# Independent evaluation of United Nations Development Account Project 2023G

*"Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)" **

Independent Evaluation Unit
August 2024

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UNCTAD/OSG/INF/2025/4

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## List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CROP | Council of Regional Organizations in the Pacific |
| CSO | Civil Society Organizations |
| DA (UNDA) | United Nations Development Account |
| DESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| ESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| EU-STREIT | European Union-funded Programme for Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea |
| FAO | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FDB | Fiji Development Bank |
| FIC | Forum Island Countries |
| iEPA | EU-Pacific Interim Economic Partnership Agreement |
| IMPACT | Improving Pacific Islands Customs and Trade Project |
| MFTA | Melanesian Free Trade Agreement |
| MTDP | Medium-term Development Plan |
| MSG | Melanesian Spearhead Group |
| MSGTA | Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement |
| MSME | Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NSDS | National Sustainable Development Strategy |
| NTM | Non-Tariff Measure |
| OCO | Oceania Customs Organization |
| PACER Plus | Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus |
| PHAMA Plus | Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Plus |
| PIF | Pacific Islands Forum |
| PIFS | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat |
| PICT | Pacific Island Countries and Territories |
| PICTA | Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement |
| PIPSO | Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization |
| PPIU | PACER Plus Implementation Unit |
| PQII | Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative |
| PRISE | Pacific Regional Integration Support |
| PSIDS | Pacific Small Island Developing States |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SIDS | Small Island Developing States |
| SPC | The Pacific Community |
| SPS | Sanitary and Phytosanitary |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| VSS | Voluntary Sustainability Standards |

## Executive summary

The four member States of the Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG), Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are highly dependent on international trade but suffer from disadvantages such as high trade costs and lack of price competitiveness. While unique and diverse, they broadly face comparative disadvantage in international trade due to some characteristics that are typical of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These include their remoteness, relatively small populations and markets as well as limited geographic size, often limited resource base and isolation. These act as barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of economies of scale while at the same time making them excessively dependent on international trade. The UNDA funded project 'Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group' was implemented by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in partnership with the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat over the period February 2020 to December 2023. The project sought to support the member States of the MSG in efforts to diversify and increase the value-added of their exports, in a manner that contributes to green economic growth and sustainable development. The project sought to be grounded in the realities faced by Pacific SIDS, including structural constraints to trade and vulnerability to climate change. This is the overall context of institutional and financial constraints that restrict green trade promotion.

The objective of the project was 'to enhance the capacity of the MSG member countries to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the SDGs.' In support of this objective, the project aimed to:

(i) Enhance capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy – shaped by non-tariff measures (NTMs) and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS), and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership; and

(ii) Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level.

The evaluation covers the duration of the project from February 2020 to December 2023. It assesses progress in all four target countries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and the sub-regional MSG context through the MSG Secretariat. Both project Outcome areas were examined, including linkages to national planning processes, the SDGs and the stated commitment placed on women and youth as the most vulnerable of marginalized groups in the project context.

The evaluation had the following specific objectives:

(i) To assess the degree to which the desired project results have been realized, including the extent to which UN cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and disability inclusion have been mainstreamed; and

(ii) To identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.

The project has made a highly valuable contribution to green trade promotion in Melanesia. However, it is also recognized by key stakeholders engaged through the evaluation that there are ongoing needs that will require additional commitment at the national and sub-regional levels to consolidate

project outputs and address related challenges. Overall, the project is found to have been successful with clear value-addition based on UNCTAD strengths (and mandate) and in full alignment with the intended purpose and scope of Development Account projects. The project has been greatly appreciated by national counterparts and partners. It was clearly very well aligned with national needs and priorities of the four countries as well as the objectives of MSG integration (as a sub-set of Pacific regionalism) which seek to help address structural barriers to trade. Partnership with the MSG Secretariat was also key in ensuring that the project was grounded in national needs and adapted to the national context of the four countries. In particular, the use of national coordinators and working with well-informed national consultants ensured a good balance of national and external support.

The design of the project and its alignment with national priorities and adoption of a sub-regional action plan with the MSG Secretariat were key strengths. The Outputs were well considered and appropriate for the national context of the four countries and their priorities and needs. These were adapted in a constructive manner in response to evolving circumstances and were highly valued by counterparts. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project were small businesses engaged in the value chain for green exports, including farmers and exporters, though beneficiaries are not clearly defined in the project document. Beyond the Outputs level, the project results hierarchy did not have an explicit policy focus, other than alignment across different policy areas and with national plans. Nonetheless, important policy recommendations have emerged from the project. Furthermore, the explicit focus on integration of green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies as a project objective suggests a need to engage national planning and budgetary entities (while the stakeholder analysis of the original product document covers planning entities, they were not involved in project activities).

The project's knowledge dissemination focus was appropriate and valued by counterparts as an important contribution to better understanding NTMs and VSSs, as well as the importance of policy and regulatory alignment in support of sustainable development. As the project focused heavily on analytical products (NTM and VSS reports, export guide etc.), the project strategy could have included stronger communications strategies to ensure that end users were clearly defined and approaches adopted. This would ensure that the users have the knowledge available to them in an appropriate format. While the project did not have an explicit focus on gender equality and social inclusion, it was designed based on the principle of 'leaving no one behind', which included integration of the consideration of the impact on women and youth throughout project implementation.

The MSG Secretariat was the key implementing partner for the project at the regional level, playing an important role in contextualizing the approach to the Pacific context, coordinating regional activities and ensuring alignment with existing MSG strategies and frameworks (including the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan and progress towards the MFTA). The project sought to strengthen sub-regional cooperation and, to an extent, integration and this was largely achieved as described in this report. The Sub-Regional Action Plan resulting from the project has three important and inter-related areas of work: Policy Coordination, Enhanced Data Collection; and Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange. This will require ongoing support, including financing, so working through ongoing and planned activities of UNCTAD, the MSG Secretariat and other development partners (such as FAO in PNG) to support implementation, will be critical to its long-term success.

The following recommendations are directed towards UNCTAD:

## Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:**

Strengthen the partnership with the MSG Secretariat under the MOU arrangements to identify opportunities for UNCTAD to support the implementation of the Sub-regional Action Plan, with guidance from the MSG Trade and Economic Officials Meeting (TEOM).

**Recommendation 2:**

In the project design phase, UNCTAD should ensure that the problem analysis and results framework adequately capture the issues to be addressed through the project, with clear intervention logic. Related to this, ensure that the project intervention logic is maintained when undertaking revisions to the project in the implementation phase, and particularly the linkages between outputs higher level results (outcomes and objectives in the context of DA projects).

**Recommendation 3:**

Strengthen the use of strategic communications approaches in the project design and implementation phases to ensure that knowledge products are utilized optimally in support of project results and are accessible to the intended users. This includes making financial resources available for the translation of some knowledge products produced under the project into local languages and usable formats, in particular, the Export Guides.

**Recommendation 4:**

Assist target countries and the MSG Secretariat in identifying opportunities to upscale and leverage project results through partnership with larger scale investments by development partners and other regional organizations in the Pacific (including, but not limited to CROP agencies). This is important for different parts of the value-chain, but particularly in working with MSMEs that require financing, awareness (on issues such as the value of VSSs), capacity and extension services to address quality and supply issues.

**Recommendation 5:**

In the context of identifying 'synergistic linkages' between green trade (and trade promotion more broadly) with national sustainable planning processes (National Development Plans but also sectoral plans), engage national planning entities and planning focal points in line ministries to ensure that opportunities for integration are substantive and influence planning (and budgetary) processes, rather than simply identifying the correlation of linkages between different policy domains.

# 1. Introduction

The United Nations Development Account (DA) funded project "Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group" was implemented by UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in partnership with the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat over the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2023. The project sought to support four target countries from the MSG[1] in efforts to diversify and increase the value-added of their exports, in a manner that contributes to their approach to green economic growth and sustainable development. The project sought to be grounded in the realities faced by Pacific SIDS, including structural constraints to trade and vulnerability to climate change. This is the overall context of institutional and financial constraints that restrict green trade promotion.

The project supported governments to identify and strengthen 'synergistic linkages' between green trade promotion, social development and environmental protection, in a way that contributes to national sustainable development objectives. The project was also motivated by the gap between willingness towards greater economic integration via the implementation of the new MFTA (that addresses services trade and labour mobility in addition to trade in goods) and the need for an effective framework for greater regional and multi-stakeholder policy coordination (noting that the project did not directly support the immediate implementation of MFTA). The objective of the project was 'to enhance the capacity of the MSG member countries to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the SDGs.' In support of this objective, the project aimed to:

(i) Enhance capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy – shaped by non-tariff measures (NTMs) and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS), and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership; and

(ii) Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level.

The outputs towards achieving these outcomes were implemented in a phased approach. The National Phase of the project kicked off by organizing the first workshops at the regional and the national levels (OP 1.1 and 1.2). In the Regional Phase, national experiences and lessons from each country were examined by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat in support of regional cooperation (and integration). Details are provided in Section 2.3 below and in Annex V. The project went through revision in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to coordinate with other development assistance projects that were recently developed in the Pacific region. In the project, attention was given to vulnerable people in the target countries. The total budget for the project was US$ 576,927, provided by the 12th Tranche of the UN Development Account through the DESA Capacity Development Office.

[1] MSG members are Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu as well as a representative of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) of New Caledonia. See: https://msgsec.info/about-msg/

# 2. Description of the Project

## 2.1 Background

The four MSG target countries (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) are highly dependent on international trade but suffer from disadvantages such as high trade costs and lack of price competitiveness. While recognizing that the four countries are unique and diverse, they broadly face comparative disadvantage in international trade due to some characteristics that are typical of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These underlying constraints include their remoteness, relatively small populations[2] and markets, as well as limited geographic size, often limited resource base and isolation. These act as barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of economies of scale and lead to extremely high trade costs, while at the same time making them excessively dependent on international trade. Imports are critical in securing access to basic supplies, necessary for food, nutrition, health and energy security. Coupled with infrastructure constraints, PSIDS are particularly susceptible to external economic and environmental shocks, including climate change and natural disasters.[3]

For this reason, the project sought to address risks arising from their narrow resource and export base through the policy recommendations (though, while important, these are not listed as specific outputs in the project document) for green export promotion with synergies with national sustainable development strategies (as well as several SDGs and Targets). This aligns with the aspirations of the target countries to achieve greener and more inclusive economic growth, as well as attempts by the MSG Secretariat to promote green growth. To do this, agricultural and fisheries exports can be promoted to niche markets that have demand for sustainable products (and services). The four countries face challenges in responding to international demand which inhibits export growth opportunities. In this context, the target countries are examining policy options for green export promotion for enhancing economic growth in an inclusive and sustainability manner.

Regional economic cooperation and integration is an important strategy to overcome trade barriers in the Pacific. Empowering MSG member states to capitalize on existing trade agreements and regional initiatives, such as the MSG Trade Agreement and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus), is important to sustain economic growth. It is equally crucial for future agreements like the MFTA, which include new areas such as trade in services, labour mobility, and cross-border investments. The project sought to address the MSG members' challenges in responding to market demand for sustainable goods. The underlying challenges include inadequate:

i. Timely information on the international market trends.
ii. Access to finance or investment needed for production transformation and certification required for their exports to be classified as green/sustainable goods; and
iii. Institutional or policy frameworks to help producers/businesses transform their export products to become "green/sustainable" products.

[2] PNG has a population of close to 10,500,000 while Fiji (904,590), Solomon Islands (761,215) and Vanuatu (314,653) are significantly smaller. SPC (2024), see: https://sdd.spc.int/
[3] Recognized in Para. [178] of 'The Future We Want, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development outcome document' (A/RES/66/288).

The project sought to address these underlying issues through the comprehensive Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) data collected from the target countries, and on Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) assessments reports and national export guides developed for select products. NTMs can act as potential barriers to trade, particularly for smaller producers who may struggle to meet the requirements. Compliance with NTMs can pose challenges and additional costs for exporters. VSS can provide market access and enable small and large-scale producers to fetch premium prices in high-value international markets. This contributes to sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation, while meeting VSS requirements enhances their competitiveness and economic viability.

The products selected by the countries were ginger in Fiji, vanilla in Papua New Guinea, kava in the Solomon Islands, and virgin coconut oil in Vanuatu. National activities (described in detail in Section 2.3 below) were concluded by the development of national matrices of 'synergistic linkages' between green trade promotion and national sustainable development strategies (National Development Plans). A Sub-Regional Action Plan was developed jointly by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat. Its final version was validated by the participating countries and the MSG Secretariat. It draws on the recommendations developed through the project at the national level (including NTM data collection, Export Guides, VSS assessment and workshops).

*Green trade in Melanesia*

In terms of exports, an important opportunity exists to focus attention on niche markets that require less price competitiveness and suit the agricultural practices used in Melanesian countries (this is recognized in the national plans of all participating countries). As noted in the project document, climate change and environmental vulnerability necessitate economic activities that optimize economic and social gains while protecting the environment. Given the structural challenges that the four countries face, it is important for them to adopt an integrated approach in policymaking and implementation, to ensure complementarity and coherence.[4] Against this background, the project supported the four MSG member countries to identify and strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and their sustainable development policy in a manner that contributes to the shared objective of achieving stronger and more effective subregional economic integration and cooperation for the achievement of sustainable development.

*Focus on vulnerable groups*

The project recognized that smallholder producers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in rural communities often face poverty as well as particular disadvantages when entering into global value chains of green products due to their lack of information and market power. While agriculture accounts for a relatively small portion of the total GDP in Pacific SIDS, compared to other sectors, it represents the primary economic activity that provides livelihoods for a large proportion of the rural population. The project therefore sought to help national and regional policymakers better understand the challenges facing marginalized and vulnerable groups and provide them with necessary supportive measures. Transformation of export sectors in a greener and more sustainable manner results in fairer and more equitable prices and decent working conditions for smallholders and MSMEs. A particular focus was placed on women and youth throughout project documents, who represent the most vulnerable of marginalized groups.

