



ANNEX C1: Twinning Fiche

Project title: Support to the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) in Strengthening SPS Systems and Food Safety Control in the Horticulture Sector in The Gambia

Beneficiary administration: Food Safety Quality Authority (FSQA), Office of the Vice President of The Gambia

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EU funded project

TWINNING TOOL

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1. Basic Information

1.1 Programme

Programme: ACT-62597 of 2024 – this Programme is directly managed by the EU Delegation to The Gambia

1.2 Twinning Sector

Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) domain of the Agriculture and Livestock sector

1.3 EU funded budget

1 000 000 EUR

1.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Main SDG: 2.

Other significant SDGs: 1, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15

2. Objectives

2.1 Overall Objective:

To contribute to the transformation of the agricultural sector in The Gambia into a resilient, competitive, and sustainable agri-food system, ensuring food safety, improved public health, and enhanced access to regional and international markets.

2.2 Specific Output:

To strengthen the institutional, regulatory and technical capacities of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) to effectively implement Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, food safety and quality systems in the horticultural sector in line with EU and international standards.

2.3 The elements targeted in strategic documents

2.3.1. Contribution to the Implementation of National Policies and Legislations

This twinning project aligns with the Government of The Gambia's ambitions and efforts towards achieving the United Nations' SDGs and the development ambitions indicated in the RF-NDP 'YIRIWAA' 2023 to 2027. The proposed project is also in consonance with The Gambia's Trade Policy 2018-2022¹ aim of "Making the Business Environment Competitive

¹ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gam201713.pdf>

for Increased Domestic Production and Export Performance” through value addition and production incentivization. Additionally, the project will be aligned to the National Export Strategy 2021 – 2025², as well as with the specific aims of developing and exploiting the potentials of strategic value chains as outlined in the Gambia Second Generation National Agricultural Investment Plan-Food and Nutrition Security (GNAIP II-FNS, 2019-2026)³. Moreover, the twinning project will align with The Gambia’s Food Safety and Quality Policy (2023), which emphasizes the strengthening of SPS systems to ensure safe and competitive agricultural exports. It also supports the implementation of the Food Safety and Quality Act (2011), and the stated desire to revise and modernize it. Accordingly, it is envisioned that through the Twinning Project, the Food safety and Quality Act 2011 will be revised and modernized to mirror and align the SPS regulatory frameworks of major trading partners such as the EU. Specifically, the twinning project will enhance the implementation and enforcement of major regulations promulgated by the FSQA, notable among these are the groundnut and groundnut products regulation, the maize and rice regulations. Overall, the twinning will enable FSQA to learn and adopt Good Regulatory formulation and enforcement practices that protect consumers and enable uninterrupted trade in agriculture. The project also aligns with the strategic objectives outlined in the recently adopted FSQA Strategic Plan 2026 to 2030.

2.3.2. Contribution to the implementation of Regional and Continental SPS strategies

In the West African region, this project aligns with the ECOWAS Food Safety Strategy Framework (2021)⁴, and the Regional Action Plan for the Prevention, Surveillance, and Control of Plant Pests and Diseases⁵, meant to strengthen the capacity of member states to adopt science-based, integrated Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) systems to improve food security and trade. Internationally, the project that will be consistent within the context of The Gambia’s commitment to achieving the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063⁶, and the 2014 Malabo Declaration on ‘Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.’⁷

Finally, the proposed project is also critical for the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)⁸, in which food safety issues are integrated and implemented in accordance with the provisions of Annex 7 on SPS Measures.

² <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gam223512.pdf>

³ https://www.gafspfund.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/7.%20The%20Gambia_Investment%20Plan%20%282019-2026%29_1.pdf

⁴ <https://ecowap.ecowas.int/ecowap-sector/2>

⁵ https://ecowap.ecowas.int/media/ecowap/file_document/2017_Validated_regional_Actions_Plan_for_the_prevention_surveillanc_6nuZSAA.pdf

⁶ <https://africanunion2063.org/>

⁷ https://www.resakss.org/sites/default/files/Malabo%20Declaration%20on%20Agriculture_2014_11%2026-.pdf

⁸ <https://au-afcfta.org/>

3. Description

3.1 Background and justification

3.1.1. Opportunities and Challenges

The Gambian agricultural sector is characterized by little diversification, being mainly subsistence rain-fed agriculture with a food self-sufficiency ratio of about 50%⁹. Crops produced include food crops, comprising cereals (early millet, late millet, maize, sorghum, rice), semi-intensive cash crop production (groundnut), horticulture and most recently cashew nuts.

