

# Opening Remarks

**Ms. Helena Fraser, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uzbekistan**

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**Meeting:** National Workshop  
Fostering Integration of the Dried Fruits Value Chain of  
Uzbekistan into Regional and Global Value Chains  
Online – via Zoom (with simultaneous interpretation)

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**Date:** 4 February 2021

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**Time:** 14:00 – Tashkent time

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Excellencies, Distinguished Panellists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The agricultural sector plays a key role in the Uzbek economy. The World Bank has estimated that agriculture formed 31 per cent of Uzbek growth in value-added per employee in the two decades to 2016.
- Raising agricultural productivity by accelerating market reforms in agriculture is an important in the medium-term goal for growth and poverty reduction and thereby meeting SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, and SDG 1 of “No Poverty”.
- An important point to consider is also that of scale. In the fruits value chain, there is significant heterogeneity in terms of sizes of farms dedicated to growing fruit like grapes, plums and apricots. Smallholder farmers, including *dekhkans*, play an important role in this value chain.
- Also, as indicated by a recent World Bank study<sup>1</sup>, the fruit and vegetable crops grown in Uzbekistan use less water compared to other crops like cotton and wheat, while at the same time producing greater income revenue per hectare and amount of water employed. This is even more so if modern techniques of drip irrigation are used. Hence, moving agricultural production towards horticultural products like fruits has advantages both from the sustainability and economic points of view.
- Additionally, development of the fruit value chain can also foster income of women, as the UNCTAD survey implemented for the elaboration of the study that will be presented today indicated that 58.6% of the workforce of surveyed fruit farmers were women, especially as temporary workers.
- Trade is a key enabler for developing countries, as it can contribute to increasing opportunities for all, not least through the creation of quality employment, as well as reducing poverty and hunger.
- Within the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan, dried fruits constitute an important component in terms of current production and export, but also in term of potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Larson, D.F, Khidirov, D. and Ramniceanu, I. (2015), “Uzbekistan: Strengthening the Horticulture Value Chain”, World Bank Background Paper Series– Uzbekistan Vision 2030.

- The fruit sector overall is the 6th largest in Uzbekistan's export profile, earning the country US\$ 647 million, as edible fruits represented 4.3 per cent of Uzbekistan's total exports in 2019 of US\$14.9 billion. Of this total, \$105m, or 16.3 per cent, is made up of dried grapes, and \$41m, or 6.3 per cent, is made up of other dried fruits. Together, therefore, dried fruits form 1.4 per cent of the entire export value of Uzbekistan.
- All this highlights the need for concerted efforts by Uzbekistan to continue to foster the fruits sector, including dried fruits. Dried fruits, as indicated by UNCTAD's study, not only allow producers to fetch higher prices for their produce, but also allow them to store fruit without the need for cold storage, and reduce the volume, and hence the cost, of transport per unit of value sold by farmers.
- In this seminar, we will hear presentations by experts from different development partners like UNCTAD, the World Bank and FAO, by people directly involved in dried fruits trade activities like FRUCOM, exporters and importers, and by different officials of the Republic of Uzbekistan working on different dimensions of public policy relevant to the sector.
- From the different presentations, and from the debate that I hope will result from the complementary interventions, we hope that we can all draw some ideas and possible directions for strengthening the integration of the fruits value chain in Uzbekistan, including dried fruits, into regional and international value chains.
- These efforts are clearly multi-dimensional, not only in terms of the type of policies that are needed, but also in terms of the temporal horizon of those policies. During this seminar, several of these topics will be discussed by our panellists.
- Among the different issues that will be discussed is that successful integration into international value chains requires addressing different barriers that the exports of these countries face around the world. Attaining and maintaining quality all along the value chain is an important conditioning factor for tapping into international markets, especially those with high prices.
- At the United Nations Resident Coordinator's office, we look forward to continuing to support the efforts of the Republic of Uzbekistan towards increased value addition, diversification and sustainable development.
- The United Nations system contributes regularly to better design and implementation of public policies in the Republic of Uzbekistan through data-based research like the one that will be presented today, policy dialogue between different stakeholders, and through the conduct of projects in the field, targeting important specific commodity sectors such as fruits, including dried fruits.
- I would like to conclude by thanking all of you who are present today to participate in our seminar.
- (CLOSE)