[4] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/sids_-_looking_back_and_forward.pdf

*Related sub-regional strategies*

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) is upgrading its MSG Trade Agreement by incorporating services liberalization and labour mobility. The MSG also aims to have "common position and solidarity" in maximizing gains from international trade. Fiji and Papua New Guinea are not parties to the PACER-Plus, which make it difficult to align trade-related regulatory cooperation among the MSG members (as envisaged under the MFTA) with the PACER-Plus. At the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) level, the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy (PAfTS) 2020-2025 seeks to ensure effective coordination and priority setting at the regional level and has quality infrastructure as one of the priorities. Accordingly, the PIF Secretariat initiated Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative (PQII) in 2017. Not only are all the MSG members part of the PQII, but the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are also beneficiary to the product-specific assistance.[5] Lastly, a group of Pacific countries, including all the MSG members, pursue closer economic and development relationship with the EU, through the EU-Pacific Interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA). It was ratified by the EU and Papua New Guinea in 2011. Fiji joined it in 2014 and Solomon Islands in 2020. In 2022, Vanuatu expressed an interest in accession to iEPA.

## 2.2 Project objectives and expected results

The Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group project was implemented over the period January 2020 to December 2023 by UNCTAD with the MSG Secretariat. An innovative development approach was adopted to support regional policy coordination for green trade promotion that resonates with their sustainable development policy approaches. The original product document had the objective, outcomes and outputs detailed below.

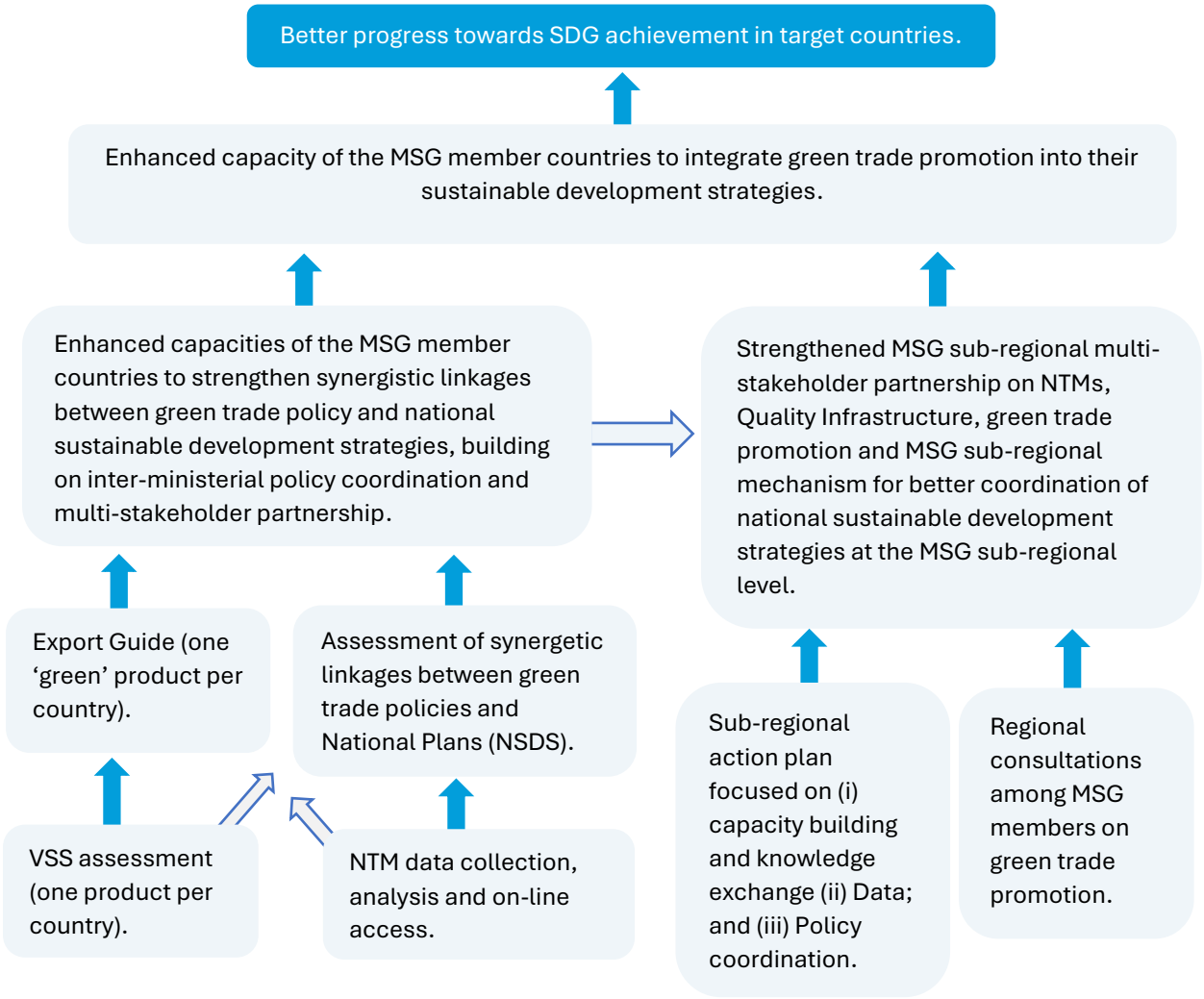
**Objective**: To enhance the capacity of the MSG member countries to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the SDGs.

**Outcome 1**: Enhanced capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership.

**Outcome 2:** Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level.

[5] https://www.forumsec.org/pacific-quality-infrastructure-pqi/

## Theory of Change[6]




[6] Constructed by the evaluator.

## 2.3 Project strategies and key activities

The project strategy sought to develop green trade promotion policy as an integral element of national sustainable development strategies in the four MSG target countries. This was to be achieved through Outcome 1 by identifying green trade promotion strategies via selecting effective strategies regarding the voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) and mapping out synergetic linkages between green trade promotion and sustainable development policy. The mapping of synergistic linkages will be supported by increased transparency on non-tariff measure (NTMs) and preparedness to sustainable standards. Another important aspect of the project under Outcome 2 is to support the MSG Secretariat in strengthening sub-regional cooperation and, to an extent, integration. The project built on key activities and findings from UNCTAD projects[7] to ensure sustainability and coherence.

**Outputs (National)**

OP 1.1: Organize the first virtual start-up regional meeting in partnership with the MSG Secretariat. Participants would consist of at least two participants from each of the MSG member countries, the MSG Secretariat staff, ESCAP and other regional and international bodies.

OP 1.2: Organize the first virtual national workshop in each of Fiji[8], Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island and Vanuatu to: (i) inform national stakeholders of the project and (ii) train national consultants for NTM data collection (according to the methodologies applied in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu under the PACER Plus project), VSS assessment (according to the methodologies applied in Vanuatu (under the DA1617AI project) and/or in-depth NTM analysis.

OP 1.3: Collect and validate NTM data in Fiji and Papua New Guinea according to the methodologies applied in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu under the PACER Plus project, conduct VSS assessment in Fiji,[9] Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea according to the methodologies applied in Vanuatu under the DA1617AI project and start the discussion on developing national matrix and in-depth NTM analysis in Vanuatu according to the methodologies which will apply in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands under the PRISE programme.[10]

OP1.4: Collect and validate NTM data in a major export market (Japan was selected in consultation with the MSG Secretariat) according to the UNCTAD Classification of NTM and disseminate the NTM data

Summary of **Non-Tariff Measure (NTM)** activities:

1. NTM data update
   i. Collect official national legislation (Acts, Regulations, Orders, etc.)
   ii. Read the text and identify information
   iii. Classify NTM type according to the NTM Classification
   iv. Classify HS according to the HS Classification
   v. Review internally
   vi. Validate with the government
2. NTM data dissemination
3. Support for WTO transparency provisions
4. NTM data analysis
5. Capacity building and training

[7] Such as: Development Account project DA1617AI, UNCTAD Online Training Course on NTMs and Data Collection
[8] The workshop in Fiji did not take place as reflected in the 2022 Progress report.
[9] Due to delay in implementation, the Fiji VSS assessment was transformed in a desk study as announced under revisions in the 2022 Progress report. In PNG, a simplified VSS assessment was conducted.
[10] NTM data was collected, validated and published for all four MSG countries.

using the platform of the UNCTAD NTM database.

OP1.5: Prepare an export guide for a key product selected by an MSG country as to have export potential as well as social and environmental implications.

OP1.6: Provide online access to NTM data, the key findings from VSS assessment and the export guide.

OP1.7: Assess synergetic linkages between green trade (NTM/VSS) policies and national sustainable development strategies of each of the MSG members.

OP1.8: Organize the second national workshops in each of the beneficiary countries where different Ministries and national stakeholders discuss, evaluate and validate the outcome of OP1.3 and OP1.7, with a view to agreeing on a national matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and sustainable development strategies.

**Outputs (Sub-regional)**

OP2.1: Organize the second virtual regional workshop of focal points and key stakeholders, in collaboration with the MSG secretariat to discuss possible regional collaboration framework based on the national matrix.

OP2.2: UNCTAD, in partnership with the MSG Secretariat, to draft a sub-regional action plan based on the outcome of the second regional workshop and in consultation with the MSG member states.

OP2.3: Organize the third regional and high-level policymaker meeting in partnership with the MSG Secretariat.

OP2.4: Present the final report explaining the MSG's approach at regional and international meetings, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2023, the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2023, and/or relevant Pacific SIDS event in 2023.

## 2.4 Target countries and beneficiaries

This project targeted the four Small island developing states (SIDS) that are the members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. It sought to work with a range of stakeholders from across Government (External Trade Units, Customs, Agriculture, Planning) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) including exporters and farmers. The target countries indicate a commitment to green economic growth and trade promotion in their national sustainable development strategies. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are not clearly defined in the project document but are assumed to be small businesses engaged in the value chain for green exports, including farmers and exporters.

## 2.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders

The project was jointly implemented with the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat. In addition to this, the project document lists the implementation partners as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Trade Centre (ITC), UN Environment (UNEP) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). In terms of transparency in trade regulation and facilitation in the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus, UNCTAD supported the PACER Plus members in publishing and notifying trade regulations through the Trade Information

Portals, based on its ample experience in NTM data collection and NTM database management. The UNCTAD EU-funded IMPACT project, which seeks to optimize border and customs procedures of Pacific Island countries, was an important contribution to the outcomes of this Green Trade project.

Related to efforts to support MSG trade-related regulatory cooperation and integration, the members of PACER Plus are moving towards increasing transparency in trade regulation for the purpose of improving trade facilitation in the region. The implications of this are that Vanuatu and Solomon Islands would not have information on trade regulations of their major trade partners, Fiji and Papua New Guinea (not parties to PACER Plus). This can add an extra challenge to regulatory cooperation in trade within the MSG.

The project, through Outputs 1.3 (collection and validation of NTM data in Fiji and Papua New Guinea) and 1.5 (national workshop) sought to address this problem. Moreover, the project sought to create synergy with the PQII undertaken by PIFS, throughout the project period. PQII has worked on establishing regional QI frameworks and identifying quality challenges in selected value chains. While PQII's work required the analysis of laws, policies and the selected value chains, the project sought to provide necessary information through Outputs 1.3 (collection and validation of NTM data in Fiji and Papua New Guinea; VSS assessment in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea) and 1.5 (national workshop). Lastly, the iEPA with the EU to which three MSG members are parties and one member expressed accession interest, has provisions to increase transparency in trade regulation, similarly to the PACER Plus. Through the above-mentioned outputs, the project sought to have a 'one stone two birds' effect. UNRCOs in the Pacific are other stakeholders connecting the countries and other UN agencies. FAO is leading a programme on strengthening capacities to address climate change impacts on biosecurity and food security in Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands.

The project built on UNCTAD support to Pacific SIDS for the establishment of pathways for achieving trade growth that can positively influence their capacity to achieve the SDGs. The first pathway was fostering "green exports". According to the project document, in Vanuatu, UNCTAD had:

(i) Identified potential green export sectors that included coconut (National Green Export Review for Vanuatu under the 9th Tranche Development Account project 1415L) and

(ii) Assessed the country's preparedness towards fostering exports of *sustainable* coconut oil via certifying for voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) under the 10th Tranche Development Account project 1617AI.

These projects established close partnership with the Government of Vanuatu and confirmed that capacity-building in green export would be most effective when coordinated at the regional level. UNCTAD has also sought to improve transparency in intraregional trade particularly concerning non-tariff measures (NTMs), many of which stem from the government's regulatory measures on social and environmental wellbeing. UNCTAD is also the leading multilateral agency collecting and disseminating information on NTMs with the UNCTAD NTM database, is supporting nine Pacific SIDS (including the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) to improve regulatory transparency via establishing an intraregional NTM database through the project "Transparency in trade regulation and facilitation in the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus" (June 2018-December 2019).

## 2.6 Resources

The project had a budget of US$576,927, provided by the UN Development Account (DA) 12th Tranche. It was managed through the Trade Analysis Branch of the UNCTAD Division on International Trade and Commodities. Five international consultants were recruited to support implementation (a regional coordinator and experts in non-tariff measures (NTM), harmonized system (HS), VSS), in addition to six national consultants (two for Vanuatu and one for each of the other countries). Also, one P2 staff member was hired as General Temporary Assistance under the project.

## 2.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

### SDG Goals and Targets

The project established linkages between green trade promotion policy and other policy measures that aim to support sustainable development, referring to these as 'synergistic linkages.' The project aimed to contribute to progress on the following three SDG targets:

**SDG 8** - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

**Target 8.a** - Increase Aid-for-Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.

**SDG 12** - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**Target 12.1** - Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries.

**SDG 17** - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

**Target 17.11** - Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020.

By

- Building capacity to enter into high-growth green markets thereby increasing exports.
- Raising national awareness on sustainable production and consumption; and
- Becoming capable of attracting more Aid-for-Trade for building capacity for green and sustainable production and trade. [11]

[11] From the Project Document.

# 3. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

## 3.1 Purpose and objectives

The evaluation covers the duration of the project, from March 2020 to December 2023. It assesses progress in all four target countries (Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and the sub-regional MSG context through the MSG Secretariat. Both project Outcome areas were examined, including linkages to national planning processes, the SDGs and the stated commitment placed on women and youth as the most vulnerable of marginalized groups in the project context.

*Objectives of the evaluation*

The evaluation has the following specific objectives:

i. To assess the degree to which the desired project results have been realized, including the extent to which UN cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and disability inclusion have been mainstreamed; and
ii. To identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.

