

A 3-STAGE APPROACH TO FOSTERING GREEN EXPORTS THROUGH VSS

THE CHALLENGES

Developing countries experience capacity gaps in capturing the potential of VSS to catalyze sustainable development through trade. Such gaps usually include:

- lack of information and analysis to understand the nature and effectiveness of VSS; and
- lack of a framework to achieve policy coherence and to coordinate actions.

THE APPROACH

In order to bridge these gaps, UNCTAD developed a three-stage approach that can easily be adapted to different contexts and local specificities. In the preliminary stage, the country in question needs to have an interest in understanding and addressing VSS adoption in a specific sector, product or value chain. From that starting point, the approach then proceeds as follows:



STAGE 1: INITIAL MULTI- STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

An initial multi-stakeholder meeting for the selected value chain is organized, in which stakeholders share experiences and discuss the rationale for adopting VSS to foster green exports.

Outcome: Initial mapping of key concerns with respect to VSS uptake and identification of core actors in the value chain



STAGE 2: ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE CHAIN

A systematic reality-check of actor-specific challenges and opportunities of VSS adoption is done using the VSS Assessment Toolkit. The toolkit is a streamlined, adaptable, publicly available and analytical framework.

Outcome: Specific policy options corresponding to the challenges and opportunities identified



STAGE 3: MULTI- STAKEHOLDER ADOPTION OF AN ACTION PLAN

A second multi-stakeholder meeting is convened to evaluate the policy options laid out in stage 2. The discussion leads to an agreement on an action plan aligned with the country's sustainable development strategies.

Outcome: An action plan that clearly maps out "who does what and when" is incorporated into a policy framework

UNCTAD's Approach and Tools

THE OUTCOME

As a result of this process, stakeholders:

1. Increase their understanding of the impact of domestic and international VSS on “green” exports and sustainable development objectives;
2. Improve their capacity to jointly design, assess and implement policy options to leverage VSS to develop sustainable exports.

Altogether, the three-stage approach to fostering green exports through VSS is expected to help countries improve their capacity to use trade as a means to achieve the SDGs.

THE TOOLS: UNCTAD'S VSS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

To support the implementation of Stage 2 (analysis) of this approach, UNCTAD provides countries with an assessment toolkit to facilitate the reality-check conducted in the field.

The objective of the toolkit is to identify the challenges and motivations to adopt a VSS scheme in a specific value chain and to then produce corresponding policy options. This exercise is useful for many actors, in particular national governments and regional agencies, but also for the private sector, NGOs and others.

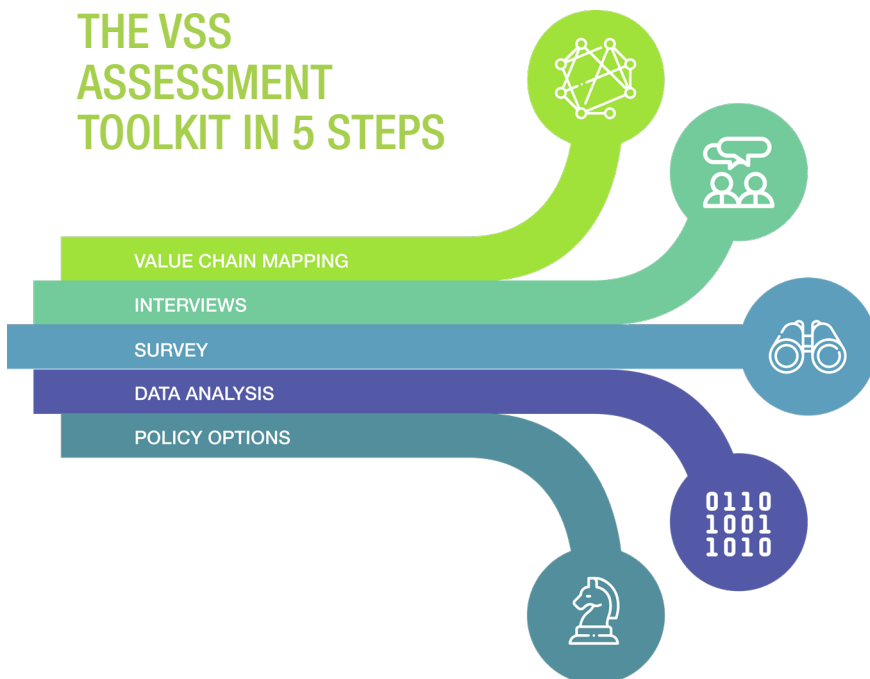
ADAPTABILITY OF THE TOOLKIT

While the toolkit provides detailed guidelines for each of these steps, there is also ample flexibility to adapt the analysis to any given country, region or product.

The VSS Assessment Toolkit is unique in that it uses objective and perception-based data via quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a holistic analysis. At the same time, the VSS Assessment Toolkit is well-positioned to complement existing tools that address other aspects of sustainability.

To find out more about the VSS Assessment Toolkit, go to <https://vssapproach.unctad.org/>

THE VSS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT IN 5 STEPS



STEP 1: VALUE CHAIN MAPPING

The value chain is mapped, identifying all relevant actors and supporting institutions, with a special emphasis on regulation, policy and actors that can affect VSS uptake and use.

STEP 2: INTERVIEWS

Selected actors of the value chain are interviewed using a list of open-ended questions to gauge perceptions and experiences regarding opportunities and challenges of VSS uptake and use.

STEP 3: SURVEY

Actors along the value chain are surveyed on both objective and perception-based questions. The survey can be adapted to any agricultural value chain, as long as sampling is careful and questions are piloted. The survey is deployed via the free software *Survey Solutions*. This allows for easy customization and offline data collection.

STEP 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Observations from the value-chain mapping, the interviews and the survey are brought together and analysed to identify the opportunities and challenges of VSS use for specific actors along the value chain.

STEP 5: POLICY OPTIONS

Policy options that correspond to the results of the previous step are put forward and explored.