



Sustainability review of the project

'Improving the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos'

Results and lessons learned three years after project completion

HIGHLIGHTS

- The EIF/ITC “**Project to Improve the Competitiveness of Senegalese Mangos (PICSM)**” lasted from August 2015 to March 2018. The project aimed to strengthen the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos and related manufactured products on the international market, to increase the contribution of the mango industry to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in Senegal. This EIF-funded project was jointly implemented by ITC and the government of Senegal.
- **The review concludes that the project had some positive effects on the capabilities of individuals involved in the mango value chain**, through training sessions and technical advice, and on some aspects of trade capacity, such as quality of production (through the improvement of agricultural and transformation practices) and identification of potential export markets.
- **The review considers that the project likely contributed positively to increases in mango production and export over the period of its implementation and to improvement of the quality of mango production and processed products.** It is however difficult to attribute quantities specifically to the project or to appraise how the project may have influenced levels of production and export after its completion (see next point).
- **Project monitoring data, relative to results and their sustainability, are limited.** As such, the review was not able to gather sufficient and appropriate evidence on results - including at project completion - to assess their sustainability over time.
- Recommendations call for a review of project design processes, of project monitoring practices and stock-taking with the Agence Sénégalaise de Promotion des Exportations (ASEPEX).

BACKGROUND

For projects to have a lasting impact, they must be sustainable. Unfortunately, however, sustainability is rarely assessed once projects have ended. To fill this gap, the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) developed an approach to assess the sustainability of projects 3-4 years after their completion. In 2020, the IEU piloted this approach with three projects and identified limitations, lessons learned, and recommendations for the methodology. Building on this experience, this review forms part of a new cycle of sustainability reviews, conducted in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), and using a revised approach and methodology.

The project “Improving the competitiveness of the mango industry”, implemented through Senegal’s EIF National Implementation Unit (NIU) was selected for this new cycle of sustainability reviews for 2021. The review was conducted by independent consultants working closely with an in-country EIF NIU secondee.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project entitled “*Project to Improve the Competitiveness of Senegalese Mangos (PICSM)*” aimed to strengthen the competitiveness of Senegalese mango and related manufactured products on the international market, in order to increase the contribution of the mango industry to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in Senegal. The project was anchored in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Republic of Senegal, in its EIF National Implementation Unit (NIU).

The PICSM intended specifically to reinforce the production, processing and marketing capacities of stakeholders working in the mango value-chain in Senegal and to reach new export markets. It was designed to address the following problems: a disorganized private sector and production; limited capacity of producers regarding production techniques, post-harvest losses, diseases; limited local processing of value-added products; poor ownership of branding, quality, and traceability certifications; and limited knowledge of exporters on market information, i.e., requirements of target international markets other than the European Union.

KEY PROJECT DATA

Start: 12 August 2015

Closure: 11 March 2018

Duration: 31 months

Total budget: \$3,109,056

ITC contribution: \$856,000 (spent)

Target groups: SMEs, BSOs

The project activities focused on the mango sector in the Niayes, Centre and Casamance areas, the main mango producing areas in Senegal, and focussed on connecting Senegalese mango producers and exporters to international value chains. More specifically, the project's key objective was to increase the supply of exportable mango and products and diversify export markets through the identification of new opportunities regionally and internationally. Key activities consisted in developing the capacity of actors working in the mango value chain in Senegal through the provision of training, equipment, and materials to improve the quality of mango products; facilitate better access to markets and diversify outlets; and increase exports and incomes of mango producers.

This EIF-funded project was jointly implemented by ITC and the government of Senegal. Designed with six intended outcomes, the project was also implemented by the Agence Sénégalaise de Normalisation (ASN), the Direction de l'Horticulture (DHORT), the Direction de la Protection des Végétaux (DPV), the Agence Sénégalaise de Promotion des Exportations (ASEPEX), the Fondation Origine Sénégal (FOS), and the Institut de Technologie Alimentaire (ITA).