## 3.2 Evaluation scope, criteria and questions

The criteria for the evaluation were established by UNCTAD in the planning phase and reflected in the evaluation Terms of Reference. Proposed amendments to the evaluation questions were decided between the evaluator and the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit. As a sub-regional approach within Melanesia, the evaluation had limited focus on broader Pacific regional trade and integration arrangements such as the PACER Plus and 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Further, while infrastructure is identified as a key constraint to agriculture export development in the target countries, the evaluation did not focus on infrastructure issues in any detail. The evaluation addressed the following questions under the evaluation criteria.

*Relevance*

1. To what extent was the project design and implementation aligned with UNCTAD and UNDA 12TH Tranche objectives?
2. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and beneficiary countries?
3. To what extent has the project utilized partnerships and been complementary to related interventions (UN and non-UN) in the target countries?

*Effectiveness*

4. To what extent has there been progress towards the objectives as contained in the project document and the SDG targets identified?
5. To what extent have the project participants utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and products developed through the project?
6. What are key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results?

*Efficiency*

7. To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring the project within the defined scope and timeline?

8. How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources?
9. To what extent has the project maximized efficiencies and results through building partnerships with other UN and non-UN organizations?

*Sustainability*

10. What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?
11. Is there evidence that beneficiary countries have continued working towards the project objectives beyond UNCTAD's interventions?

*Gender, human rights and disability*

12. To what extent were an equity-focused approach and a gender mainstreaming strategy incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard?

## 4. Methodology

The evaluation methodology is based on the ToR (Annex I), with further elaboration of the approach agreed with the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit. It was conducted in accordance with the UNDA Project Evaluation Guidelines (October 2019) as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy (June 2023). The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach, guided by the project results framework (Annex II), evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions. The evaluation was supported by a Stakeholder Mapping. The evaluation matrix (provided as Annex IV) adhered to the evaluation criteria, with key questions outlined under each criterion. The evaluator visited Vanuatu to hold discussions with the MSG Secretariat and Vanuatu stakeholders. The evaluation was conducted remotely for Fiji, PNG and Solomon Islands. It adopts a mixed-methods approach, covering data gathering and analysis to draw conclusions and recommendations based on the evaluation findings. The following data collection methods were adopted:

- Desk review of project documents and relevant materials.
- Observation of recordings of project meetings and webinars.
- Interviews with key informants (in person in Vanuatu and remotely in Fiji, PNG and Solomon Islands), including a balanced sample of project counterparts, participants, partners and other relevant stakeholders as well as key UNCTAD staff; and
- Group discussions to validate evaluation findings.

The mixed-methods approach was intended to garner more nuanced, reliable, and valid findings through the triangulation of data. To the extent possible (based on the availability of data), the evaluation sought to examine each of the four target countries with equal weighting given the stated aim to support sub-regional integration in Melanesia. Country visits to all four countries were not possible given the scope of the evaluation and available resources. Communication was difficult with some national counterparts who were travelling or otherwise not available for interviews.

## 5. Findings

This section provides an overview of country-specific, sub-regional and overall findings that respond to the evaluation objectives and questions. Conclusions are made according to the evaluation criteria in Section 6 'Conclusions' and are followed by Recommendations in Section 7.

## 5.1 General findings

*Key success factors*

Overall, the project is found to have been successful, with clear value-addition based on UNCTAD principles of technical cooperation and mandates.[12] The project was designed and implemented in alignment with the intended purpose and scope of Development Account projects and the 12th Tranche Guidelines.[13] The evaluation finds that the project has been greatly appreciated by national counterparts and partners based on feedback from national and regional stakeholders. As described in the country-specific findings, it was clearly very well aligned with the national needs and priorities of the four countries, as well as the objectives of MSG integration (and as a sub-set of Pacific regionalism), which seek to help address structural barriers to trade. Despite serious challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, practicable project amendments (for example, moving to online meetings and basing the Regional Coordinator in the MSG Secretariat for two three-month periods) helped to ensure that the project was able to adapt to changing circumstances. Partnership with the MSG Secretariat was also key in ensuring that the project was grounded in national needs and adapted to the national context of the four countries. In particular, the use of national coordinators and working with well-informed national consultants ensured a good balance of national and external support. Implementation of activities with key partners the Pacific Community (SPC), through the SAFE project, also considerably strengthened implementation and progress of the project.

While the main areas of work (NTMs, VSS, Export Guides, synergistic linkages and Sub-regional Action Plan) were common for each of the countries, the project was able to work with national partners and development partners to adapt the project in the national context and build on previous and ongoing related work. Important dimensions of export promotion, such as addressing infrastructure gaps and financing, were beyond the scope of the project, so partnership and alignment was particularly important. This was arguably the strongest in the PNG context, but is a key success factor in all four countries.

*Effectiveness and project design*

The design of the project and its alignment with national priorities and adoption of a sub-regional action plan with the MSG Secretariat was a key strength. The Outputs were well considered and appropriate for the national context of the four countries and their priorities and needs. These were adapted in a constructive manner in response to evolving circumstances and were highly valued by counterparts. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are small businesses engaged in the value chain for green exports, including farmers and exporters, but this is not clearly defined in the project document (so had to be established by the evaluator with the project team).

Beyond the Outputs level, the project results hierarchy did not have an explicit policy focus, other than alignment, despite the important policy recommendations that emerged from the project. For example, the objective of the project focused on the integration of green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the SDGs. While important, and a positive contribution of the project to national policy alignment, this does not necessarily reflect the true value of the project. The main value of the project, according to this evaluation

[12] https://unctad.org/projects/mandates
[13] https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2015_1560887471_Guideline_PD_T12_23-05-2019.pdf

(based on feedback from national counterparts and key stakeholders), centers around export promotion of green commodities and unpacking key dimensions of this through the NTM analysis, VSS assessments and development of the Export Guide. All of these have policy implications that were valuable (and valued by national counterparts), but which are not reflected in the way that the results hierarchy was formulated. This creates challenges for project management (including planning, communications approaches and MEL) and leads to the risk that the effectiveness of the project is inadequately understood. This could be a result of the way that the project was amended over time due to changing circumstances where the focus of attention of the project team was on Outputs rather than higher up on the results chain. Amendments to the project were also made through progress reporting.

Furthermore, the explicit focus on integration of green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies as a project objective suggests a need to engage national planning and budgetary entities which was not done under the project. To be clear, engagement with national planning processes was not intended under the project document (so does not necessarily reflect any weaknesses in project implementation) and this finding does not detract from the value of the project. It does, however, suggest that the results hierarchy could have been formulated to better balance the focus on policy integration with actual green trade promotion.

*Strategic communications in support of effectiveness and sustainability*

The project's knowledge dissemination focus was appropriate and valued by counterparts (based on feedback from interviews) as an important contribution to better understanding NTMs and VSSs, as well as the importance of policy and regulatory alignment in support of sustainable development. As the project focused heavily of analytical products (NTM and VSS reports, export guide etc.), the project strategy could have included stronger communications strategies to ensure that end users were clearly defined, and approaches were adopted to ensure that the users have the knowledge available to them in an appropriate format. This could strengthen the achievement of long-term project results. For example, a number of national counterparts requested that funds be made available to translate the export guides into national languages (Bislama, Pidgin) to make them more accessible to exporters and possibly farmers themselves. Again, this does not detract from the significant success of the project but could contribute positively to the achievement of results.

*Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)*

While the project did not have an explicit focus on gender equality and social inclusion, it was designed based on the principle of 'leaving no one behind', which included integration of the consideration of the impact on women and youth throughout project implementation. For example, the project teams reported that the target countries selected the product for the VSS assessment and export guide based on consideration of the level of involvement by women and youth in that value chain. A 2021 World Bank study found that women-owned Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) represent a small proportion of SMEs in the region and the average growth rates of these firms do not come close to matching that of their male counterparts.[14] Further, women entrepreneurs also tend to operate with smaller sized businesses while fewer (less than one in five) exporting firms are led by women in the region. There is limited work

[14] World Bank (2021). Pacific Region Trade Facilitation Challenges for Women Traders and Freight Forwarders: Survey Findings and Recommendations. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

focusing on trade facilitation initiatives and trade competitiveness interventions aimed at women firms who face trading barriers that are not strictly linked to tariffs or policies. There is also a shortage of analysis and data on the gender of those who participate actively in cross-border trade to guide the design or interventions that are inclusive (benefiting women as well as men).

Furthermore, making NTMs and trade regulations more accessible to vulnerable groups supports inclusive processes and procedural rights of access to information, specifically by improving access to and the quality of information on trade and export-related processes and procedures. The national synergistic linkages assessments also have a section devoted to "leaving no one behind" including special challenges to women, youth and remote communities. According to project reporting, attention was also given to ensuring the engagement of women and youth in project activities workshops. The extent to which this was successful differed in the four countries. Overall female participation in the national workshops was 36% (105 of 290 participants) with 48% in Vanuatu, 41% in Fiji, 33% in PNG and 25% in the Solomon Islands (see Annex V for details). In interviews with the evaluator, a general observation (not attributed to the project) was that national counterparts demonstrated a sound understanding of issues related to gender equality and the potential positive impacts of working on green trade to MSMEs and small-scale farmers, including opportunities for increased income and livelihood security.

### 5.2 Fiji

The main project counterpart was the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs and Communications, under which the Trade Unit is guided by the Fijian Trade Policy Framework (2015-2025) and has responsibilities that include the formulation and implementation of policies related to international trade, trade negotiations and market access for Fijian goods and services. The government is developing a new national plan throughout 2024 having extended the implementation of the National Development Plan 5-Year (2017-2021) and 20-Year (2017-2036). In the 2017 NDP, green growth, the environment, gender equality, and governance were mainstreamed. A focus area on "Transformational strategic thrusts" sought to nurture new and emerging growth sectors and development of niche products for export, including organic agricultural produce.[15] This objective is linked to green growth and supports the principles of the Fiji Green Growth Framework (2014). The NDP sought to create an enabling environment that accelerates the pace of delivering sustainability, economic opportunities, climatic viability, and food and nutrition security for all Fijians. The Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda (2010-2020) aimed to establish a diversified, economically, and environmentally sustainable agricultural economy in Fiji. The government is prioritizing green products in the negotiation of trade agreements such as the Agreement of Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (the only PIC). Fiji also undertook a WTO Trade Policy Review in 2023. In contrast, the MSG and MFTA (since 2017 only Fiji and Solomon Islands have signed) do not attract the same level of priority.

The project's focus on NTM's, VSS and the development of the Export Guide is highly relevant in this context. It responds to clear policy priorities of the government, as reflected in the matrix of national synergistic linkages. The project undertook the collection of NTM data up to 2021 (with data up to 2023 supported under the closely related IMPACT project) and the VSS assessment

[15] The top exports of Fiji are water, processed fish, gold, raw sugar, and petroleum oils; exported mostly to the United States, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and Japan.

on ginger. The evaluator was informed by national counterparts that the NTM collection and analysis broadened the understanding of NTMs as well as NTM transparency, and catalyzed discussion on the impact of NTMs in trade more broadly. This informed the (ongoing) review of the National Export Strategy. The VSS assessment was revised to a desk study (reflected as a revision in the 2022 Progress report). Work on the VSS for ginger (expected to be published in Q3 2024) has highlighted the costs of compliance for organic certification as a key barrier to export opportunities and recommended cost subsidies and in-country auditing as well as the establishment of a national body to support organic certification. The evaluator was informed by national counterparts that a better understanding of the demand-side, to help incentivize market-driven VSS through the examination of market opportunities that attract premium prices, is key. In this context, raising awareness of farmers 'on the ground' is also considered critical. This approach would also apply to other commodities that are important in Fiji, such as Vanilla, Turmeric, Coffee and Tamarind.

The focus on ginger for the Export Guide (2024) builds on work undertaken by the government in supporting ginger value-chains and provides information about export procedures and requirements. It targets what are considered to be high-end markets of Australia, EU, Japan and USA, recognizing the low-weight and relatively high-value of ginger that can help overcome infrastructure constraints. The government has identified a need to address consistency in supply and has developed a financing model to address the challenge of access to capital and finance for MSMEs. In the view of the evaluator, continued work with the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) and opportunities provided by the development of mechanisms, such as the Digital Financing Facility, will be important in this context. Other ongoing needs identified by the government[16] include improving information flow to farmers, infrastructure and skill upgrading to reduce the incidence of pests and diseases (addressed to an extent by SPC through the SAFE programme work on sanitary and phytosanitary measures), enhancing the industry's environmental sustainability; and continuing to better understand and improve market access.

The project took longer to establish in Fiji compared to the other three target countries, due to factors outside the control of project management. In interviews, government counterparts highlighted the resource constraints faced by the Trade Unit, with a limited number of staff engaged in the negotiation of large trade agreements as well as the roll-out of initiatives such as the National Single Window System. As the focus of green trade examines the whole value chain of green products (from the 'farm to the market'), a number of different government departments are involved, including the Trade Unit (Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs and Communications), the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways and the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF). Through interviews with national stakeholders, it appears that some confusion remains about overlapping responsibilities in supporting market readiness and export diversification and expansion. In this context, a national coordinating body to galvanize leadership and coordination on green trade would be crucial, ideally by strengthening an existing mechanism.

### 5.3 Papua New Guinea

The project was coordinated by the Director of the International Economic Affairs Branch, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Medium-Term Development Plan IV 2023-2027, titled 'National Prosperity Through Growing the Economy' (MTDP4), recognizes that agriculture accounts for 14

[16] https://unctad.org/system/files/non-official-document/DITC_TAB_MSG_GTP_3_2._Fiji_-_Presentation_of_national_activities.pdf

per cent of the total GDP but continues to be the primary economic activity that provides livelihoods for over 80 per cent of the rural population. PNG implemented the 2013 National Strategy for Responsible Sustainable Development for Papua New Guinea (StaRS) which highlighted three dimensions that are considered necessary for PNG to achieve inclusive green growth: a national green growth plan to create enabling conditions; green growth mainstreaming mechanisms to ensure opportunities are explored through existing economic activities; green growth policy instruments to tap specific opportunities within spatial and resource systems. The Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) III (2018-2022) also discussed the importance of unlocking untapped economic growth potential. Commercial agriculture receives priority focus to increase exports and secure high value products by processing domestically, and to create more jobs and generate income.

