



Ensuring further progress of SPS and food safety system in Georgia

EU TWINNING PROJECT ENI/2020/418-130 / GE 18 ENI AG 07 19

REVIEW

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES PERFORMED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN ONE YEAR PERIOD

DECEMBER 2022



Māris Balodis,
the Project
Leader, Director
General of
Latvian Food
and Veterinary
Service

“ I am pleased that the implementation of the project has proceeded dynamically and is now in its final phase, even despite the covid pandemic, which made impact on everything. I am sure that the knowledge and skills of project experts have helped to strengthen the Georgian food chain and animal health monitoring system, making Georgian products even more competitive on the European market.



Zurab Chekurashvili,
the Head of the
National Food
Agency of
Georgia

“ The implementation of a high food safety standard is one of our priorities. Therefore, it is essential to share other countries’ experiences that is provided by the EU twinning project. In this respect, we are actively working in the food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary directions. Within the framework of the EU Twinning project, our specialists have the opportunity to participate in study visits to the EU countries, and EU experts of relevant domains share also with us the best practices of their countries when visiting Georgia.

About the project



Twinning project “Ensuring further progress of SPS and food safety system in Georgia”



Financed by the European Commission



The overall objective - to obtain functional market economy and the capacity to cope with competitiveness in the European Union market while maintaining the consumer protection and achieving high food safety standards



Implementation partners: Latvia (leading partner), Estonia and Sweden.

Beneficiaries: Institutions of Georgia - National Food Agency, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance



Implementation period: 02.11.2020.–1.05.2023.



Zurab Sitehinava,
the Head of the
Customs
Department

“ The project provides very valuable assistance in the approximation process, through practical and relevant recommendations for the procedural amendments and in the implementation of SPS border control procedures in line with EU standards.



Zurab Kikalia,
the Head of
Sanitary,
Phytosanitary
and Veterinary
Control
Division

“ Study visit in Estonia was very important and beneficial and acquired knowledge will be reflected in implementation and further enhancement of border control procedures in line with EU standards.



On January 21, 2022 in Tbilisi, Georgia project held a dedicated high level event to take stock of its progress in helping Georgia to bring its sanitary, phytosanitary and food safety system closer to EU standards and practices. This review is overview of activities performed and results achieved in one year period.



REVIEW

DECEMBER 2022



Training on Pest Risk Analysis & Management

July
September
2021

In July and September 2021 the Twinning project experts from Latvia delivered two rounds of online trainings on pest risk analysis (PRA) and management.

The aim was to present to the participants the European and international practices in pest risk analysis and management and conduct a pilot analysis on two specific pests relevant to the Georgian context.

Representatives of the National Food Agency, the Revenue Service, the Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture and the State Laboratory of Agriculture participated in the training.

During the training, the Latvian experts shared their experiences and organised group work to go through a step-by-step process of how to conduct express PRA and identify management options for two specific pests selected by the Georgian colleagues.



THE GOAL - to enhance the capacities of the staff of the mentioned institutions in plant health and assist in building up their monitoring and surveillance efforts.



Training on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for border control of food and feed of non-animal origin

October
2021

On 22 October 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia and the Agriculture and Food Board of Estonia conducted training for the representatives of the Revenue Service of the

Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the National Food Agency dedicated to the update and implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for border control of food and feed of non-animal origin. This process included comparison of the current Georgian legislation with the EU's and elaboration of recommendations on how these requirements can be upgraded and brought closer to the EU standards.

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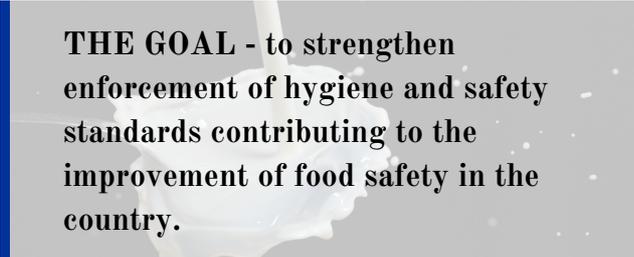
During the training, the experts also presented Latvian and Estonian experiences in this area. The participants actively engaged in the discussion during the training to examine different aspects of the recommendations on updating the legislation and procedures.



Improvement of official controls in area of primary production

In September 2021 the Twinning project experts from Latvia carried out a short-term mission in Georgia to work with the National Food Agency (NFA) on the enhancement of official control in primary production.

September
2021



THE GOAL - to strengthen enforcement of hygiene and safety standards contributing to the improvement of food safety in the country.