ITC was specifically responsible for the delivery of:

- “*Outcome 3: Business Support Organizations (BSO) have sufficient capacity to offer trade-related services adapted to export markets, both existing and new markets*”. This translated into activities to activate the system of “veille commerciale”, i.e., a market watch system to be led by the ASEPEX for ongoing data collection, as well as presentation and dissemination of market data on mangos.
- “*Outcome 5: new markets for Senegalese mangos are identified*”. This translated mostly into activities to identify and develop new export markets and partnerships for Senegalese mango producers and exporters; two market studies (for Maghreb and Europe) were completed.
- “*Outcome 6: business relationships are created in existing and new target markets for companies exporting Senegalese mangos*”. This translated into activities for setting up and launching a label for Senegalese mangos and in the participation of Senegalese producers and exporters in two international fairs.

An external mid-term evaluation that covered the entire project was completed in February 2017. Key findings related to ITC's contribution were: the implementation of the ASEPEX business intelligence system was slow but found satisfactory (Outcome 3); new markets for Senegalese mangos were identified, and the outcome was considered fully achieved (Outcome 5). The ITC [2018 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report](#) notes however that “*for [outcome 5 results] to bear fruit, the business intelligence system must be in place*”. The level of progress towards building business relationships (Outcome 6) was assessed as unsatisfactory. However, evaluation documentation acknowledged that the timeframe was too short for the development of international relations, and that the project should have been planned for a longer period in order to achieve this result.

A final evaluation was also completed in 2018, concluding that the sustainability of the project was strongly correlated to the implementing partners' internal capacity to mobilise further resources and follow-up themselves on activities and partnerships initiated by the project.

METHODOLOGY

This review provides an assessment of the sustainability of the project, together with actionable recommendations for improvement, by addressing the overall question: What has been the sustainability of the project's results, i.e., outcomes and impact, and of their contribution to organizational and systems capacity for trade?

The sustainability of the intervention is assessed on four key dimensions:

- **Value-addition:** What did the project activities contribute to capacity for trade? How has that contribution been sustained up to now?
- **Outcomes:** How did improved capacity (as a result of the project) translate into changes in intended outcomes? What is the state of those intended outcomes today and why?
- **Impact:** What impact did the project have on the revenues of ultimate intended beneficiaries, particularly women and youth? What other effects, positive and negative, intended and unintended, did the project have on stakeholders and beneficiaries? How did these evolve up to now?
- **Context:** What key contextual factors affected intended results and their evolution up to now?

Approach

Sustainability depends on the capacity of the institutions and organizations in Senegal to maintain results achieved by the project and to build on these. Accordingly, the sustainability review takes into account the capacity of the institutional and organizational arrangements in Senegal, e.g., between EIF, ITC, the ministries and project implementers, to sustain processes and systems that achieve results.

Aspects of capacity can include resources, administration, policy, etc. while systems and processes can be considered from a functional perspective, e.g., how well are these evolving relative to intended benefits. The review also considers key contextual factors, in particular the effects of the COVID pandemic.

Scope

The review focusses on the **sustainability of ITC supported activities** in Senegal, as part of the EIF *Project to Improve the Competitiveness of Senegalese Mangos (PICSM)*.

The review does not assess the performance per se of the activities nor of the project overall. More specifically, it does not focus directly on other intended results as part of the overall project, nor on prior phases however these are taken into account, where relevant and applicable to sustainability related questions. It also does not assess the performance of partners, individuals or the policies of the government of Senegal.

Data collection

A total of 14 interviews with the project managers and beneficiaries (mango producers and exporters, business support organizations [BSOs]), both remotely and on-site, was conducted for the purpose of this review; the interviews took place between 1 July 2021 and 15 September 2021.

More specifically, the findings of this review are based on a) a systematic **review of relevant documentation** including project documents and documentation related to the technical field of the project, b) a selection of eleven **in-depth semi-structured interviews** with key informants, i.e., those most able to contribute additional information (beyond what is provided by documentation), c) three **site visits** for observation and interviews, conducted by the Trade Officer for the Ministry of Trade in Senegal and Focal Point for the EIF NIU of Senegal.