The government selected Vanilla under the project, including the VSS and Export Guide. PNG is a significant exporter of Vanilla, producing around 10 percent of the global supply, with 17,000 small holders involved in production, primarily concentrated in two provinces: East and West Sepik.[17] However, there has been no clear policy on Vanilla production and no standard guidelines to monitor quality. A key challenge is the amount of vanilla traded across the land border with Indonesia. With the lack of strict regulation and better market opportunities, up to 95% of the Vanilla has been informally traded across the Indonesian border at lower prices, undermining the livelihoods of farmers and export revenue.[18] The Prime Minister has prioritized Vanilla production and has stated that East Sepik should become "the world's vanilla capital".[19] FAO is working on vanilla in PNG through the STREIT programme. While Vanilla has not been considered under the Spice Act, and therefore by the Spice Board, there are plans in place by the PNG Spice Industry Board to develop the policy and review the current Act. The evaluator was informed that the institutional capacity to coordinate, implement and regulate vanilla value chain activities lies with the Spice Industry Board which is challenged with capacity issues at national and subnational level.

The project undertook the first NTM data collection since 2017 and found 195 regulations introduced NTMs, with 795 NTMs identified and classified. A total of 33 different ministries and departments were involved in the implementation of the project, which was reported by the government to be a milestone for a development assistance project in PNG. The project identified quality concerns and inconsistency in supply as challenges which point to the need for extension services and financial support for farmers so that farmers can meet market requirements. Government agricultural extension services are limited in PNG.[20] The evaluator was informed that in some cases, commodity institutions (coffee, cocoa and oil palm) run their own extension services. In the case of vanilla, its extraordinarily rapid growth outstripped any supporting institutional development.[21]

A key finding of the project was that the Vanilla market can be improved by addressing policy and legislative gaps. The government continues to implement a number of legislative and structural changes under the lead of a national coordination group. This includes the development of a

[17] https://www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product/asia-pacific/papua-new-guinea/en
[18] Ibid.
[19] https://www.pngbusinessnews.com/articles/2022/4/pm-marape-wants-east-sepik-to-become-vanilla-capital-of-world-international-hub-for-cocoa
[20] See, for example: https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JADEE-06-2022-0131/full/html
[21] https://www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product/asia-pacific/papua-new-guinea/en

technical standard on Vanilla by the Papua New Guinea National Institute of Standards and Industrial Technology (NISIT), reported by the government to be direct result of the work undertaken under the Project.[22] Furthermore, a direct follow-up has been the drafting of a National Vanilla Action Plan which is posed to be published in late 2024. The examination of the VSS and development of the Export Guide for Vanilla were greatly appreciated by national counterparts, and the government has reported that the approach will be extended to other commodities. Importantly, the project team, along with the national coordinator, informed the evaluator that the project outputs will be upscaled by contributing to work being undertaken by the FAO (EU-STREIT PNG). This will help ensure the sustainability and, ultimately, impact of the project.

The project managed to achieve a great deal in a relatively short period of time in PNG. Specific success factors in the PNG context include the very strong alignment of the project with national policy and strategic priorities in supporting export promotion of niche commodities. Leadership and coordination from the Director of External Trade was especially important, including the capacity to bring so many government entities together to demonstrate the importance of integration and collaboration across government. While some challenges were faced initially in the quality of inputs provided by the first consultant, the level of knowledge and engagement of the consulting team that developed the export guide was a key success factor. The level of commitment to the project was demonstrated by the Government using its own funding for the participation of a large number of PNG stakeholders in the final regional workshop held in Port Vila. This allowed them to learn from other countries and share success factors with other MSG members. There is clearly a great deal of pride in what the Government has achieved through the project. The project was catalytic in PNG and the high level of government ownership of the project and strong alignment with national policy priorities suggest that the project will have high sustainability and ultimately impact (not considered as an evaluation criteria) in the PNG context.

### 5.4 Solomon Islands

The project was coordinated by the Department of Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. The Government is implementing the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016–2035 'Improving the Social and Economic Livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders'.[23] Key strategic dimensions of the NDS include sustainable and inclusive economic growth, increased investment opportunities for all Solomon Islanders, alleviation of poverty and improved food security, sustainable environment, contributing to climate change mitigation. The Plan recognizes that agricultural exports are a major source of export earnings and adopts a twin track strategy, including the development of commercial agriculture and exports as key dimensions of growth. The Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan 2021-2030 is intended to guide agricultural development. Around 84 per cent of Solomon Islanders engage in subsistence smallholder farming and rural communities rely on agriculture and forest products for their food and fuel. Commercial export crops are important for increasing cash incomes for rural households and are recognized as main contributors to the economy. These include cocoa, coffee, kava, vanilla, copra and coconut oil, oil palm and honey. The project was very well aligned with the priorities and needs of the government and was able to effectively adapt to the changing circumstances created by the pandemic over the course of implementation.

[22] MCI and NISIT Joint Press Statement, 2 May 2024 'New Papua New Guinea Standards'.
[23] https://solomons.gov.sb/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/National-Development-Strategy-2016.pdf

The government selected Kava for the focus of the VSS assessment and Export Guide (both in the final stage of being published at the time of writing) under the project. The Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (2021-2030) includes a Kava Development Scheme (Component 4.3.1). Key stakeholders identified in the Kava value-chair are the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce, Kava Industry Working Group, Commodity Export Marketing Authority; and Kava farmers/producers. Freight costs remain a significant barrier to kava exports. Consistency of supply is also a challenge. Farmers need access to financing and agriculture extension support, while also better understanding Quality Assurance control and the value of certification.[24] For the VSS assessment, field surveys and interviews were conducted in three provinces (Malaita, Santa Isabel and Guadalcanal) and included government offices, MSMEs and SOEs. NTMs were examined up to 2021, revealing 64 regulations that introduced 388 NTMs which were identified and classified.

Policy recommendations under the project included the revision of the Pure Food (Food Control) Regulations to include the CODEX Alimentarius Standard for Kava Products. This would help to ensure the quality and safety of Kava and improve the confidence of foreign buyers. The project also recommended the development of Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) to support the implementation of the National Kava Policy and Kava Development Scheme (Component 4.3.1) of the Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (2021-2030) and the publication of trade-related regulations (primarily for exporters but also relevant government entities and farmers) in a more systemic manner. It also recommended the designation of a national management body, that, in addition to coordination, could supervise and pursue the development of the GAP code (with the opportunity of extending it to other commodities), as well as the training of farmers on the benefits and compliance with the GAP code. The national workshops were undertaken jointly with the IMPACT and SPC-SAFE Projects. As in other countries, leveraging the support of other projects is a key success of the project and increased the efficiency of project implementation, while also ensuring a coherent approach for national stakeholders.

Based on interviews and the evaluator's findings, there are opportunities to further consolidate the work of the project in the Solomon Islands. Further consideration could be given to utilizing the knowledge products developed under the project (when published) to ensure that end-users have access to the information they need. This could include the translation of the export guide into Pijin. Government commitment and coordination across departments and with key stakeholders will also be key to sustaining the project's results. Financing for farmers and exporters will remain an important need. Ongoing discussions with the Development Bank of the Solomon Islands to roll out initiatives such as the Micro, Small, Medium Enterprise (MSME) Business Loan Guarantee Scheme will be important in this context. Understanding market opportunities for kava export would also benefit farmers and exporters.

## 5.5 Vanuatu

Key government entities for the implementation of the project were the Department of External Trade (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade), Department of Industry (Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Industry, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business) and the

[24] Agriculture Sector Growth Strategy and Investment Plan (2021-2030)

Department of Agriculture. It was not clear to the evaluator which government entity coordinated the project in Vanuatu, though 'Effective Implementation headed by the Department of Industry' was proposed at the final regional consultation. Vanuatu is implementing the National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030). This 'People's Plan' seeks to grow the economy based on equitable, sustainable growth that creates jobs and income earning opportunities accessible to all people in rural and urban areas. On trade, it aims to increase trade and investment opportunities and reduce barriers, including using Aid-for-Trade; increase access to markets for Vanuatu exports; and stimulate economic diversification to spread the benefits of growth and increase economic stability. It also has a dedicated objective to increase production and processing of niche commodities, and value addition to commodities in which Vanuatu enjoys a comparative advantage.

The Trade Policy Framework Update (2019) recognizes Coconut Oil as a key merchandise product for Vanuatu, though the bulk of this is crude rather than virgin coconut oil (VCO). It recognizes that despite its high potential, only a few communities produce VCO supplying a small number of exporters. The quality of the VCO produced by small-scale producers is considered to be low and irregular. Sanitary standards and a lack of technology and capacity are cited in the Trade Policy Framework Update as the main reasons for this. The Vanuatu Bureau of Standards (VBS) is reported by interviewees to be developing a national standard for VCO. It was reported to the evaluator that 80% of the VCO producers are small-scale enterprises, and that women and youth actively participate in VCO production (which is different to copra which is male dominated).

The NTM data collection found that 73 regulations introduce 276 NTMs, which were classified. Ongoing challenges in data connection were identified in the process. Work on the NTMs was considered to be a clear value-addition of the project given that the understanding of NTMs prior to the project was limited. The review of Vanuatu's Coconut Oil Voluntary Sustainable Standards (VSS) extended the work done previously by UNCTAD in the Assessment of Organic Certification in the Coconut Oil Value Chain. Key barriers identified included, limited certification awareness, a need to improve quality and supply reliability as well as difficulties in market access (including infrastructure gaps). Electrification outside of urban areas is very limited so processing is often a challenge and only available in urban centers (such as Luganville). The review recommended that the government should facilitate third-party organic certification through cost subsidies and in-country auditing and establish a national body to manage organic certification. Other challenges cited include, labour gaps (many people of working age are working overseas in temporary labour mobility schemes in Australia and New Zealand) and coconut supply (for example, Efate no longer produces viable coconuts due to the Rhino Beetle so most of the supply comes from Santo).

The Vanuatu Virgin Coconut Export Guide produced under the project seeks to address NTM and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) barriers associated with exporting virgin coconut oil. The goals were to enhance awareness among potential exporters, strengthen logistical and supply networks, and thereby revitalize the coconut industry through increased export of quality coconut oil. In the view of the evaluator, dissemination of the export guide to farmers, exporters and implementing agencies will be critical. Translation into Bislama and French was proposed by national counterparts to assist in ensuring the information is accessible to those that need it. Value-addition for high quality but small-scale VCO production was raised as an important priority, but this requires producers to increase quality and reliability and exporters to understand market opportunities, in what are often niche markets. Access to finance for capital

investment (through the Agriculture Development Bank or Rural Development Bank for example, noting that this remains a challenge for farmers), training on standards and compliance as well as extension services will be important in this context.

The government is examining opportunities to use the approach introduced under the project for other commodities, such as cocoa, coffee and sandalwood. However, it is noted that there remains to be some work done to consolidate the work done on VCO through the implementation of the recommendations that have emerged from the project. The government is also considering how it may be incorporated into initiatives such as the Trade Portal[25] and other trade processes such as PACER-Plus. The government is oriented towards the PACER-Plus while it is examining the potential benefits and impacts of joining the MFTA. The project made a number of policy recommendations that will be important for the effectiveness of the project and its sustainability. These include revising the Food Act to include CODEX Standard for named vegetable oil, aligning the GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) code with international standards and the publication of trade regulations on a regular basis.

### 5.6 Sub-regional (Melanesian Spearhead Group)

The MSG Secretariat was the key implementing partner for the project at the regional level, playing an important role in contextualizing the approach to the Pacific context, coordinating regional activities and ensuring alignment with existing MSG strategies and frameworks (including the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan and progress towards the MFTA).The MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan reaffirms that the MSG is a sub-set of Pacific Regionalism and emphasizes the importance of sub-regional integration. It has objectives related to sustained economic growth as well as economic and structural reforms to ensure better integration into the global economy (6.1.2). It also seeks to promote sustainable resource-based economies as well as Green Growth policies (6.1.4). As Melanesian sub-regionalism sits within broader Pacific regionalism it is important to acknowledge Pacific regional frameworks that MSG members are engaged in.[26] The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus Agreement covers trade in goods (rules of origin, customs procedures, sanitary and phytosanitary, technical regulations, standards and conformance), trade in services, investment, development and economic cooperation, transparency, consultation and dispute settlement. There are eleven signatories to PACER Plus. The agreement entered into force on 13 December 2020. The PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU) in Apia, Samoa, assists members through implementation of a Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme.

The project sought to strengthen sub-regional cooperation and, to an extent, integration. A key output of the project was the 'Sub Regional Action Plan for Green Trade Promotion and Sustainable Development for MSG countries' which was endorsed by participating countries at a regional workshop. It will be presented to MSG Trade Officials for consideration and endorsement. While the Trade Officials Meeting has not been convened for around five years, the evaluator was informed that there is a meeting scheduled for later in 2024 (to be Chaired by Vanuatu). The Action Plan has three important and inter-related areas of work:

[25] The Trade Portal is a trade facilitation platform implemented by the government in the context of the PACER Plus agreement, with TA from UNCTAD and funding from Australia and New Zealand.

[26] Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) to promote regional integration moving towards wider integration with the global economy came into force on 13 April 2003 and was operational in 2007. It has been ratified by four countries: Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Tuvalu

1. Policy Coordination
2. Enhanced Data Collection
3. Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange

In the view of this evaluation, ongoing support, including financing, will be essential. Therefore, working through ongoing and planned activities (IMPACT, SAFE, SPIRIT, PACER Plus, Phama Plus etc.) to support implementation will be critical to its success. This builds on the recognition in the Sub-regional Action Plan that enhancing dialogue and consensus-building on trade-related regulations and NTMs at the regional level, while ensuring alignment with international standards, will be crucial. Knowledge exchange, including the sharing of experiences on the promotion of specific commodities that are common among MSG members, provides an important opportunity for MSG members facing similar challenges and barriers to trade to learn from each other. Monitoring and reporting on Action Plan progress will support the consolidation of project results (and sustainability). Oversight of the implementation of the Action Plan by MSG Trade Officials and Ministers will be an important dimension of effectiveness and sustainability of the project. The MSG Secretariat may need more resources to do this effectively. Ongoing support from partners will be important. In this context, the evaluator views the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat as a highly constructive step toward institutionalizing cooperation between the two organizations.