The crops sub-sector generates approximately 40% of the foreign exchange earnings and provides about 75% of total household income¹⁰. This sub-sector also employs 70% of the labor force, and accounts for about 30% of GDP of the country. In recent years, the horticulture sub-sector has seen the most commercial investment, in particular for the export of high-value products like fresh mangoes, baby corn, and chili peppers. A projected growth of US\$ 17 million between 2019 to 2025 suggests a promising outlook for horticulture export markets¹¹. Still, the Gambian agri-food export market is constrained by inadequate compliance with SPS requirements and a failure to meet standards and technical requirements in EU markets, as well as other export markets. The livestock sub-sector is predominantly traditional, involving low-input extensive systems of animal husbandry.

The livestock sector remains a predominant sector in the livelihood of the population of the Gambia, with cattle and chicken as the most reared species in the country. According to the Gambia Bureau of Statistics, the livestock population in 2020 was estimated at 285,000 cattle, 177,000 sheep, 378,000 goats and 982,000 chickens. Moreover, official figures indicate that the livestock sector alone contributed 13.8% to the agricultural GDP and 2.6% to the overall GDP of the Gambia¹².

The fishery sub-sector, which is managed by the Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources, contributes an estimated US\$ 55.5 million to the economy annually, representing 12% of the GDP. Out of the total contribution of the fishery sub-sector, 69% is derived from production and 29.3% from industrial processing. The sector currently employs an estimated 30,000 people and provides livelihood to about 200,000 people. Currently, fish exports (*i.e.*, fishmeal, fish, processed fish, off-Gambian landings by industrial vessels, etc.) represent roughly 19,300 tons per year, generating US\$ 65 million¹³. However, the country faces persistent problems of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities.

Despite the primary role of the agriculture sector in the economy, its performance and share in most key socio-economic indicators in the past decade has been generally erratic. This was attributed to a combination of factors, including adverse climatic conditions, the application of structural adjustment programs without sequencing, low private investments, soaring prices of food commodities and essential production inputs, inadequate domestic policies, low institutional support and investment in the sector (particularly roads and equipment) and SPS-

9 The Gambia: A Look at Agriculture (World Bank, 2019)

10 The Gambia Second Generation National Agricultural Investment Plan-Food and Nutrition Security (GNAIP II-FNS) 2019-2026).

11 FOOD SYSTEMS PROFILE - THE GAMBIA Catalysing the sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems (FAO, 2022)

¹² <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gam223843.pdf>

¹³ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/The_Gambia_Case_Study.pdf

related market access hurdles¹⁴. Despite the latter, The Gambia is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 1996 and is hence theoretically bound by its Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement)¹⁵. This inability to meet the SPS requirement is attributable to various factors, such as fragmented institutional mandates, the inability of national frontline SPS institutions to develop and enforce technical regulations, and most importantly, limited investment in quality infrastructure elements, including laboratories and scientific technical know-how. This has significantly affected the export capabilities of the Gambian agricultural products. For instance, the recurrence of high levels of aflatoxins in groundnut consignments exported from The Gambia has led European authorities to include The Gambia in the list of countries subject to the enhanced control regime, leading to a significant drop in the export of Gambian groundnuts to European markets.

3.1.2. Beneficiary Institutions

As part of the twinning project, support will be provided to one (1) frontline SPS-relevant competent authority, namely the *Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA)* of The Gambia¹⁶. The FSQA was established in 2011 through an act of Parliament, and is mandated as the sole competent authority, with powers of delegation responsible for the overall official control of the safety and quality of food – including water, beverages and animal feed – along the food chain, from production up to its supply to the final consumer. Among other functions, the FSQA is responsible for inspecting and certifying imports and exports, and serves as the designated national SPS inquiry point, thereby playing a central role in the information and coordination of SPS matters in the Gambia. The Authority is also the secretariat and lead institution of the National SPS Committee, a thirteen-member committee comprising all frontline SPS institutions in the country, such as the Department of Plant Protection Services, the Department of Livestock Services, the Ministry of Trade, the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency, and other value-chain-specific representations. Among other responsibilities, the SPS committee serves as a coordination and discussion platform for national and International SPS issues that are of interest to the Gambia. Re-launched in early 2023, the committee conducts quarterly meetings hosted and funded by the FSQA, where pertinent discussions and decisions are made in a coordinated and organized manner¹⁷.