Limitations

The main limitation faced by the review was the absence of accessible, reliable and sufficient post-project monitoring data to establish findings of fact appropriate to some of the review questions. The review lacked also precise and sufficient data at project completion, and hence was not provided with a clear baseline on the project results to facilitate tracking of their sustainability.

The review notes that the ASEPEX could not be reached by the review for an interview – and was also not included as part of the respondents for the final evaluation conducted in 2018.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

1. VALUE ADDITION: What did the project activities contribute to capacity for trade? How has that contribution been sustained up to now?

Conclusions

- The review concludes that, over the period of the project, ITC activities did contribute to improve the capacity for trade of Senegalese mango exporters by providing them with market information, access to international buyers and trainings to improve understanding of market requirements. Other activities of the project improved the technical capacities and practices of mango producers (post-harvest losses and diseases) and those of the transformation industry to facilitate exports to international markets.
- The review considers that, to some extent, these results may have been sustained to date although threats to their sustainability have been identified by project stakeholders such as management of processing facilities, especially regarding the maintenance of the equipment and material provided.
- The review did not find sufficient data and/or evidence on the sustained application of activities and capacities related to the market watch system and the label for Senegalese mangos.

Key findings

1.1 Trade capacity

The review finds that ITC conducted activities aimed at contributing to capacity for trade of stakeholders in the mango value chain in Senegal, in particular:

- Activities for developing a market watch system by training 20 ASEPEX staff and other BSOs on market data collection, analysis and communication; appointing a focal point in ASEPEX to take charge of a market watch system (outcome 3).
- Training selected ASEPEX staff, other BSO staff and exporters in commercial negotiation, conducting market studies involving exporters (outcome 5).
- Activities for developing a label, branding for Senegalese mangos, and supporting the participation of Senegalese mango producers and exporters in international business fairs i.e., FruitLogistica 2016 and 2017 (outcome 6).

The review found that the reliability and sufficiency of accessible data on end of project results were mixed and, consequently, found it difficult to determine fully the value added by the project and to assess its sustainability after completion in March 2018, to present.

For outcome 3, the review was unable to find out whether a market watch system had been set up functionally at project completion. The review was unable to talk to someone at ASEPEX nor could any of the interview respondents provide a clear answer. The final project evaluation report (2018) provides contradictory assessments, stating on one hand that a market watch system was established operationally but on the other that it was not able to assess its degree of functionality, as it was unable to interview anyone at ASEPEX despite repeated attempts to do so. The final evaluation report notes that none of the intended deliverables for outcome 3 were produced yet rates performance for it as average. The review was also unable to obtain clear follow up information on the sustainability of the effects of activities relative to outcome 3, such as training for the market watch system, beyond general statements from some respondents that ASEPEX didn't seem to have carried on activities relative to the functioning of the market watch system. The primary reason given to the review was the lack of sustained resources, both human and financial.

For outcome 5, the review was provided with documentation relative to the completion of two market studies, and exporters indicated that they were given the opportunity to meet with key business institutions in Morocco.

For outcome 6, the review finds that the exporters selected by the project to participate in the international business fairs were given the opportunity to take part in numerous business-to-business meetings, helping them to grow their portfolio of potential buyers. However, the review couldn't obtain clear follow up information to date regarding the effectiveness and value addition of the label for Senegalese mangos.

Overall, it is not clear to the review that project gains and intended results on trade capacity have been sustained after project completion. For example, the review did not find evidence that the label set up to standardise and promote the quality of Senegalese mangos is still used. Nor did the review find information on the activities carried out by the organization responsible for controlling and certifying producers of Senegalese mangos according to the label's standards.

1.2 Technical capacities

Other project activities were carried out by the Ministry of Trade in Senegal, in charge of the following results:

- Actors in the mango sector have a better understanding of good production and processing practices (outcome 1).
- Packaging, storage and processing infrastructures of the mango sector are upgraded (outcome 2).
- Exporting companies have a better understanding of the commercial requirements of export markets (outcome 4).