## 6. Conclusions

This Section details the conclusions which reflect on the findings (in Section 5) and are based on evidence and data gathered through the evaluation based on the criteria and key evaluation questions.

### Relevance

The project was highly relevant in all four countries and at the Sub-regional level. It clearly responded to well-established priorities of the target countries in supporting green trade and sustainable development. It also sought to promote policy alignment by documenting policy synergies and by examining NTMs, which commonly support sustainable development objectives but can act as additional barriers to trade promotion. Reconciling different policy objectives in a practicable way is central to sustainable development planning. The project clearly supported national priorities and the approach was well placed to inform the export strategies for other commodities.

The project was well situated in MSG sub-regional strategies (such as the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan) and built on MSG approaches to promote green growth and trade promotion among MSG members and through wider Pacific trade processes, such as the PACER-Plus and iEPA. The relevance of the sub-regional dimensions of the project are tied to the priority accorded by each country to MSG trade processes, as opposed to broader Pacific regional trade agreements (such as the PACER-Plus) and multi-lateral trade agreements (such as the Agreement of Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity).

### Effectiveness

Overall, the project has been effective with a package of activities that were well placed to meet the needs of the four target countries in green trade promotion. The extent of national ownership was a key to the success of the project. Working with national project coordinators and national consultants was the correct approach for this project, which is recognized as a key success

factor in the management of the project (by UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat). Adjusting the project strategy in response to changing circumstances (including the pandemic) was supported by strong and regular communication between national counterparts, the MSG Secretariat and the UNCTAD team. The UNCTAD team also adopted an empowering, consultative, non-prescriptive and respectful approach that was appreciated by counterparts.

All four target countries are using the products developed under the project to enhance data driven policy and decision-making on green trade promotion and enhancing exports. While effective in all four countries (with some variation in approach and progress) the project was particularly successful in PNG, due to a number of factors including strong national leadership and effective coordination across government. Informing larger investments (such as the FAO EU-STREIT PNG) considerably increased the effectiveness of project outputs. This could be replicated in other countries. In all four countries different government entities are responsible for supporting different parts of the value chain for commodity exports. Accordingly, collaboration and coordination, as well as a clear delineation of responsibilities, is essential. Partnership was also a key dimension of effectiveness in the delivery of the project outputs.

The project delivered an important suite of activities that helped unpack key dimensions of green trade promotion based on clear UNCTAD strengths (such as the NTM assessments), but partnership was an essential aspect of addressing related issues such as SPS measures, infrastructure, policy integration and financing. The evaluator acknowledges the complexity of trade arrangements in the Pacific that affect trade development in each of the four countries. The project worked with the right partners on the right issues in this context. Efforts to consult the UN Resident Coordinators Offices (UNRCO) and other UN entities such as ESCAP are also recognized. Sub-regional alignment with broader regional initiatives such as the Aid-for-Trade Strategy could help to continue support upscaling and replication of the project for other commodities and overall trade strategies.

Assessment of the results hierarchy and the extent to which the project achieved (or is expected to achieve) its outcomes and objectives revealed some limitations in the Theory of Change (ToC). To an extent there has been progress towards the objectives as contained in the project document. However, in the view of the evaluator the formulation of the project objectives and outcomes does not adequately capture the full extent of project effectiveness. The results hierarchy does not contain an explicit policy orientation in the design but has some clear and important implications for policy. Furthermore, national planning processes were not examined in detail and national planning entities not engaged in the project. Integration should be taken beyond synergies (or correlation) to actually influencing planning and policy priorities. The linkages as they are formulated are relatively passive. However, this does not detract from the value of the project which lies in unpacking NTMs, assisting export opportunities (for exporters and commodity producers) and identifying linkages across related policy domains.

## Efficiency

The project has been efficient in the use of resources to achieve outputs and, overall, in delivering them in a timely manner. Project efficiency and cost effectiveness are considered by the evaluator to be very reasonable given the difficulties posed by the pandemic. The project expenditure was 95.9% at the end of 2023 (US$553,426). It also leveraged additional financial commitments (cash and in-kind) from the Government of PNG and the IMPACT project (as reported in the Final report). The balance of expenditure across different object classes is

considered by the evaluator to be reasonable given that the project was based in the Pacific but managed primarily from Geneva (travel of staff, for example, was 8.5% of expenditure at project completion).

The project team adopted an adaptive approach to the evolving challenges of the pandemic. The structure and management in support of the project was a strength of the project. Implementation and partnership arrangements enabled efficiency and optimized coherence in a complex trade context. National coordinators and working with the MSG Secretariat supported localization and stuck a good balance between using national capacities and external support from UNCTAD (and partners). Communication with the project team in Geneva by counterparts in the Pacific was reported by the MSG Secretariat and national counterparts to be clear and responsive. In addition, the project coordinator's presence in the region, when based at the MSG Secretariat for two three-month periods, was highly valued by both the countries and the Secretariat. This was a valuable approach to pushing the project along, particularly in the context of the challenges that arose due to the pandemic.

It will be important for the remaining publications under the project to be launched and disseminated. A project communications approach would strengthen outcomes to ensure that the right people are able to access the information in the key project outputs.[27] It is essential that valuable knowledge products are not simply shelved after they are launched. The NTM assessment, VSS assessment, matrix of synergistic linkages and Export Guides are valuable products and need to be disseminated and made available in an appropriate format for the end-users. This may require resourcing and better consideration of how communications can support policy engagement and advocacy as well as capacity development. Counterparts should be encouraged to consider how the knowledge products can be used most effectively.

### Sustainability

The project has invested heavily in sustainability by design at both the national and sub-regional levels. Project outputs are considered by the evaluator to be highly likely to have an effect on the investment environment in the future for all four countries (though most prominently in PNG). There is evidence that national counterparts in all four countries have acted on policy recommendations from the project during and after completion. It is clear that there are varying levels of commitment to MSG trade processes with different orientations, for example, for PACER-Plus members and non-members. Sustained effort for coordination and cooperation at the national and sub-regional scales will be important.

A key question remains as to whether collaboration across government departments will be sustained. National coordinating bodies should be clearly appointed and empowered (ideally using an existing mechanism which may need to be strengthened) to oversee green trade promotion, with a view to ensuing that the integration dimensions of the project are maintained and consolidated in national planning (and budgetary) cycles. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for governments to continue to prioritize the development of financing model and opportunities for farmers and other MSMEs involved in the green trade value-chain to address the challenge of access to capital and finance to improve product quality, compliance and supply.

[27] The evaluator understands that UNCTAD is implementing a new organization wide communications strategy.

The MSG Secretariat will need to convene the Trade Officials meeting on an ongoing basis and work with partners to continue to nurture green trade promotion. While resource constraints and competing priorities are understood, in the view of the evaluator, it will be important for the MSG Trade and Economic Officials process to get back on track in support of continued progress in cooperation (and integration) in general, and to oversee the Sub-regional Action Plan specifically. The Sub-regional Action Plan is an excellent step towards sustaining the project but will require financial support for implementation as well as technical assistance from development partners and regional organizations (such as SPC, PIFS and OCO). The MOU signed between UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat is a very positive step in this direction. While not necessarily proposing further project support for the MSG (though this would most likely be welcomed) continued support should be provided to the MSG Secretariat in providing guidance, technical assistance and advice on the implementation of the Sub-regional Action Plan.

### Gender equality and social inclusion

The project did not incorporate a thorough gender lens at design (gender analysis in the project document is limited) or during implementation (knowledge products do not attempt a thorough gender analysis). However, activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders at a community level to improve livelihood security and address vulnerabilities. The project team sought to ensure representation of women and youth in these activities. At a broader level, the project focused on countries that have been recognized by the UN as particularly vulnerable. Within this framework, the project focused on the promotion of commodities that represent the primary economic activity and provide livelihoods for a large proportion of the rural population, including women and youth. The integration of the principle of 'leaving no one behind' and gender considerations into the project is regarded as adequate in this context.

As with many projects of similar scale and scope to this DA project, the approach to gender mainstreaming in a meaningful and comprehensive manner can always be improved. The ongoing work of UNCTAD in support of dialogue on the trade and gender nexus, and initiatives such as the roll-out of the UNCTAD Trade and Gender Toolbox, are important in this context. It remains important to strengthen the uptake of UN system-wide approaches and UNCTAD guidance that mainstream gender equality, disability and social inclusion, as well as the consolidation of important UNCTAD work on the gender and trade nexus in project and programme planning. These should be contextualized to the Pacific where significant challenges in gender equality remain.

## 7. Recommendations

Recommendations based on the findings and conclusions are provided below.

**Recommendation 1:**

Strengthen the partnership with the MSG Secretariat under the MOU arrangements to identify opportunities for UNCTAD to support the implementation of the Sub-regional Action Plan, with guidance from the MSG Trade and Economic Officials Meeting (TEOM).

**Recommendation 2:**

In the project design phase, UNCTAD should ensure that the problem analysis and results framework adequately capture the issues to be addressed through the project, with clear intervention logic. Related to this, ensure that the project intervention logic is maintained when undertaking revisions to the project in the implementation phase, and particularly the linkages between outputs higher level results (outcomes and objectives in the context of DA projects).

**Recommendation 3:**

Strengthen the use of strategic communications approaches in the project design and implementation phases to ensure that knowledge products are utilized optimally in support of project results and are accessible to the intended users. This includes making financial resources available for the translation of some knowledge products produced under the project into local languages and usable formats, in particular, the Export Guides.

**Recommendation 4:**

Assist target countries and the MSG Secretariat in identifying opportunities to upscale and leverage project results through partnership with larger scale investments by development partners and other regional organizations in the Pacific (including, but not limited to CROP agencies). This is important for different parts of the value-chain, but particularly in working with MSMEs that require financing, awareness (on issues such as the value of VSSs), capacity and extension services to address quality and supply issues.

**Recommendation 5:**

In the context of identifying 'synergistic linkages' between green trade (and trade promotion more broadly) with national sustainable planning processes (National Development Plans but also sectoral plans), engage national planning entities and planning focal points in line ministries to ensure that opportunities for integration are substantive and influence planning (and budgetary) processes, rather than simply identifying the correlation of linkages between different policy domains.

## Annex I - Terms of Reference

**Independent Evaluation of Development Account Project 2023G: Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group**

### Introduction and Purpose

This document outlines the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the independent final project evaluation for the United Nations Development Account (DA) funded project titled "*Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group"*.

The evaluation will provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office/Development Account of DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD's member States with whom the final evaluation report will be shared.

The evaluation will provide assessments that are credible and useful and include practical and constructive recommendations. In particular, the evaluation will systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, overall results, and the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming. Based on these assessments, the evaluation will formulate recommendations to project stakeholders, in particular to UNCTAD and the Capacity Development Programme Management Office/Development Account of DESA, including on operational and administrative aspects, with a view towards optimizing results of future projects.

### Context of the project

Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu face comparative disadvantage in international trade due to characteristics that are typical of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Smallness and remoteness physically prevent them from taking advantage of economies of scale. They face extremely high trade costs and are, at the same time, excessively dependent on international trade in terms of public-sector and private-sector income generation and securing access to basic supplies necessary for food security, health and energy, among others. The only viable way for SIDS countries to have exportable goods is to find niche markets that would require less price competitiveness. Another SIDS-specific challenge for these countries is vulnerability to climate change, which requires them to conduct their economic activities in a way that is least harmful to their already delicate ecosystems. In this context, promotion of green trade is desirable for getting into niche markets, on the one hand, and for harnessing social and environmental benefits on the other hand.

Partly to overcome the challenges specific to SIDS, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) is moving to upgrade its MSG Trade Agreement, first signed in 1989 then updated to a Free Trade Agreement in 2007, by incorporating services liberalization and labour mobility. The MSG also aims to have a "common position and solidarity" in maximizing gains from international trade[28].

[28] The MSG Trade Agreement has not yet come into force as 2 MSG member states have not ratified it.

Due to the limited resource base of the target countries, largely due to their smallness, it is important for them to adopt an integral approach in policymaking and implementation, in such a way to ensure that actions aiming at one policy target would positively contribute towards policy objectives in other areas in a coherent and cross-feeding manner. Against this background, the project supported the four MSG member countries to identify and strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and their sustainable development policy in a manner that contributed to the shared objective of achieving stronger and more effective subregional economic integration and cooperation for the achievement of sustainable development.

**Project activities and objectives**

The motivation of the project was the target countries' desire to diversify and increase the value added of their exports, which are mainly based on agroforestry or fishery produces, in a manner that contributes to their green (and blue) economic growth. However, their SIDS-specific needs include provisions for climate change adaptation, if not mitigation, and limited institutional and financial capacity that can be devoted to green trade promotion. The governments of these countries would benefit from coming up with a policy framework that strengthens synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and social development and environmental protection, in such a way that works towards green trade promotion and contributes to sustainable development objectives of the country, and vice versa. The project was also motivated by the gap between their willingness towards greater economic integration via the implementation of the new MFTA (that addresses services trade and labour mobility in addition to trade in goods), and lack of effective frameworks necessary for greater regional and multi-stakeholder policy coordination.

The project went through a revision in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to coordinate with other development assistance projects that were recently developed in the Pacific region. The pandemic made travel and physical meetings difficult, as well as changing the priority of development needs in beneficiary countries. Also, as other development projects, especially the Pacific Regional Integration Support (PRISE) programme and the Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative (PQII) started to be or were planned to be implemented during this project period, thus coordination with other projects to reduce duplication and create synergy was indispensable.

The objective of the project was to enhance the capacity of the MSG member countries to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the SDGs. Towards this objective, the project aimed to: (i) Enhance capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy – shaped by non-tariff measures (NTMs) and voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) –, and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership; and (ii) Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level. The outputs towards meeting these outcomes took place in four phases.