The FSQA also represents the Gambia in various global and regional multilateral food safety-relevant platforms and forums. Notable among these is the CODEX Alimentarius commission—an international body established by the FAO and WHO tasked with setting global food standards, guidelines, and codes of practice to protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food and agricultural trade. In line with this participation, in 2019, The Gambia was awarded the Codex Trust Fund by the Codex Secretariat to support its participation in global food safety standards-setting activities. Through the \$150,000.00 grant, the FSQA led the development of a Codex Procedural Manual, the establishment of a national Codex Committee, and participation in various Commodity and Contaminant-specific Codex sub-Committees, such as the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, the Codex Committee on Contaminants and Pesticide Residues.

¹⁴ <https://www.fao.org/gambia/gambia-at-a-glance/en/>

¹⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/spsagr_e.htm

¹⁶ <https://fsqa.gm/>

¹⁷ [Gambia Launches National Sanitary and Phytosanitary \(SPS\) Committee | CODEXALIMENTARIUS](#)

This enhanced participation in the global Food Safety standards-setting platforms led to the elected of the Gambia (through the FSQA) as the coordinator of the Codex's Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA). In this role, the FSQA will exercise general coordination in the preparation of standards related to and of interest to the region of Africa. The role of the FSQA will include the harmonization of regional and continental food safety and quality standards to facility trade and commodity exchange.

3.1.3 Operating Environment and Contextual Constraints

Member States applying to this twinning project are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with the broader operational context in The Gambia prior to submitting their proposals. The Gambia is a low-income country with significant structural constraints that will directly affect the pace, modality and scope of project implementation. Proposals should be grounded in a realistic understanding of these conditions, and Member States should demonstrate in their applications how their proposed approach accounts for them.

Physical infrastructure across The Gambia remains limited. Reliable electricity supply is inconsistent, and power outages are frequent, including in Banjul and Serrekunda. Internet connectivity, while improving, remains slow and intermittent in many areas. In this context, it is important to clarify that, in line with Twinning rules, Member States experts may provide coaching, guidance and advisory support on appropriate digital and IT tools, including recommending suitable solutions and developing strategies or plans for their adoption, but the design, development and implementation of any IT systems falls outside the scope of Twinning and must be contracted through separate means or undertaken directly by the FSQA. Member States should further ensure that the expertise proposed is available in-house within their public administrations and is not outsourced to private consultants. Transport infrastructure outside of the Greater Banjul Area is basic, and in-country field missions, including to production areas and border crossing points, may require significant additional logistical planning.

FSQA currently operates with limited laboratory infrastructure and equipment. Analytical capacity for food safety testing — including residue analysis, microbiological testing, and contaminant detection — is constrained by shortages of calibrated equipment, certified reference materials, and consumables. The absence of accredited national laboratories for many food safety parameters means that certain samples must be referred abroad for analysis, increasing costs and turnaround times. Member States should not presuppose the existence of a functional accredited laboratory as a baseline condition. Activities related to risk assessment, monitoring plan implementation, or certification that depend on laboratory analysis should be designed with these limitations explicitly in mind, with achievable intermediate steps prioritised over transformative outcomes that require capital investment beyond the scope of this project.

The FSQA is a young and relatively small institution operating with a limited number of trained technical staff. High workloads, constrained financial resources, and periodic staff turnover represent ongoing operational realities. While FSQA leadership has demonstrated strong commitment to reform, as evidenced by the institution's active participation in international SPS platforms and its leadership of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Africa (CCAFRICA), the administrative and technical absorptive capacity of the institution should

not be overestimated. Training and capacity-building activities should be sequenced carefully to allow for consolidation and should avoid placing excessive parallel demands on FSQA counterparts.

The Gambia's food safety legislative framework, while in the process of modernisation, remains incomplete in several areas. Key secondary legislation, standard operating procedures and enforcement guidelines are yet to be developed or operationalised. Member State experts should anticipate working in an environment where foundational regulatory tools are still being put in place and should be prepared to support their development from a relatively early stage rather than building on a fully established legal base.