The review was provided with some indication that:

For outcome 1, the trainings received to strengthen production methods, phytosanitary controls and enhance organizational management at points along the value chain were found useful. *"The technical training sessions and different project activities corresponded well to our needs as they addressed a large part of the difficulties we encounter as producers along the value chain from harvest and production through to commercialisation and export."* (Producer in Keur Mbir Ndao) The project contributed to improved organization of phytosanitary inspection including more systematic monitoring of control production sites, i.e., control orchards.

For outcome 2, the material provided to upgrade transformation units such as the Feltiplex have been effectively delivered as well as trainings to use the new facilities although concerns on the sustainability of practices for the management of these installations have been raised.

For outcome 4, exporters were provided with technical knowledge useful to improve the quality and marketing of Senegalese mangos. Especially, the training received on commercial and intercultural commercial negotiations, as well as on export rules and business practices in international trade were found useful by exporters participating in the market studies and business fairs.

2. OUTCOMES: How did improved capacity (as a result of the project) translate into changes in intended outcomes? What is the state of those intended outcomes today and why?

Conclusions

- The review concludes that, overall, improved capacities in the mango value chain in Senegal likely contributed to increase the quality and quantity of mangos production in Senegal over the period, as well as mango export levels.
- The review did not find sufficient evidence to conclude on the sustainability of these outcomes up to now.

Key findings

2.1 Production and quality increase

The review notes that the volume of Senegalese mango exports has grown from 17,000 tons in 2015 to 22,000 in 2018 according to data provided by the DPV (which represents an increase of 30% over the period), and that, on this total volume, exporters received only 9 quarantine notifications (2 because of documentation issues and 7 because of phytosanitary issues) involving only 70 tons of mangos. The review finds indications that some of the project gains have been maintained, for example with respect to improved levels of production and increased quality of mango exports to fit the needs of exports markets – although the review was not provided with detailed supporting data.

2.2 Diversification of export markets

The final evaluation of the PICSM conducted in 2018 estimates that the project helped to diversify exports markets and to build a better understanding of export rules. Data provided highlight that 29 Senegalese export companies had been put in touch with potential clients at the end of ITC's intervention; these results do not appear to have been tracked and monitored by project management since. Producers interviewed indicate that business-to-business meetings at international business fairs boosted their capacity to reach foreign markets and reinforced their capacity to conclude contracts with foreign clients (especially in Spain, Morocco and regionally for example with Mauritania, Ghana, Gabon).

3. IMPACT: What impact did the project have on the revenues of intended beneficiaries, particularly women and youth? What other effects did the project have on stakeholders and beneficiaries? How did these evolve up to now?

Conclusions

- The review considers that the project may have had both a positive impact on the income of some producers and exporters, as well as some positive effects on practices at national scale although there is likely variability among organizations/businesses that has not been captured by project management documentation.
- The review did not find sufficient evidence to conclude on how these positive effects may have translated into an improvement of beneficiaries' livelihoods.

Key findings

3.1 Impact on beneficiaries

The project worked with various organizations operating in the agricultural sector and especially mango producers, exporters and BSOs. There are an estimated 1500 to 2000 producers and exporters of mangos in Senegal, and the project was able to reach related networks across the country. The interviewed BSOs (DPV, ITA, ASN and DHORT) state that the project helped mapping mango producers and exporters but couldn't provide aggregated or granular data on the state of mango production and export relative to the project's activities.

The review was not provided with data related to the key impact indicator defined for the project - *increase in the revenues of actors in the mango value chain* -, although follow up visits by technical advisors, phytosanitary inspectors as well as monitoring by the EIF NIU confirmed that improved practices were progressively integrated into production and transformation processes on a national scale. These follow up visits also confirmed an increase in production, as a result of improved agricultural practices, but did not provide any data or information on the income of producers.

3.2 Monitoring and reporting beyond outputs

The review finds that, beyond the formulation of expected results, little data are available from the project regarding its intended outcomes and impact - be it in the planning documentation for the PICSM, in project management documentation or in the reporting documentation relative to the intervention.