The National Phase of the project kicked off by organizing the first workshops at the regional and the national levels (OP 1.1 and 1.2). The first regional start-up workshop took place virtually. It elaborated the project's objective and the implementation steps and facilitated establishing a regional network of national focal points and key stakeholders for effective implementation of the project. The first national workshops took place in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in a hybrid format in which national participants attended physically while regional and

international participants attended online. The workshops informed national stakeholders of the project and its upcoming activities. Also, they set the scene to undertake NTM data collection and VSS assessment. While Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu had chosen ginger, vanilla, kava and virgin coconut oil for the VSS assessments respectively, other development programmes were going on with respect to the same products in the same countries such as the EU-STREIT programme on vanilla and the PQII on kava. These programmes were invited to the workshops to present their work so that not only implementing agencies, but also national stakeholders, can coordinate and create synergies. The first national workshop could not take place in Fiji because Fiji did not have sufficient manpower to actively support the project, despite its interest. Nevertheless, the other project activities were carried out under the lead of UNCTAD and with the support of the Fijian government.

After the first workshops, national consultants, together with an international NTM expert, collected regulatory measures from the four MSG member countries and classified them according to the UNCTAD Classification of NTMs (OP 1.3a). In parallel, a group of Japanese consultants has been collecting NTM data from Japan as the NTM data of a major export market (OP 1.4). The country was selected through consultation with the MSG secretariat.

Separately, national consultants and an international VSS expert led the VSS assessment in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, based on the UNCTAD VSS Assessment Toolkit that was developed under the 10th Tranche Development Account project 1617AI. National consultants in Vanuatu also updated the previous VSS assessment conducted under the said Development Account project (OP 1.3b). The VSS assessment identified: (i) challenges and opportunities as regards certifying for VSS for green trade promotion and (ii) policy recommendations including multi-stakeholder cooperation for green trade promotion. For mainstreaming gender equality, the study addressed the gender implication of VSS and green trade promotion. With respect to the products for which the VSS assessment was conducted, the national consultants prepared export guides as well (OP 1.5) which cover the market access/entry conditions (including regulatory barriers) facing green exports. NTM data from Japan (OP 1.4) fed into the export guides as market information.

Lastly, UNCTAD assessed synergetic linkages between green trade policies and national sustainable development strategies in each MSG member country (OP 1.7). Specifically, UNCTAD looked at how the policy recommendations resulting from NTM and VSS work can contribute to achieving national sustainable development strategies.

Outputs from NTM data, VSS assessment, export guides and synergistic linkages were presented and discussed at the second national workshop in each MSG country, including Fiji (OP 1.8). The workshops took place in-person, in cooperation with the MSG secretariat and back-to-back with the PRISE workshops co-organized by UNCTAD and the Pacific Community (SPC).

UNCTAD is working on providing online access to NTM data, the key findings from VSS assessment and the export guide (OP 1.6). NTM data from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are published in TRAINS Online. The NTM data from Papua New Guinea is being reviewed before being published. The VSS assessment reports and the export guides are undergoing editing, formatting and policy clearance with the aim of publishing them.

In the Regional Phase, national experiences and lessons from each country are examined from the perspective of regional cooperation. The second virtual regional workshop (OP 2.1) presented the national outcomes country by country and discussed what could be the regional action plan.

The plan aimed to enhance the synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and sustainable development, not only supporting national strategies but also the "MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan". The discussions from the second regional workshop formed the basis of a draft regional action plan, which is being prepared in partnership between UNCTAD and the MSG Secretariat and will be validated by the MSG secretariat (OP 2.2). The third regional workshop is planned to take place in Vanuatu in October 2023. It will be followed by the MSG policymakers' meeting in December (OP 2.3), where the regional action plan is to be endorsed by the MSG member countries. To conclude, the MSG approach will be presented at occasions at regional and international meetings (OP 2.4).

An overview of the project phases, and their respective outputs, is presented below (based on the revised version of the project):

| **National Phase:** | |
|---|---|
| OP1.1 | The First virtual start-up regional meeting organized in partnership with the MSG Secretariat |
| OP1.2 | The First national workshop organized in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island and Vanuatu, informing the countries of the project, including the NTMs and VSS components. |
| OP1.3 | NTM data collected and validated in four MSG member countries; VSS assessment conducted in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands and updated in Vanuatu |
| OP1.4 | NTM data of a major export market (Japan) collected and validated |
| OP1.5 | Export guides of key products (ginger in Fiji; vanilla in Solomon Islands; kava in Solomon Islands; virgin coconut oil in Vanuatu) prepared |
| OP1.6 | An online access to NTM data, the key findings from VSS assessment and the export guides provided |
| OP1.7 | Synergetic linkages between green trade (NTM/VSS) policies and sustainable development strategies assessed at the national level |
| OP1.8 | The Second (in-person) national workshops in four MSG member countries were organized, discussing and validating NTM data, VSS assessment, export guides and synergistic linkages |
| **Regional Phase:** | |
| OP2.1 | The second virtual regional workshop, discussing and identifying possible options to be incorporated in a regional action plan, was organized |
| OP2.2 | A regional action plan drafted in partnership with the MSG Secretariat and submitted to the MSG member countries |
| OP2.3 | The third regional workshop and MSG policymakers meeting, finalizing the regional action plan and discussing the regional coordination mechanism |
| OP2.4 | The final report presented at regional and international meetings |

This project directly links to the following SDGs and their specific targets:

- 17.11 - Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports.

- 12.1 - Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries.
- 8.a - Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries.

Through establishing synergetic linkages between green trade promotion policy and other policy measures aiming at sustainable development, the project contributed to beneficiary countries making progress on the above primary SDG targets via: (i) building capacity to enter into high-growth green markets thereby increasing exports; (ii) raising national awareness on sustainable production and consumption; and (iii) becoming capable of attracting more Aid-for-Trade for building capacity for green and sustainable production and trade.

In terms of leaving no one behind, particular focus in the project was on vulnerable people in the target countries. Smallholder producers and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in rural communities, who represent the majority of the poor in the target countries, are particularly vulnerable when entering into global value chains of green products due to their lack of information and market power. The project helped national and regional policymakers better understand the challenges facing these vulnerable groups and provided them with necessary supportive measures. Transformation of export sectors to a greener and more sustainable one results in fairer and more equitable prices and decent working conditions for smallholders and MSMEs. A particular focus was placed on women and youth, who represent the most vulnerable within the vulnerable group. Field studies conducted under the previous Development Account project DA1617AI (in Lao PDR, Philippines and Vanuatu) demonstrated that women and youth are often employed informally, which makes it difficult for them to claim higher wages, even when the commodities they produce start to attract higher prices in international markets of green products. The studies also found that women and youth are less represented in training and workshops organized by the value chains or government agencies, most likely because they are not always involved in decision-making on production.

**Evaluation scope, objectives and questions**

This final evaluation of the project has the following specific objectives:

a. Assess the degree to which the desired project results have been realized, including the extent of gender, human rights and disability mainstreaming; and
b. Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project that could feed into and enhance the implementation of related interventions.

The evaluation will cover the duration of the project from March 2020 to December 2023.

The evaluation is expected to address the following questions under the below criteria (to be further developed in the inception report, as appropriate):

***Relevance***

To what extent were the project design, choice of activities and deliverables aligned with UNCTAD and UNDA objectives?

- To what extent did they reflect and address the development needs and priorities of Melanesian Spearhead Group and beneficiary countries?

- What unique value did UNCTAD bring to the project? Has the work of the project been complementary to that of initiatives in related sectors by other UN and non-UN actors in the target countries?

***Effectiveness***

- Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document, including the SDG targets identified? Is there any evidence of (intended or unintended) outcomes?
- To what extent have the project participants from each targeted country utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and products developed through the project's activities?
- To what extent has the project contributed to partnerships amongst project participants with national and regional counterparts, regional and international development partners, civil society and/or the private sector?
- What are key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results?

***Efficiency***

- To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring the project within the defined scope and timeline?
- How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources?
- Has the project enabled effective and efficient sharing of resources through building partnerships with other UN and non-UN organizations?

***Sustainability***

- What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?
- Is there evidence that beneficiary countries have continued working towards the project objectives beyond UNCTAD's interventions?
- Have there been catalytic effects from the project at the national/regional levels?

***Gender, human rights and disability***

- To what extent were an equity-focused approach and a gender mainstreaming strategy incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard?

**Methodology**

Methods for data gathering for this evaluation will include, but are not limited to, the following:

Desk review of project documents and relevant materials.

- Collection and analysis of relevant web and social media metrics related to the outputs of the project.
- Observation of a sample of meetings, webinars and other activities implemented by the project, as appropriate.
- Interviews with relevant UNCTAD staff, and with a balanced sample of project participants, project partners and other relevant stakeholders.

- Online surveys of beneficiaries of the project, and other stakeholders, as appropriate; and
- Focus group discussions.

The third regional workshop, to be held in Vanuatu in October 2023, will be attended by the evaluator. This will be an opportunity for direct observation of the workshop and preliminary discussions with the project stakeholders.

As part of the desk review, which will lead to an Inception Report, the evaluator will use the project document as well as additional documents such as mission reports; progress reports, financial reports, publications and studies - both produced under the project as well as received from national and regional counterparts. A list of project beneficiaries as well as other partners and counterparts involved in the project will be provided to the evaluator.

The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report, determining thereby the exact focus and approach for the exercise, including developing tailor-made questions that target different stakeholders (based on a stakeholder analysis), and developing the sampling strategy and identifying the sources and methods for data collection.

The evaluator is required to submit a separate final list of those interviewed in an Annex to the evaluation report. The evaluator is to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders, bearing in mind the need to include those in a disadvantaged or minority position as appropriate.

**Organization of the evaluation**

**Deliverables and Expected Outputs**

The evaluation, on the basis of its findings and assessments made on the above criteria, should draw conclusions, make recommendations and identify lessons learned from the implementation of the project.

More specifically, the evaluation should:

- Highlight what has been successful and can be replicated elsewhere.
- Highlight, as appropriate, any specific achievements that provide additional value for money and/or relevant multiplier effects.
- Indicate shortcomings and constraints in the implementation of the project while, at the same time, identifying the remaining challenges, gaps and needs for future courses of action.
- Make pragmatic recommendations to suggest how work in this area can be further strengthened in order to address beneficiaries' needs and create synergies through collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions, international organizations and development partners, and other international forums.
- Draw lessons of wider application for the replication of the experience gained in this project in other projects/countries.
- Review exit strategies if any, how well it is tailored to the needs of the member States and the implementing entities.

All assessments must be supported by facts and findings, direct or indirect evidence, and well-substantiated logic. Proposed recommendations must be supported by the findings and be relevant, specific, practical, actionable, and time-bound.

Three deliverables are expected out of this evaluation:

I. An inception report[29];
II. A draft evaluation report; and
III. The final evaluation report[30]

The inception report should summarize the desk review and specify the evaluation methodology, determining thereby the exact focus and scope of the exercise, including the evaluation matrix, the sampling strategy, stakeholder mapping analysis and the data collection instruments.

The final report of the evaluation must be composed of the following key elements:

I. Executive summary.
II. Introduction of the evaluation.
III. a brief description of the project, including project objectives, expected accomplishments, strategies and key activities.
IV. A clear description of the evaluation objectives, scope, and questions as well as evaluation methodology used.
V. Findings and assessments according to the criteria listed in Section III of this ToR, with a comparison of planned and implemented project activities and outputs; and
VI. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the assessments.
VII. Annexes including a list of documents consulted, interviewed stakeholders, survey templates and this TOR.

**Description of Duties**

1. The evaluation will be undertaken by an independent evaluator and facilitated by the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation (IEU) in close collaboration with the Project Team from UNCTAD.

2. The evaluator reports to the Chief of the UNCTAD Evaluation Unit. S/he will undertake the evaluation exercise under the guidance of IEU and in coordination with the project managers for UNCTAD. The evaluator is responsible for the evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting as provided in this TOR. The evaluator shall act independently, in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and in her/his private capacities and not as a representative of any government or organization that may present a conflict of interest. S/he will have no previous experience of working with the project or of working in any capacity linked with it. The evaluator should observe UNEG guidelines, including the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system[31], as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy[32], in the conduct of this assignment. The evaluator needs to integrate human rights, gender equality

[29] The quality of the inception report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Reports: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=608

[30] The quality of the evaluation report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports: http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607

[31] "Norms and Standards for Evaluation" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2016): http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914

[32] "Evaluation Policy" of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), June 2023. https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/osg_evaluationpolicy2023_en.pdf

and disability perspectives in evaluations to the extent possible.[33] The evaluator needs to ensure a complete, fair, engaging, unreserved, and unbiased assessment. In case of difficulties, uncertainties or concerns in the conduct of the evaluation, the evaluator needs to report immediately to the Chief of Independent Evaluation Unit to seek guidance or clarification.

3. The project team will support the evaluation by providing desk review documents, contact details of project stakeholders as well as any additional documents that the evaluator requests. It is the responsibility of the project managers to ensure senior management engagement throughout the evaluation and timely feedback in the quality assurance and factual clarification process coordinated by IEU. The project team will review and provide comments on the inception, draft and final reports, and formulate a management response to the recommendations of the evaluation report. The UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit endorses the TOR and approves the selection of the proposed evaluator. It reviews the evaluation methodology, clears the draft report, performs quality assurance of the final report and participates in disseminating the final report. The Independent Evaluation Unit engages the project team throughout the evaluation process in supporting the evaluation and validating the reports.

**Timetable**

The evaluation will take place over the period 1 October 2023 to 15 May 2024, in two phases. The first phase concerns the evaluator attendance at the regional workshop in October 2023, and any subsequent follow-up data collection required at this time. The second phase will commence 1 February 2024, following conclusion of the project in December 2023.

**Monitoring and Progress Control**

The evaluator must keep the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit informed of the progress made in the evaluation on a regular basis. The evaluator will submit the first draft of inception report by 1 March 2024. The Report should include draft data collection instruments for review. The first draft of the report should be presented to the Evaluation Unit by 15 April 2024 for quality assurance purposes (approximately 1 week). The revised draft report will then be shared with the project team for factual clarification and comments (approximately 2 weeks). The deadline for submission of the final report will be 15 May 2024.

The contract concludes, and payment issued, upon satisfactory receipt of the final report.

**Qualifications and Experience[34]**

**Education:** Advanced university degree in economics, trade, development, public administration, rural development, or related field.

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[33] "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2014): http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616. The UNEG Handbook on "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations: Towards UNEG Guidance" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2011): http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980.

[34] The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

**Experience:** At least 10 years of experience in conducting or managing evaluations, or in programme management, preferably on interventions in the areas of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building. Solid understanding of the UN context and the Sustainable Development Goals. Experience working in the Melanesian region. Experience conducting public policy and/or development programme evaluations. Solid understanding of gender responsive and equity-focused evaluation design, data collection and analysis methods. Ability to develop clear, realistic, feasible recommendations.

**Language:** Fluency in oral and written English.

**Conditions of Service**

The evaluator will serve under a consultancy contract as detailed in the applicable United Nations rules and regulations. The evaluator will not be considered as staff member or official of the United Nations but shall abide by the relevant standards of conduct. The United Nations is entitled to all intellectual property and other proprietary rights deriving from this exercise.

Evaluation communication and dissemination plan

The final evaluation report and key findings will be disseminated widely to all relevant stakeholders including through the following channels:

- A copy of the final evaluation report and management response will be made available publicly on the UNCTAD website.
- A summary of the key evaluation findings, highlighting the results of the project in particular, and lessons learned, will be shared with UNCTAD member States as part of the annual reporting on evaluation activities; and
- Other communication briefs and products as appropriate.

## Annex II - Results Framework

| Intervention logic | Indicators | Means of verification |
|---|---|---|
| **Objective**<br>To enhance the capacity of the Melanesian Spearhead Group member countries to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. | | |
| **Outcome – OC1**<br>Enhanced capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership | **IA 1.1**: Over 80 per cent of participants surveyed at the second national workshop (OP1.8) in each of the MSG member countries agree that they have better understanding on ways to achieve positive interaction between green trade promotion and sustainable development, and importance of policy coordination across ministries and stakeholders in doing so. | ***Sources of information:*** Workshop evaluation results by participants<br>***How data are collected:*** Through evaluation survey at the end of the national workshop. |
| | **IA 1.2**: National matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade policy and sustainable development strategies is developed with the active participation of member countries, with one section devoted to "leaving no one behind" including special challenges to women and youth, and each country has discussed a plan for its use. | The outcome document of OP1.8 (second national workshop) to contain the national Matrix; UNCTAD sends a questionnaire to each Government on how they plan to reflect the contents of the matrix in their development plan |
| **Output (OP)1.1: Organize the First virtual start-up regional meeting** in partnership with the MSG Secretariat. Participants would be at least two participants from each of the MSG member countries, the MSG Secretariat staff, ESCAP and other regional and international bodies. The expected result is for the establishment of a regional network of national focal points and key stakeholders of the project. | | |
| **OP1.2: Organize the First virtual national workshop in each of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island and Vanuatu** to: (i) inform national stakeholders of the project and (ii) train national consultants for NTM data collection (according to the methodologies applied in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu under the PACER Plus project), VSS assessment (according to the methodologies applied in Vanuatu (under the DA1617AI project) and/or in-depth NTM analysis (according the methodologies which will apply in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands under the PRISE programme). Each national workshop will have a duration of 0.5 to 1 day, complemented by UNCTAD Online Introductory Course on NTM and COVID-19 before the workshop. It will include participants representing different stakeholder groups, plus policymakers from at least five different ministries/agencies. It is aimed that at least 40 per cent of participants invited are women, and at least 10 per cent represent youth (between 15 and 24). The expected result is a roadmap of activities towards the completion of the NTM database and/or the VSS assessment. | | |
| **OP1.3: Collect and validate NTM data in Fiji and Papua New Guinea** according to the methodologies applied in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu under the PACER Plus project (if needed, update NTM data in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), **conduct VSS assessment in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea** according to the methodologies applied in Vanuatu under the DA1617AI project (probably an already developed lighter approach that includes a virtual survey needs to be used due to Covid-19), **and start the discussion on developing national matrix and in-depth NTM analysis in Vanuatu** according to the methodologies which will apply in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands under the PRISE programme. The country consultant will be trained by UNCTAD including using the UNCTAD Online Training Course on NTMs and Data Collection (new version upcoming) and any other materials to be developed if necessary. To mainstream gender equality, the VSS assessment will address the gender implication of VSS and green trade promotion. The expected result is the NTM database and the completed VSS assessment to be circulated to all the MSG member countries and the MSG Secretariat. The collected NTM data and regulatory information would facilitate the access to reliable information on the MSG countries' trade policies. In times of COVID-19 crisis with high uncertainty, increased transparency is particularly important for these countries because it contributes to maintaining trade flow of essential goods such as foodstuffs and medical goods, of which they are highly dependent on import. Moreover, VSS assessment findings would help countries to understand the vulnerability of the society against an external hit like the pandemic. | | |

| Intervention logic | Indicators | Means of verification |
|---|---|---|
| **OP1.4: Collect and validate NTM data in a major export market** according to the UNCTAD Classification of NTM and disseminate the NTM data using the platform of the UNCTAD NTM database (new version upcoming). The export market will be chosen in consideration of the share of MSG countries' export, the feasibility, etc. The expected result is the NTM database to be presented to all the MSG member countries and the MSG Secretariat. The collected NTM data and regulatory information of export market would support the MSG countries not only to maintain trade flow of essential goods in times of crisis, but also to recover from the crisis by facilitating their (re)integration into global value chain. | | |
| **OP1.5:** . **Prepare an export guide of a key product** selected by an MSG country as to have export potential as well as social and environmental implications. The green export guide explains requirements that this key product should comply with. Ideally, NTM data collected by OP1.3 and/or OP1.4 will be used as an input. The expected result is the export guide to be sent to an MSG member country and the MSG Secretariat. Green export of goods supported by the guide would allow the countries to leverage shrunk tourism industry and considerable debt distress during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as leading to a more sustainable recovery from it. (The UNRCOs in the region confirmed that the green export is a part of socio-economic recovery plan.) | | |
| **OP1.6: Provide an online access to NTM data, the key findings from VSS assessment and the export guide.** They will be uploaded to a relevant database or website, if it already exists. Then, a link to the database or the website will be added to the project website and the MSG website. | | |
| **OP1.7: Assess synergetic linkages between green trade (NTM/VSS) policies and national sustainable development strategies** of each of the MSG members. An international consultant will work under the direct supervision of the UNCTAD project manager, taking into account the outcomes of national workshops, NTM data and the VSS assessments. When mapping synergistic linkages, potential opportunities and challenges arising from green trade promotion will be assessed from the perspective of rural communities and of women and youth, to highlight the importance of "leaving no one behind". The expected result is a matrix of synergistic linkages for each country. OP1.7 forms the key input to OP1.8. As mentioned in OP1.5, the green export is a part of socio-economic recovery plan in the region. | | |
| **OP1.8: Organize the second national workshops in each of the beneficiary countries** where different Ministries and national stakeholders discuss, evaluate and validate the outcome of OP1.3 and OP1.7, with a view to agreeing on a national matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade promotion and sustainable development strategies. One section in the matrix will be devoted to the challenge of "leaving no one behind". Each national workshop will have a duration of 1.5 days and include participants representing different stakeholder groups, plus policymakers from at least five different ministries/agencies. OP1.4 and OP1.5 will be presented in the workshops to support the discussion of and agreement on the national matrix. The list of participants shall be formulated to aim at 40 per cent or higher female invitees, and at least 10 per cent youth (between 15 and 24). OP1.8, a national matrix of synergistic linkages, forms the key input to OP2.1. | | |
| **Outcome - OC2**<br>Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level | **IA 2.1**:<br>MSG partners contribute to the joint development of a MSG sub-regional plan of action to strengthen synergetic linkages, which incorporates actions to "leave no one behind", and the plan is validated by the MSG Secretariat. | The final report of OP2.3 (the third regional workshop and high-level policymaker meeting) contains the regional action plan and validation by MSG Secretariat |
| | **IA 2.2**:<br>MSG partners jointly develop, with a view to its endorsement, a proposal for a MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to implement the plan of action. | The outcome of OP2.3 (the third regional workshop and high-level policymakers meeting) including the proposal of the regional coordination mechanism |

| Intervention logic | Indicators | Means of verification |
|---|---|---|
| **OP2.1: Organize the second virtual regional workshop** of focal points and key stakeholders, in collaboration with the MSG secretariat to discuss possible regional collaboration framework based on the national matrix. Close collaboration with ESCAP is envisaged. Participants will include at least two representatives of stakeholders from each of the MSG member countries, the MSG Secretariat, ESCAP and other relevant regional and international bodies. Existing national/regional strategies and frameworks aiming at the objective of "leaving no one behind" including women and youth shall receive special attention in the discussion. The expected result is identification of policy options to be incorporated in the regional action plan to strengthen Quality Infrastructure coordination and integrate green trade promotion into sustainable development policy coordination at the MSG level.<br>* Depending on the COVID-19 situation, the workshop may take place in a hybrid format (e.g., each country holding a physical workshop connects with UNCTAD and other partners virtually). | | |
| **OP2.2: UNCTAD, in partnership with the MSG Secretariat, to draft a regional action plan** based on the outcome of the second regional workshop and in consultation with the MSG member states. The draft regional action plan will give particular attention to the objective of "leaving no one behind", while ensuring the actions would contribute to existing national/regional policy frameworks for inclusive sustainable development, if any. The expected result is the final draft regional action plan submitted to the MSG member countries. As mentioned in OP1.5, the green export is a part of socio-economic recovery plan in the region. Regional partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure and green export promotion would support the region being more resilient to an external hit. | | |
| **OP2.3: Organise the third regional and high-level policymaker meeting** in partnership with the MSG Secretariat. Close cooperation with ESCAP and other regional organizations is envisaged. To achieve high-level (e.g. Ministerial-level) participation, UNCTAD and partners seek opportunities to organize the meeting back-to-back with a major regional event, such as the Forum Economic Ministers meeting. As a result of this meeting, the report of regional action plan is finalized and the MSG members discuss a regional coordinating framework to facilitate the implementation of the plan of action.<br>* Depending on the COVID-19 situation, the workshop may take place in a virtual or hybrid format (e.g., each country holding a physical workshop connects with UNCTAD and other partners virtually). | | |
| **OP2.4: Present the final report** explaining the MSG's approach at regional and international meetings, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2023, the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in 2023, and/or relevant Pacific SIDS event in 2023.<br>* Depending on the COVID-19 situation, the presentation may be done in a virtual format. | | |

## Annex III - Documents reviewed

| Document | Date | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| *Project documentation* | | |
| 1. National Synergistic Linkages between Green Trade and Sustainable Development – Fiji | | |
| 2. National Synergistic Linkages between Green Trade and Sustainable Development – Papua New Guinea | | |
| 3. National Synergistic Linkages between Green Trade and Sustainable Development – Solomon Islands | | |
| 4. National Synergistic Linkages Between Green Trade and Sustainable Development – Vanuatu | | |
| 5. A Voluntary Sustainability Standards Guidebook for Vanilla in Papua New Guinea | January 2024 | |
| 6. Papua New Guinea Vanilla Export Guide | December 2023 | |
| 7. Vanuatu Virgin Coconut Oil Export Guide | October 2023 | |
| 8. A Sub Regional Action Plan for Green Trade Promotion and Sustainable Development for MSG countries | February 2024 | Endorsed by regional workshop at the MSGS in October 2023. Supports Outputs 2.2 (and 2.3) |
| 9. Summary: The First Virtual Start-up Regional Workshop | Nov. 2021 | |
| 10. Report of the Fiji national workshop on the MSG Green Trade Project and Joint IMPACT-SAFE workshop on non-tariff measures (NTMs) and International Trade Promotion | June 2023 | |
| 11. Report of the Second regional workshop on the MSG Green Trade Project | August 2023 | |
| 12. Report of the 3rd Sub-regional Workshop on the MSG Green Trade Project | October 2023 | |
| 13. 2023G: Green trade for sustainable development in Pacific small island developing States of the Melanesian Spearhead Group | February 2020 | Project document |
| 14. 2023G - Annual Progress Report for 2020 | January 2021 | |
| 15. 2023G - Annual Progress Report for 2022 | January 2023 | |
| 16. 2023G 0 Final Report | April 2024 | |
| *National policy context* | | |
| 17. Fiji National Development Plan 5-Year (2017-2021) and 20-Year (2017-2036) | 2017 | |
| 18. Fiji Green Growth Framework | 2014 | |
| 19. Solomon Islands is implementing the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016–2035 | 2016 | |
| 20. PNG Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) III (2018-2022) | 2018 | |

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| 21. Papua New Guinea's Medium Term Development Plan IV 2023-2027 | 2023 | |
| 22. Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan (2016-2030). The 'People's Plan'. | 2016 | |
| *Background context and publications* | | |
| 23. Independent project evaluation Supporting Member States in developing and launching sustainable product export strategies through National Sustainable Product Export Reviews (Development Account Project 1415 L) | March 2019 | |
| 24. Independent project evaluation: "Fostering the development of "green" exports through Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in Asia and the Pacific" (Development Account Project 1617AI) | September 2022 | |