The Gambia has a tropical climate with a pronounced rainy season (approximately June to October) that can affect travel, fieldwork scheduling and the logistics of in-country missions. The cost of living is generally modest, though the availability of specialised goods, services and technical materials may be limited.

Member States are invited to articulate in their proposals how the above constraints have been considered in their proposed methodology, staffing approach, and activity design. Proposals that reflect a clear-eyed understanding of this operating environment will be viewed more favourably than those which assume conditions comparable to EU Member State contexts.

3.2 Ongoing reforms and suggestions:

Over the years, the Government of The Gambia has introduced several policy reforms designed to enable the development of commercial and export-oriented agriculture as a catalyst to food insecurity and poverty reduction in the country. Among these reforms are the GNAIP II-FNS, 2019-2026, which envisions a vibrant commercially capable agricultural sector. Additionally, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy 2018¹⁸ envisions competitive fish trade and marketing through the adoption and implementation of safety and quality standards that enable access to international markets for Gambian fishery products.

In 2021, the PPS tabled the Plant Health Protection bill before the National Assembly to make provision for the modernization and proper management of plant health in international trade to facilitate market access. The Bill was expected to be adopted by the National Assembly before the end of 2025. However, this possibility has been postponed to the second quarter of the 2026 legislative year.

To facilitate the effective implementation of its mandate as the competent authority for food safety in The Gambia, measures should be taken to equip the FSQA with detailed regulations, guidelines and procedures. These would clarify the provisions of the Food Safety and Quality Act governing them and provide practical instructions for compliance. For regulations, a national framework for the identification and development of regulations required under the Food Safety and Quality Act is required to be put in place and operated on an ongoing basis. For guidelines and procedures, technical capacity should be created within the FSQA for their drafting and issuance.

¹⁸ <https://policies.gov.gm/f/caa99c3c-5bad-11ec-9b31-029254d29bb1>

3.3 Linked activities:

This project builds upon and complements previous initiatives in The Gambia focused on strengthening SPS capacities and enhancing agricultural trade:

‘Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security or Nutrition in The Gambia to Mitigate Migration Flows’ (funded by the European Union for a total amount of EUR 20 553 245 and implemented by FAO and national NGOs)

The overall objective of this intervention (2017-2023) was to contribute to sustainable growth in the agricultural sector and reduce food insecurity and malnutrition to mitigate migration flows to Europe. The specific objectives of the project were (i) increasing agricultural productivity/ diversification and access to food for improved nutritional status of pre- and primary school children; (ii) Increasing most vulnerable smallholders' participation in value chains and (iii) Enhancing information systems, crisis management & prevention.

COLEAD, PIP, EDES, FFM, FFM SPS, FFM+ and AGRINFO programmes (as part of the 11th EDF, total value of EUR 40 million for all ACP countries)

Since 2001, COLEAD has contributed to strengthening the horticultural and fisheries sectors in The Gambia and other ACP countries by supporting compliance with SPS regulations and standards. Through EU-funded programmes such as PIP, EDES and Fit For Market (FFM / FFM-SPS and FFM+), COLEAD has enhanced the technical capacities of public institutions and private actors, particularly in export-oriented value chains like mango and capsicum. These efforts have led to improved SPS compliance by acting at several levels, such as governance, operational processes, capacity building, and communication. The AGRINFO programme complemented these efforts by ensuring that partner countries remained informed and prepared for evolving EU regulatory frameworks, particularly in the areas of sustainability and SPS measures. The intervention resulted in the development and implementation of a mango dossier as a measure against fruit flies and consequently ensured steady and uninterrupted export of Gambian mangos to the UK and the EU.

West Africa Competitiveness Program “WACOMP” (*‘Increasing competitiveness through enhanced quality compliance along the onion value chain in The Gambia*¹⁹) (2020-2025, implemented by UNIDO and funded by the European Union)

The WACOMP rolled out on a regional and national level in the 15 ECOWAS Member States. In The Gambia, the project aimed to strengthen standards compliance capacity along the onion value chain to improve the food safety and quality characteristics of onion and onion derivatives for better market access, and to support undergirding trade support institutions, including quality infrastructure and food control institutions, which serve the horticultural sector. The project aimed to enhance firm-level competitiveness by strengthening the technical capacity of producer associations and relevant service providers to adequately support smallholders, particularly women-owned/operated enterprises.