More specifically, the review:

- did not find systematic performance data and/or information on results beyond basic financial and technical monitoring and reporting on the implementation of activities supported by ITC;
- was not provided with detailed data for activities implemented by the Ministry of Trade and found that the project didn't fully consider differences in contexts depending on the regions of production for project planning and implementation i.e., types of orchards, bioclimatic regimes, and related pests.

4. CONTEXT: What key contextual factors affected intended results (outcomes and impact) and their evolution up to now?

Conclusions

- The review concludes that the overriding post-project contextual factor affecting the mango value chain including its exports is the COVID-19 pandemic and its various associated restrictions and effects.

Key findings

4.1 Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic led to various restrictions and effects on both the mango value chain in Senegal as well as export markets. According to one respondent for example, to respect distancing protocols, personnel, mostly women, in one conditioning centre was reduced from about 75 to 25, together with an increase in daily work hours from 8 to 16. As well, on the export side, respondents agreed that access to, and development of, international export markets were affected adversely and export levels decreased, e.g., from an average of four containers a week to one.

The review was not able to verify these data, however the examples provide an illustration of the type of effect the pandemic had on mango value chain processes.

LESSONS

Although there is reference to sustainability (durabilité) in the project document, the “*sustainability strategy*” is presented simply as “*ownership by the actors of the concepts, strategies, methods and tools*”. The exit strategy states essentially that if there is sufficient capacity, project benefits will be sustained. Although the project document identifies the risk that actors may not take ownership, and hence that capacity may not be developed to the point where it is self-sustaining, there is no reference to alternative or mitigation strategies.

Beyond a confirmation of what we already know, i.e., that sustainability considerations should be an integral part of the design of the project, the review highlights the importance of using a more rigorous definitional and analytical lens for the integration of sustainability into the project.

Historical context shapes expectations. For decades, and until recently, sustainability was conceived and applied by donors as the expectation of post-project financing. This pervasive and dominant view permeated relationships with partner countries and their institutions, and is still prevalent today in many administrations. The review found that there was a general expectation among in-country stakeholders, of a second phase of the project based on external financing.

The design stage should also incorporate considerations of key contextual variables such as administrative culture and managerial capacity, for example, and as referred to above, in the absence of a clear definition of, and agreement on, what is meant by sustainability, administrations may likely understand the term to mean continued external financing.

The review confirms that **systematic project monitoring is essential to any assessment of longer-term sustainability**. In its absence, it is challenging, both from management and from evaluative perspectives, to obtain retrospectively reliable, sufficient and appropriate data, at a reasonable level of effort, to understand well and assess validly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The **project proposal process** should be reviewed in light of the lessons drawn from this review, with particular attention to the **consideration of sustainability and of country specific contextual factors**.
- The monitoring and evaluation in the EIF National Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Republic of Senegal, should **review project monitoring options**, with a focus on dimensions of sustainability.
- Efforts should be made by ITC/EIF and the EIF National Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Republic of Senegal, to **meet with representatives of ASEPEX** as the organization was not included in the project’s evaluation nor was it possible for this review to obtain a meeting or interview.

The [International Trade Centre](#) (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC is the only international agency dedicated to expanding trade opportunities for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

The [Enhanced Integrated Framework](#) (EIF) is a multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to assisting the least developed countries (LDCs) in their use of trade as an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction.

Reviews are key instruments to support organizational learning and accountability. The results of this review inform ITC’s and the EIF’s decision-making in project and programme management, with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing their contributions towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This review was commissioned jointly by ITC’s Independent Evaluation Unit and the Monitoring and Evaluation section at the EIF Secretariat. It was carried out by Ian Davis and Albine Guitard (independent consultants) in collaboration with Maïmouna Gueye Fall (EIF secondee of the NIU in Senegal). The review was managed by Simon Bettighofer (ITC Evaluation Officer) and Fanan Biem (EIF Programme Officer). Oversight and quality assurance was provided by Miguel Jiménez Pont (Head of the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit) and Simon Hess (Head of EIF Monitoring and Evaluation).

The project assessed by this review indicated contributions to the following SDG target:

