducting a sector-specific case study on stakeholders' preparedness for VSS towards achieving green exports.

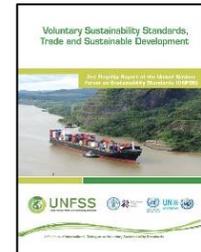
This Toolkit helps users unpack different perceptions of VSS among different actors within the value chain, shedding light on the willingness and preparedness to adopt certification and sustainable production methods. The Toolkit is divided into five parts:

1. **Roadmap:** It aims to provide hints and tips on how users (researchers) could modify the Assessment Toolkit to suit their respective country contexts.
2. **Structured Questionnaire:** Divided into several sections, the idea of this step is to analyze perceptions that reflect the understandings of actors about the participation in VSS according to various dimensions, which are mapped to the SDGs.
3. **Interview Guidelines:** Consists of open-ended questions that aim to probe deeper into the statements provided in the Structured Questionnaire.
4. **Simple Guide to Data Analysis:** An explanation on how to analyze the data gathered from the value chain actors. This document clarifies how to input data and obtain results using a dedicated worksheet or other software.
5. **Metrics File:** An explanation of the categories of results in the area of interest. It showcases the qualitative and quantitative indicators that are used to capture the results linking the survey questions to the indicators.

 UNCTAD is organizing the first technical consultation of the Toolkit with researchers and potential users. The consultation will be held on **28<sup>th</sup> March 2019**. Interested parties may register at the event web page: <https://reg.unog.ch/event/28158/>



In September 2018, UNFSS launched its 3<sup>rd</sup> Flagship Report titled, "Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS), Trade and Sustainable Development".



The study focuses on the relationship between VSS, Trade and Sustainable Development within green global value chains. The VSS system has in fact influenced the export landscape to either facilitate market access or become an obstacle to trade. (Flagship Publication is available for download via <https://unfss.org/home/flagship-publication/>)



Two organic-certified Virgin Coconut Oil (VCO) producers, **Pasciolco** and **GreenLife** from the Quezon Province promote values that pay special attention to the integration of smallholder producers. **GreenLife** for example, follows a social mission to create jobs for coconut farmers while ensuring a self-sustaining household in the coconut producing community.