West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP)(2025-2030),

Funded by the EU, the West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP) seeks to enhance and promote integrated and sustainable management of marine and coastal resources in West Africa, while fostering inclusive and competitive economic growth. The programme is

¹⁹ <https://www.itcilo.org/projects/wacomp>

implemented in partnership with ECOWAS and the 13 coastal countries of West Africa including the Gambia. Specifically, pillar two of the projects aligns with this twinning project as it seeks to strengthen regional and national blue economy policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities.

3.4 List of applicable *Union acquis*/standards/norms:

The project aligns with several components of the EU *acquis communautaire* relating to food safety, plant health, and quality infrastructure. These include:

- General Food Law Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 – principles of food safety and traceability²⁰.
- Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs²¹.
- Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 – specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin²².
- Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 / 2017/625 – official controls to ensure verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules²³.
- Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products²⁴.
- Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 (EU Deforestation Regulation) – relevant to value chain traceability²⁵.
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 22000 – Food safety management systems²⁶.
- Codex Alimentarius – for international harmonisation of food safety standards²⁷.
- WTO SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) and TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) Agreements – referenced in supporting export compliance.

Correspondence with Domestic Legislation:

The domestic framework will be harmonised through:

- The FSQA strategy and action plan, under implementation.
- Enhanced capacities for national certification, auditing, and inspection in accordance with EU and international norms.

3.5 Components and results per component

Component	Mandatory results
1. Development of legal, Regulatory and Policy frameworks	MR 1: Strengthened regulatory and institutional framework for SPS, food safety and quality control. Aim: Support alignment of the national SPS and food safety framework with EU and international standards. Indicative activities may include: • Review and gap analysis of existing legislation

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2002/178/oj/eng>

²¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2004/852/oj/eng>

²² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32004R0853>

²³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2004/882/oj/eng>

²⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/848/oj/eng>

²⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1115/oj/eng>

²⁶ <https://www.iso.org/iso-22000-food-safety-management.html>

²⁷ <https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>

	• Drafting/revision of laws, regulation and SOPs • Development of standards and guidelines • Stakeholder consultations and validation
2. Strengthening inspection and control systems	MR 2: Enhanced official import/export control, inspection, sampling and monitoring systems. Aim: Support the development of risk-based inspection and certification systems. Indicative activities may include: • Development of inspection and sampling procedures • Design of inspection and certification systems • Preparation of monitoring plans for selected value chains • Introduction of basic ICT tools for traceability and data management
3. Technical capacity and risk assessment	MR 3: Improved technical and operational capacity of FSQA staff in inspection, audit and risk-based control. Aim: Strengthen technical skills and risk assessment capacity of FSQA staff. Indicative activities may include: • Training in risk-based control, HACCP and audits • Capacity building in food safety risk assessment • Development of data management tools • Awareness and outreach activities

3.6 Means/input from the EU Member State Partner Administration:

The EU Member State partner is expected to bring:

- Technical expertise in harmonising national systems with EU standards.
- Institutional twinning experience in food safety governance and laboratory accreditation.
- Training curricula and delivery for:
 - Inspectors and auditors
- Advisory support and guidance on the design of traceability systems, including the identification of suitable ICT platforms and the development of plans and strategies for their adoption; noting that the development and implementation of any ICT systems must be contracted through separate means or undertaken directly by the FSQA, and that the expertise provided by the Member State must be available in-house within its public administration.
- Inputs for the communication strategy, including market awareness of certification and food safety compliance.
- Provision of model SOPs, enforcement mechanisms, and legal/institutional templates.
- Mentorship/peer exchange missions with EU competent authorities (e.g. European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), national food agencies).

Scheduling:

The detailed sequencing and timing of activities will be defined by the Twinning partners in the initial work plan and its subsequent updates.

The project is expected to follow a structured and progressive approach, which may include an initial phase of diagnostic assessment and planning, followed by implementation of capacity-building and system-strengthening measures, and a final phase focusing on consolidation, evaluation and sustainability of results.

Flexibility is retained to allow Member States to propose their own proven methodologies and implementation arrangements, ensuring complementarity with their national comparative advantages and experience in food safety, SPS compliance, and export-oriented quality systems.