This work included development of Standard Operating Procedures, checklists and guidance materials based on the approximated legislation and evaluation of the selected Food Business Operators (FBO) for piloting official control using the prepared inspection documents.

During the mission, the experts and their NFA colleagues visited two milk producing farms in Georgia to see their operations in practice, jointly perform an inspection of compliance with the requirements of primary milk production and provide recommendations on improving and streamlining inspection on the side of NFA.



Before the training, the experts held extensive discussions with the Georgian colleagues to review the import control procedures of food/feed of non-animal origin and their compliance with the relevant EU legislation, revise the existing SOPs and prepare recommendations on the update of the SOPs.



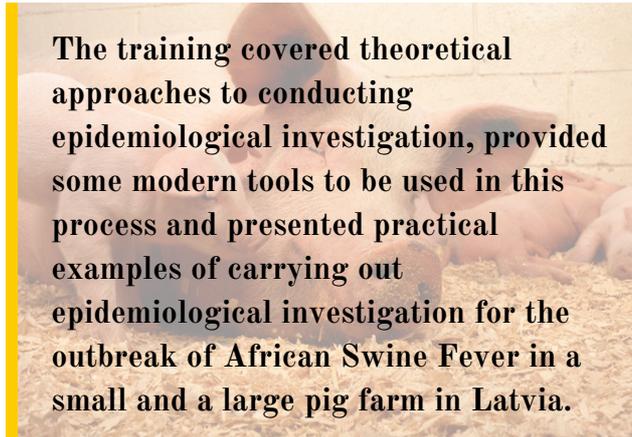
Development of epidemiological surveillance programmes for strengthening control of animal diseases

October

2021

On 13th October 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia delivered a dedicated training for the representatives of the National Food Agency (NFA) in Georgia on the epidemiological investigation of disease outbreak focusing on pig farms.

Staff of the central office of NFA as well as regional inspectors participated in this one-day event.



The training covered theoretical approaches to conducting epidemiological investigation, provided some modern tools to be used in this process and presented practical examples of carrying out epidemiological investigation for the outbreak of African Swine Fever in a small and a large pig farm in Latvia.

During the training, the participants held extensive discussions on this topic including the new EU legislation on animal health. The assistance provided by the Twinning project in this area aims to enhance capacities of NFA to control animal diseases in the country more effectively and strengthen epidemiological surveillance programmes.



Training on epidemiological investigation of foodborne outbreaks

October

2021

During 20 - 21 October 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia conducted training for the representatives of the National Food Agency in Georgia, the State Laboratory of Agriculture and the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health on the epidemiological investigation of foodborne disease (FBD) outbreaks. During the training, the experts presented the EU and Latvian experience in this area and spoke about the crisis management in emergency situation and contingency planning, communication and collaboration between public sector and other sectors, procedures and guidelines on FBD outbreak investigation, surveillance

programmes, sampling, exchange of information and surveillance data, preventive activities and other. These detailed presentations were combined with extensive discussions and question and answer sessions to provide the participants with insight into the different aspects of this complex topic.



Development of monitoring and surveillance programmes for priority plant pests

October

2021

In October 2021, the Twinning project experts from the State Plant Protection Service of Latvia visited Georgia to work with the Plant Protection Department of the National Food

Agency (NFA) on the development of monitoring and surveillance programme for priority plant pests.

During this visit, the experts held discussions with the representatives of NFA to review the existing requirements and procedures for carrying out inspections and conducting monitoring of plant harmful organisms in Georgia as well as guidelines and practices in this area.

In addition, the project experts and NFA representatives visited nurseries in Mtskheta and Gori to observe the operations of the nurseries in practice and to see how sampling is conducted by NFA as the official control body.

The information collected during this working visit will help the project experts for develop a draft monitoring and surveillance plan prioritising nurseries.



THE GOAL - to enhance the capacities of the staff of NFA in plant health and assist in building up their monitoring and surveillance efforts.



AIM - to assist NFA in developing and effectively implementing monitoring and surveillance programmes for food safety.

REVIEW

DECEMBER 2022

Assisting National Food Agency in developing surveillance and monitoring program for fish diseases



November
2021

On 2 November 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Agriculture and Food Board of Estonia together

with the representatives of the regional office of the National Food Agency visited an aquaculture farm in Shida Kartli to see the aquaculture farming practices in Georgia and assist the National Food Agency in developing surveillance and monitoring programme for specific fish diseases.