## Annex IV - Evaluation Matrix

| KEQ | Measure of progress | Data source | Data analysis |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A. Relevance** | | | |
| 1. To what extent was the project design and implementation aligned with UNDA 12th Tranche objectives? | · Project design is aligned with DA 12th Tranche guidance | · Desk review | |
| 2. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and beneficiary countries? | · Project objectives aligned with the needs of the target countries and MSG strategies for sub-regional integration and export promotion.<br>· Project has been able to adapt to evolving needs and/or changes in policy priorities | · Key informant interviews<br>· Desk review of relevant government policy documents<br>· Synthesis of reports | · Policy analysis<br>· Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| 3. To what extent has the project utilized partnerships and been complementary to related interventions (UN and non-UN) in the target countries? | · Project team and project partners have managed to build on earlier successes lesson<br>· Project implemented in the context of overall gov. policy and MSG strategies | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| **B. Effectiveness** | | | |
| 4. To what extent has there been progress towards the objectives as contained in the project document and the SDG targets identified? | · Planned activities are informed by relevant analysis of the needs of the beneficiary countries<br>· Activities addressed specific needs of the beneficiary countries<br>· Target countries show that they are using tools to enhance data driven policy and decision-making<br>· Results-based M&E system facilitated adaptive project management | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | · Results chain analysis<br>· Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| 5. To what extent have the project participants utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and products developed through the project? | · Counterparts in each government have demonstrated ability to access and share information on new product requirements on export markets<br>· Counterparts in each government show that they are using the skills and information to comply with the | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | requirements and enhance the countries' export performance | | |
| 6. What are key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results? | · Evidence of key factors that have enabled the achievement of the outcomes and outputs<br>· Project responsive to changing context<br>· Project managed and mitigated against risks appropriately and in a timely manner | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| **C. Efficiency** | | | |
| 7. To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring the project within the defined scope and timeline? | · Project delivered as expected<br>· Project managed and mitigated against risks appropriately and in a timely manner | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| 8. How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources? | · Resources were used cost-effectively.<br>· Resources were used in a timely and economic way | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| 9. Has the project enabled effective and efficient sharing of resources through building partnerships with other UN and non-UN organizations | · Implementation and partnership arrangements enabled efficiency and optimized alignment and coherence | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| **D. Sustainability** | | | |
| 10. What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes? | · Project activities are likely to have an effect on the investment environment in the future | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| 11. Is there evidence that beneficiary countries have continued working towards the project objectives beyond UNCTAD's interventions? | · National counterparts act on policy recommendations from the project after completion. | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |
| **E. Gender, human rights and disability** | | | |
| 12. To what extent were an equity-focused approach and a gender mainstreaming strategy incorporated in the design and implementation of the intervention, and can results be identified in this regard? | · Activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders from a wide geographic representation<br>· Activities have clearly integrated and addressed gender and youth | · Desk review<br>· Key informant interviews<br>· Stakeholder mapping | Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews |

## Annex V - Status of Indicators and Outputs[35]

**(a) Indicators of Achievement**

| Intended Outcomes (OCs) | Indicator of achievement (IA) at the start of the project | Indicator of achievement (IA) at the end of the project | Review |
|---|---|---|---|
| **OC1: Enhanced capacities of the MSG member countries to strengthen synergistic linkages between green trade policy and national sustainable development strategies, building on inter-ministerial policy coordination and multi-stakeholder partnership** | IA 1.1: Over 80 per cent of participants surveyed at the second national workshop (OP1.8) in each of the MSG member countries agree that they have better understanding on ways to achieve positive interaction between green trade promotion and sustainable development, and importance of policy coordination across ministries and stakeholders in doing so. **Baseline:** The availability of data and study on two components of green trade, VSS and NTM was limited. Later, at the first national workshops, VSS was a new concept for many of the participants and NTMs, were also something that only a handful of participants knew about. | Results of the survey by country (see "Review" column for explanations):<br>Fiji:<br>(i) 96% / 52%<br>(ii) 96% / 64%<br>Papua New Guinea:<br>(i) 100% / 87%<br>(ii) 100% / 74%<br>Solomon Islands:<br>(i) 100% / 90%<br>(ii) 100% / 90%<br>Vanuatu:<br>(i) 96% / 73%<br>(ii) 100% / 81% | Surveys were conducted after the "second national workshops" that were held in June 2023. Among other questions, participants had to answer to the questions:<br>(i) *The workshop helped me understand how green trade promotion positively impact sustainable development.*<br>(ii) *The workshop helped me understand the importance of policy coordination across ministries and stakeholders to achieve the synergy between green trade promotion and sustainable development.*<br><br>Participants could answer by the following: *Fully disagree; Disagree; Somewhat agree; Agree; Fully agree*<br><br>The results shown in the "IA at the end of the project" column shows the share of participants who answered *Somewhat agree; Agree; Fully agree* to question (i) and (ii). After the "/", shows the fraction share of participants who answered *Agree; Fully agree*.<br><br>A share of 96% or 100% chose that the workshops at least somewhat helped them. |
| | IA 1.2: National matrix of synergistic linkages between green trade policy and sustainable development strategies is developed with the active participation of member countries, with one section devoted to "leaving no one behind" including special challenges to women and youth, and each country has | National matrices of synergistic linkages between green trade policy and sustainable development strategies were developed with one section devoted to "leaving no one behind" for each country. Also, each country discussed a plan for its use. | The matrices were presented at the June 2023 national workshops. They will be published by the end of May 2024.Also, through a questionnaire, each country indicated how they plan to reflect the contents of the matrices in their development plans. |

[35] From Final Report - not prepared by consultant but validated through consultations and document review.

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|---|---|---|---|
| | discussed a plan for its use.<br>**Baseline:** National matrix of synergistic linkages did not exist. | | |
| **OC2 Strengthen MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder partnership on NTMs, Quality Infrastructure, green trade promotion and MSG sub-regional mechanism for better coordination of national sustainable development strategies at the MSG sub-regional level** | IA 2.1: MSG partners contribute to the joint development of a MSG sub-regional plan of action to strengthen synergetic linkages, which incorporates actions to "leave no one behind", and the plan is validated by the MSG Secretariat.<br>**Baseline**: MSG sub-regional plan of action did not exist. | The sub-regional action plan has been developed jointly with and validated by the MSG Secretariat and the MSG member States. All the recommendations were devised so as to incorporate actions to "leave no one behind". | The development of the sub-regional action plan was through the second regional workshop and its validation was through the third regional workshop. The sub-regional action plan will be published by May 2024. It is included as one of the official agenda items at the next MSG TEOM. |
| | IA 2.2: MSG partners jointly develop, with a view to its endorsement, a proposal for a MSG sub-regional multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism to implement the plan of action.<br>**Baseline**: A proposal for a MSG sub-regional multistakeholder coordination mechanism did not exist. | MSG member States have agreed to the creation of a "Sub-regional Implementation Group". Its composition and structure will be at the agenda of the next MSG TEOM. | The initial proposal is to make use of the existing set-up under the MSG TEOM, rather than creating one from scratch. The MSG Secretariat is now taking over the coordination and development of the "Sub-regional Implementation Group". The TEOM was regretfully postponed multiple times and did not take place during the implementation period of this project (Please see **2. Challenges encountered and actions taken**). |

**(b) Output Delivery**

| Output | Output description (Revised version as per progress report 2020) | Output Status | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **OP1.1** | **Organize the First virtual start-up regional meeting.** | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: The meeting became virtual.<br>*The virtual start-up regional workshop was held on 23 November 2021 with 13 government officials (8 female, 5 male) from four MSG member States, the MSG Secretariat and UNCTAD including UNCTAD ASYCUDA team from the IMPACT project.*<br>*Result of the workshop was the establishment of a regional network of national focal points and key stakeholders of the project.* |
| **OP1.2** | **Organize the first virtual national workshop in each of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.** | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: The meeting became virtual.<br>*The first national workshops have taken place with success in three beneficiary countries in 2022. It has not taken place in Fiji (Please see 2. Challenges encountered and actions taken).*<br>*Papua New Guinea:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 31.05.2022*<br>*Number of participants: 43 (of which 13 female)*<br>*Solomon Islands:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 30.06.2022*<br>*Number of participants: 48 (of which 12 female)*<br>*Vanuatu:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 03.08.2022*<br>*Number of participants: 39 (of which 15 female)*<br>*The result was the establishment of a roadmap of activities towards the completion of the NTM database and the VSS assessment (or only the NTM database in the case of Vanuatu).* |
| **OP1.3** | **Collect and validate NTM data in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, conduct VSS assessment in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and start the discussion on developing national matrix and in-depth NTM analysis in Vanuatu.**<br>The expected result is the NTM database and the completed VSS Assessment to be circulated to all the MSG member countries and the MSG | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: In-depth NTM analysis in Vanuatu was added.<br>*(i) NTM data has been collected and coded in the four target countries in 2022. The HS coding has been finalized in 2023. After consultation with the Governments to check-proof the quality of the data and get the approval for the publication, the NTM data of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu was officially published on the UNCTAD TRAINS database in 2023. For Papua New Guinea, the data was published in February 2024. The NTM database was presented to the MSG Secretariat and member States at the second national workshops in June in 2023.*<br>*(ii) VSS assessment field trips have taken place in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands in* |

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| | Secretariat. | | *2022. A desktop VSS assessment has been done for Fiji in 2023. The report of Papua New Guinea has been published in January 2024. The reports of Solomon Islands and Fiji have received the Government approval and will be published by the end of May 2024.*<br>*(iii) A plan for the development of the national matrix of Vanuatu (and of other countries) has been put in place in 2022.* |
| **OP1.4** | **Collect and validate NTM data in a major export market**.<br>The expected result is the NTM database to be presented to all the MSG member countries and the MSG Secretariat. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: This activity was added in response to feedback from needs assessments, which is the need for export-related information.<br>*Japan was selected as an export market in discussion with the MSG secretariat. The collection of NTM data including HS codes started in 2022 and finished in 2023. Japan NTM data was validated and published in the TRAINS NTM database in 2023. The NTM database was presented to the MSG Secretariat and member States at the second national workshops in June in the same year.* |
| **OP1.5** | **Prepare an export guide of a key product selected by an MSG country.**<br>The expected result is the export guide to be sent to an MSG member country and the MSG Secretariat. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: This activity was added in response to feedback from needs assessments, which is the need for export-related information.<br>*The export guides of Vanuatu on virgin coconut oil and Papua New Guinea on vanilla have been officially published and sent to the countries and the MSG Secretariat in Q4 2023.*<br>*The export guides of Fiji on ginger and Solomon Islands on kava have been approved by the Governments and the MSG Secretariat. They are now going through UNCTAD's publication process and are posed to be officially published by end of May 2024.* |
| **OP1.6** | **Provide an online access to NTM data, the key findings from VSS assessment and the export guide.**<br>They will be uploaded to a relevant database or website, if it already exists. Then, a link to the database or the website will be added to the UNCTAD project website and the MSG website. | ☒ *Fully completed (by end May 2024)*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | *NTM data is available on the TRAINS NTM database.*<br>*The key findings from VSS assessment and the export guide are uploaded on the project's webpage.*<br>*The VSS assessment and export guides of Fiji and Solomon Islands will be officially published by the end Mayl 2024.* |
| **OP1.7** | **Assess synergetic linkages between green trade (NTM/VSS) policies** | ☒ *Fully completed (by end May 2024)*<br>☐ *Partially completed* | *(i) The matrices of synergistic linkages have been prepared and presented at the second national workshops that took place in June 2023.* |

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| | **and national sustainable development strategies.** The expected result is a matrix of synergistic linkages for each country. | ☐ *Cancelled* | *(ii) To ensure that the matrices are properly understood, a report accompanying the matrices has been written. The one of Vanuatu has been published in January 2024. The other three reports will be published by end May 2024.*<br>*(iii) The matrices can be found in the presentations delivered during the workshops. They are freely available on the workshop's events webpage.* |
| **OP1.8** | **Organize the second national workshops in each of the beneficiary countries.** The expected result is validation of the NTM/VSS data and (agreement on) the national matrix of synergistic linkages. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | *Vanuatu:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 8-9.06.2023*<br>*Number of participants: 43 (of which 24 female)*<br>*Fiji:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 12-13.06.2023*<br>*Number of participants: 44 (of which 18 female)*<br>*Solomon Islands:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 19-20.06.2023*<br>*Number of participants: 31 (of which 8 female)*<br><br>*Papua New Guinea:*<br>- *Format: hybrid*<br>- *Date: 21-22.06.2023*<br>*Number of participants: 42 (of which 15 female)*<br><br>*At the workshops, findings of NTM data, VSS assessment and the national matrix of synergistic linkages were presented and validated with comments.* |
| **OP2.1** | **Organize the second virtual regional workshop.** The expected result is identification of policy options to be incorporated in the regional action plan to integrate green trade promotion into sustainable development policy coordination at the MSG level. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: The meeting became virtual.<br>*The second virtual workshop was held on 16 August 2023. The policy options were selected and approved by member States and the MSG Secretariat.*<br><br>*There has been a total of 13 participants connected on the "Teams" online meeting link. The Government officials of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea were however in common meeting rooms. A gross estimate would therefore be of 20 to 25 participants in total.*<br><br>*At the workshop, policy options to be incorporated in the regional action plan (now called sub-regional action plan) were identified and they guided the drafting of the sub-regional action plan.* |

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| **OP2.2** | **UNCTAD, in partnership with the MSG Secretariat, to draft a regional action plan.**<br>The expected result is the final draft regional action plan submitted to the MSG member countries. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | *(i) The sub-regional action plan was drafted in August-September 2023 jointly with the MSG Secretariat.*<br>*(ii) The final draft sub-regional action plan was submitted to and consulted with the MSG member States.* |
| **OP2.3** | **Organise the third regional and high-level policymaker meeting.**<br>The expected result is agreement on the regional plan of action and a regional coordinating mechanism to facilitate the implementation of the plan of action. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | *(i) The third regional workshop was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu on 16-17 October 2023. The number of participants was 29, of which 11 were female.*<br>*(ii) The action plan was validated by member States and the MSG Secretariat.*<br>*(iii) A coordination mechanism was also proposed and will be at the agenda of the next MSG TEOM.* |
| **OP2.4** | **The MSG and country stakeholders trained at regional entrepreneurship training workshop under EMPRETEC** | | **Change in the project's original design through a progress report**: This output was deleted to increase the relevance and consistency with other interventions. |
| **OP2.4** | **Present the final report explaining the MSG's approach at regional and international meetings in 2023.**<br>The expected result is to explain the MSG's approach at regional and international meetings. | ☒ *Fully completed*<br>☐ *Partially completed*<br>☐ *Cancelled* | The outcomes of the project have been mentioned and presented at:<br>- 2023.02.28. Mr. Ralf Peters, meeting with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) Director Programmes and Initiatives, Mr. Zarak Khan in Suva, Fiji.<br>- 2023.03.02. Mr. Ralf Peters, meeting with the Head Cooperation, EU Delegation in Fiji, Mr. Michal Krejza in Suva, Fiji.<br>- 2023.03.28. Mr. Julien Bliesener, presentation of the project during UNCTAD Regional Workshop on 'Supporting Trade Facilitation, Digitalization and Digital Transformation in the Blue Pacific' in Nadi, Fiji.<br>- 2023.11.23. Mr. Pati Pyale, at UNCTAD in Geneva, Switzerland.<br>- UNCTAD Annual Report 2023 (TBC).<br>*The presentation at the above meetings in 2023 excludes the sub-regional action plan because it was finalized toward the end of 2023 and it has to be cleared at the TEOM first before being presented.* |