3.6.1 Profile and tasks of the Project Leader:

The Member State Project Leader (PL) must be an official or assimilated agent with a sufficient rank to ensure an operational dialogue at political level. This should guarantee the capacity to lead the implementation of the project and the ability to mobilise the necessary expertise to support its efficient implementation. Involvement of the Member State PL is expected during the preparation of the Member State proposal and the PL's attendance at the selection meeting is obligatory, as well as their participation in the quarterly meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The Member State PL is supported by the Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA), who is a citizen from the EU-beneficiary(ies) that works on-site with the beneficiary administration.

Profile

Education:

- He/she must hold a master's degree in the field of Food Science, Food Safety, Public Health, Agricultural Sciences or any other field relevant to this Twinning Project, or a bachelor's degree in a field relevant to this Twinning Project. In the absence of a bachelor's degree or a degree in a field that is relevant to this Twinning Project, an additional eight years of relevant professional experience in a public administration (in addition to the specific experience required below) *(required)*

Experience:

- He/she must have a minimum of three years professional experience in the food safety/sanitary and/or phytosanitary sector, of which three years as a manager within a competent authority *(required)*

Skills:

- He/she has experience working with a low- or middle-income country, preferably in Africa *(desirable)*
- He/she must have proof of a contractual relationship with a public administration or a mandated body *(required)*;
- He/she must have experience in an EU-funded Twinning Project *(desirable)*;
- He/she must have a good knowledge of European SPS legislation *(required)*;
- He/she must have a good command of English Language (spoken and written) with a minimum level of B2 *(required)*;

- He/she must be proficient in standard computer tools/software (Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint®, Outlook®, videoconferencing, etc.) that are necessary to implement the project **(required)**.

Tasks

- In collaboration with the PL of the beneficiary country, design, supervision and coordination of overall project preparation.
- In collaboration with the PL of the Beneficiary country, ensure the overall management and coordination of the Twinning Project;
- Monitor the overall implementation of the project;
- Ensure effective use of project resources and inputs to achieve the expected results;
- Together with the beneficiary country's PL (and relevant EU delegations), co-chair the regular meetings of the PSC;
- Carry out administrative tasks within his/her area of responsibility;
- Take responsibility for interim and final reports together with the PL of the Beneficiary country;
- Ensure a robust steering policy;
- Participate in communication and visibility activities

3.6.2 Profile and tasks of the RTA:

The RTA is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the twinning project throughout its duration. The RTA is the backbone of the twinning project. The RTA must provide advice and technical assistance to the representatives of the Beneficiary administration. He/she keeps the beneficiary PL informed of the implementation and reports regularly to the Member State PL. During the project implementation, the RTA regularly updates the work plan to be transmitted to the PSC. The RTA will play a key role in coordinating contributions to the project. The RTA will be supported by short-term experts.

The RTA is the only Member State Expert to work full time in The Gambia. He/she will be based at the FSQA Headquarters. He/she will work on an ongoing and daily basis in the beneficiary country for the duration of the project. If deemed necessary and justifiable in order to implement the project, he/she may be required to carry out some short-term missions in the country (in accordance with the provisions of the Twinning Manual).

Profile

Education:

- He/she must hold master's degree in the field of Food science, Food Safety, Agronomy, Agriculture, Plant Health, or equivalent relevant professional experience, or an equivalent professional experience of eight years (in addition to the specific experience required below) **(required)**;

Experience:

- He/she must have previous experience in low- and middle-income country contexts, preferably in Africa **(desirable)**;
- He/she must have a minimum of three years of professional experience in the food safety/sanitary and/or phytosanitary sector **(required)**;
- Have experience in supporting the transposition or approximation of the Union acquis **(desirable)**;
- Have experience in managing a project in a similar field, preferably an international project **(required)**;

Skills:

- Have good knowledge of SPS-related European legislation and regulations *(required)*;
- Have good negotiation/administration and leadership skills *(desirable)*;
- Fluency in spoken and written English language (minimum level C1) *(required)*;
- Proficiency in standard computer tools/software (Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint®, Outlook®, videoconferencing, etc.) that are necessary to implement the project *(required)*.