Development of epidemiological surveillance programmes for strengthening control of animal diseases



November
2021

On 10th November 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia together

with the representatives of the Veterinary Department of the National Food Agency and their regional staff from Shida Kartli visited a pig farm in Gori region to assist NFA in developing a surveillance and monitoring program for African Swine Fever.

Training of veterinary, food safety and phytosanitary border inspectors



November
2021

On 18-19 November 2021, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia and the Agriculture and Food Board of Estonia worked with the

representatives of the Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the National Food Agency to introduce the new EU legal framework related to plant health and official control and discuss alignment of the Georgian legislation in the area as well as delivered a practical training on the TRACES NT (Trade Control and Expert) system.



May
2022

National Food Agency in Georgia and Twinning project experts from Latvia work together for improvement of official controls in primary production of dairy products

In May 2022, the Twinning project experts from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia carried out a short-term mission in Georgia to work with the National Food Agency on the enhancement of official control in primary production.

The experts shared with the Georgian colleagues the Latvian experience and the steps that Latvia took to bring its standards into compliance with the EU requirements. The Latvian experts and their NFA colleagues visited a dairy production plant in Tbilisi to see the operations in practice and provide recommendations on improving and streamlining inspection on the side of NFA.

Tabletop simulation exercise for African Swine Fever outbreak



September
2022

During 19-23 September 2022, experts of the Twinning project from Latvia and Estonia carried out tabletop simulation exercise on African Swine Fever outbreak to

train representatives of the National Food Agency in Georgia to handle animal disease outbreaks effectively. The training took place in Tbilisi and Kutaisi for NFA specialists from different regions. As a result, the specialists of NFA will be better prepared to deal with animal disease outbreaks more efficiently and successfully.

Latvian experts of the project shared their experience and delivered training to the regional and central veterinary inspectors of the National Food Agency in Tbilisi and Gori on primary milk production requirements, official control and biosecurity requirements for pig holdings.



Training of veterinary border inspectors

September
2022

On 5-9 September 2022, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia and the Agriculture and Food Board of Estonia conducted training for the representatives of the Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia and the National Food Agency dedicated to the topics of veterinary control at the border.

The event consisted of seminars for the border inspectors of East Georgia in Tbilisi and of West Georgia in Batumi.

The experts from Latvia and Estonia shared with the Georgian colleagues their experiences and best practices in the veterinary border control procedures as well as held discussions and answered their questions.

The seminars included a theoretical part and on-site visits to the selected border control points.

This event is aimed to assist in the implementation of veterinary control procedures in line with European standards, and by this providing safe imported products to the customer as well as enhance protection against the spread of animal diseases.

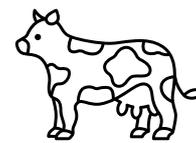


Development of zoonosis monitoring programs

Throughout the project implementation, the Swedish experts of the Twinning project worked closely with the Georgian counterparts from NFA to jointly elaborate a surveillance programme for zoonotic salmonella (*S. enteritidis* and *S. typhimurium*), and to analyse possibilities of supporting its implementation.

Numerous meetings, discussions, and presentations took place during this process to prepare a document tailored to the needs of the Beneficiary institution and reflect the actual state of affairs, challenges and opportunities.

Improvement of official controls in area of primary production: training on general and specific hygiene requirements for primary production



October
2022

On 19th October 2022, experts of the Twinning project from the Food and Veterinary Service of Latvia delivered dedicated training for the representatives of the National Food Agency (NFA) in Georgia on the general and specific hygiene requirements for primary production.

The staff of the central office of NFA, regional inspectors, and several local farmers from Shida Kartli participated in this one-day event held in Gori.

The Latvian experts spoke about the issues of biosecurity, hygiene requirements, and control in the primary production of milk and shared Latvian experience in dairy farming and inspection planning. The assistance provided by the Twinning project in this area aims to enhance the capacities of NFA to carry out official control in primary production effectively and in line with European standards.

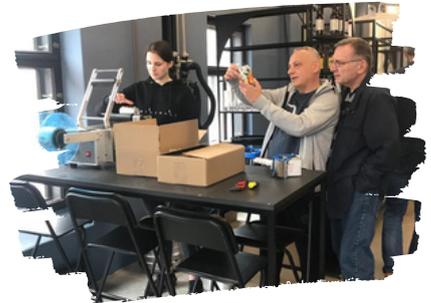
The final draft of the programme was presented to the senior staff of NFA, and possibilities were discussed to provide assistance in elaborating a detailed sampling plan to support the national implementation legislation expected to become effective from 2023.

REVIEW

DECEMBER 2022



Photo moments 2021 - 2022



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