

Session 2: UNFSS 3rd Flagship Report on VSS, Trade and Sustainable Development

UNFSS Coordinator and UNCTAD Senior Economist, Santiago Fernandez de Cordoba delivered an introductory presentation highlighting the key components of UNFSS as a neutral, independent platform to harness the potentials of VSS to achieve the SDGs, mainly through facilitating developing countries' access to the global markets and stimulating well-informed policy dialogue among key stakeholders on the national and international level.



"More and more developing countries require deeper understanding of VSS to export their products to developed markets. Our goal is to ensure that VSS uphold its promises to achieve sustainable economic and environmental development as a way to improve the well-being and prosperity of people in developing countries."

Santiago Fernandez de Cordoba
UNFSS Coordinator/ UNCTAD Senior Economist

This was followed with a presentation by Matteo Fiorini from the European University Institute (EUI) where he delivers the findings on how VSS have contributed directly to sustainable development and indirectly to market access. He emphasized the importance of having more transparency, data and analysis as the needed factors to answer the questions related to the role of VSS towards sustainable development. VSS are designed to shape economic activity and in modifying the economic activity towards a more sustainable direction.

This session was also a highlight of engagement between the National Platforms and UNFSS. The cooperation has been recognized through a Certificate of National Platform Network awarded to the pilots of this initiative namely Brazil and India (also China and Mexico), commemorating the establishment of the National Platforms within the UNFSS network. The certificate is also in recognition of the **Declaration of Cooperation in Sustainability Standards Ecosystem between National Platforms**, that was signed by Brazil, Mexico and India last September 2018 in New Delhi.



These National Platform representatives also discussed their on-ground forward plans with regard to advancing VSS domestically.



"Moving forward plans in advancing deeper engagement among platforms using the declaration that was signed in September 2018 is the next step and ways for public policy advocates to cooperate the adoption of responsible sourcing and simplifying the SDG localization through Global Value Chains."

Manish Pande
Quality Council of India

"Due to the fact that the proliferation and fragmentation of VSS brings negative outcomes on business such as communicating the SDGs and the misunderstandings among consumers, the cooperative work among countries can close the information gaps by providing trainings, standards assessments and promote mutual recognition or merging of certifications."

Rogério Corrêa
INMETRO, Brazil



Discussants, mainly Steering Committee members of UNFSS (FAO, ITC, UNIDO and UN Environment) participated in the discussion on key points/ concepts the audiences and constituencies can pick out from the Flagship Report.



"The Flagship report gives an interesting and useful tool that provides a taxonomy of all the policy actions that can be undertaken to contribute to making VSS work for sustainable development. The key implication of the analysis is needed more in terms of data in order to give very precise recommendations."

Matteo Fiorini
European University Institute

"At country level, for example the constituencies in trade and ministers, normally they are not at much ease with the voluntary standards, therefore this report is a contribution for them to start with. This report is the very few instances where VSS, trade and market access have been discussed in a more scientific way."

Ahmad Mukhtar
FAO



"The report enlightens us on concepts that could help us in ITC on the ground especially for SMEs, small producers where these VSS landscape links trade and sustainable development, and how important this is for them and the dialogue between the different multi-stakeholder to understand the different perspective. VSS are tools to access markets, but it is important to look at the transparency and the shared responsibilities of VSS along the supply chain, and governmental involvement in seeing VSS as tools to design this system into public policy."



Sandra Cabrera
ITC

"Readers should look out on where VSS can really contribute to the environmental aspects of the 2030 Agenda. VSS does not only contribute to market access opportunities, but also deliver environmental sustainability and across the variety of spheres. It addresses issues on pollution, climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and VSS can encourage exports towards sustainability, while also enabling consumers to see the impacts of their purchasing choices."

Taylor Clayton
UN Environment



"VSS, if done properly can help operationalize the SDGs and can help all different stages and actors from the value chains to improve their social and environmental outcome and also in the end considers what the consumers want. From the report, the importance of good governance, which entails the design and operationalization of VSS schemes, which is key for trust and credibility. The standard setting function should be clearly separated from the certification function as good practices."



Dominika Dor
UNIDO