Tasks of the RTA

The RTA must support the implementation of the different components of the project. He/she convenes the Steering Committee meetings and provides assistance to the different beneficiary structures with regard to the management and implementation of the project. The RTA's role specifically includes:

- Ensuring the daily implementation of the twinning project in the beneficiary country with contact points for the beneficiary structure (FSQA);
- Drafting the work plan in close cooperation with all actors and based on the expected results of the project;
- Ensure smooth coordination between the MS RTA and the beneficiary RTA
- Coordinating the interventions of other experts;
- Providing technical advice and support to representatives of the beneficiary administration of the twinning project;
- Ensuring the proper implementation of the various activities that are carried out;
- Organising all project activities, such as workshops, study visits, training and short-term expertise, etc.; in collaboration with the CLs, short-term experts and counterparts (see below);
- Preparing regular project monitoring meetings/briefings;
- Preparing quarterly and monthly reports (to be signed off by the PLs);
- Making recommendations to ensure optimum project results;
- Regularly updating the work plan and transmitting project updates to the PSC.

3.6.3 Profile and tasks of Component Leaders:

Given the structure of the project, three Component Leaders (CLs, key experts) are envisaged, each responsible for one component. Depending on the proposal of the Member State, these roles may be combined.

CLs will support the implementation of their respective components in close coordination with the RTA and under the supervision of the MS PL. They will contribute to the planning, organisation, coordination and monitoring of activities, as well as reporting on progress towards the mandatory results. Their involvement will be through short-term missions. They will also act as technical experts in their respective fields. It is recommended that they participate in Project Steering Committee meetings, as appropriate.

Profile**Education:**

- He/She must hold at least a master's degree in one of the following areas: Food Science, Food Safety, Agronomy, Agriculture, Plant Health, Public Health or another relevant field. Alternatively, they may possess a bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline,

accompanied by an additional five years of professional experience in lieu of advanced educational qualifications (*required*)

Experience:

- A minimum of three years of professional experience in the food safety, sanitary of phytosanitary sectors is required, with proven experience in leading or coordinating projects or programmes of a similar nature (*required*)
- Experience working in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa (*desirable*)
- Component Leaders should have experience in managing teams, coordinating activities and ensuring the delivery of planned outcomes within complex projects. Previous involvements in EU-funded projects is a plus (*desirable*)

Skills:

- Comprehensive understanding of European SPS legislation and regulations is essential for ensuring project alignment with EU standards (*required*)
- Strong organisational, administrative and leadership abilities are crucial for effective project component management (*required*)
- Good negotiation and communication skills are required, with a demonstrated ability to engage with diverse stakeholders (*desirable*)
- Proficient in English (minimum C1) and capable of clearly articulating ideas and strategies both verbally and in writing (*required*)
- Competence in using standard computer tools/software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, video-conferencing etc.) is necessary for efficient project management and reporting (*desirable*)

Tasks: Component Leaders are responsible for the overarching management of project activities associated with their specific component. Their role includes:

- Planning and coordinating a series of short-term missions in collaboration with the RTA ensuring close monitoring of activities and alignment with project objectives
- Organising, programming, and overseeing all component-related activities from inception through completion, ensuring that established goals and milestones are met
- Managing teams and experts assigned to their component, delivering expert guidance and ensuring cohesive operation
- Actively participating in quarterly Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, providing updates and insights on component progress and challenges
- Preparing detailed reports on component activities and outcomes, contributing to interim and final project evaluations
- Acting as a technical expert within their field, offering specialised knowledge and salutation to advance project's objectives
- Employing a collaborative approach to work harmoniously with other Component Leaders, the RTA, and the Member State Project Leader (PL) and partner country counterparts to ensure comprehensive project execution across all components.

3.6.4 Profile and tasks of other short-term experts:

For each activity that is linked to a component result, MS experts shall be mobilised in the form of short-term missions, with each expert acting within his/her own field of speciality. These missions will be scheduled and initiated by the RTA, in consultation with the

component leaders, and defined on a quarterly basis according to the work programme. The general tasks of short-term experts are specified below:

- Provide technical input in specific areas of project implementation including technical and institutional support, organisation of training workshops, drafting of training materials, drafting of required documents and other activities mentioned in their respective references;
- Provide support to beneficiary Departments in implementing activities and provide specific recommendations in their role as specialists;
- Provide the RTA with an activity report and the deliverables planned for the end of each mission.

The qualifications and experience required for short-term experts are as follows:

- He/she must hold a bachelor's degree in a field relevant to the mission or an additional eight years of relevant professional experience (in addition to the specific experience required below). Having a master's degree in a relevant field is desirable.
- Minimum three years of specific professional experience in the specific area of the project **(required)**;
- A good command of spoken and written English (C1) **(required)**;
- Proficiency in standard computer tools/software (Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint®, Outlook®, videoconferencing, etc.) that are necessary to implement the project **(required)**.

4. Budget

1 000 000 EUR

5. Implementation Arrangements

5.1 Implementing Agency responsible for tendering, contracting and accounting:

EU Delegation to The Gambia
Delegation-gambia@ccas.europa.eu

Program Officer:

Emile Henri Van Caenegem
Emile.van-caenegem@ccas.europa.eu

5.2 Institutional framework

The FSQA is the only beneficiary administration of this twinning project. Although not being a direct beneficiary, the FSQA will work in close collaboration with the PPS. More specifically, three technical departments will be Beneficiaries of the project:

- The Food Control Directorate of the Food Safety and Quality Authority;

- The Scientific Affairs Directorate of the Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia;
- The Regulatory and Enforcement Directorate of the Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia,

5.3 Counterparts in the Beneficiary administration:

5.3.1 Contact person:

Mary Johnson
Director of Regulatory Affairs, The Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia
103 Kairaba Avenue, Serrekunda, The Gambia

5.3.2 PL counterpart:

Mamodou Bah,
Director General, the Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia
103 Kairaba Avenue, Serrekunda, The Gambia

5.3.3 RTA counterpart:

Abdoulie Jallow
Principal Food Inspector
the Food Safety and Quality Authority of the Gambia
103 Kairaba Avenue, Serrekunda, The Gambia

6. Duration of the project

The overall execution period of the Twinning contract is 18 months. The implementation period of the Action will last 15 months. The execution period of the contract shall enter into force upon the date of notification by the Contracting Authority of the contract signed by all parties, whereas it shall end 3 months after the implementation period of the Action.

7. Management and reporting

7.1 Language

The official language of the project is the one used as contract language under the instrument (English). All formal communications regarding the project, including interim and final reports, shall be produced in the language of the contract.

7.2 Project Steering Committee

A project steering committee (PSC) shall oversee the implementation of the project. The main duties of the PSC include verification of the progress and achievements via-à-vis the mandatory results/outputs chain (from mandatory results/outputs per component to impact), ensuring good coordination among the actors, finalising the interim reports and discuss the updated work plan. Other details concerning the establishment and functioning of the PSC are described in the Twinning Manual.

7.3 Reporting

All reports shall have a narrative section and a financial section. They shall include as a minimum the information detailed in section 5.5.2 (interim reports) and 5.5.3 (final report) of the Twinning Manual. Reports need to go beyond activities and inputs. Two types of reports are foreseen in the framework of twinning: interim quarterly reports and a final report. An interim quarterly report shall be presented for discussion at each meeting of the PSC. The narrative part shall primarily take stock of the progress and achievements *via-à-vis* the mandatory results and provide precise recommendations and corrective measures to be decided by to ensure the further progress.

8. Sustainability

The long-term success of this twinning project depends not just on achieving its immediate goals, but on making sure the systems, skills, and reforms it supports remain in place and effective after the project ends. To ensure this, the project has been designed with sustainability at its core - across institutional, financial, human, and environmental dimensions.

From the beginning, the project will work closely with government institutions, the private sector, and other stakeholders to improve food safety and quality systems. This process will not be top-down. Instead, all the relevant actors will be involved in shaping the reforms, which increases the likelihood that the changes will be accepted, implemented, and maintained in the long run.

A key focus of sustainability is building national expertise. The project will provide technical training to inspectors, auditors and technical staff of the FSQA and other competent authorities. Where relevant, producers and value chain actors will be involved in awareness-raising, consultation and validation activities as users of the SPS system, in order to support effective implementation and uptake of reformed regulatory and inspection frameworks. But rather than stopping there, the training programs and materials developed will be institutionalised so they can be used to train future generations. In this way, capacity building becomes a continuous process, not a one-off event.

Importantly, the project also takes into account environmental sustainability. By promoting better farming and food processing practices - such as organic production, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), and compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) - the project encourages more responsible use of land, water, and chemicals. These practices help protect ecosystems, reduce pollution, and improve the long-term productivity of the land. Additionally, introducing traceability systems and encouraging certification supports more climate-resilient supply chains, which are increasingly important in both domestic and export markets.

Communication and public awareness will further reinforce sustainability. The project will develop messages and materials that will continue to be used by public agencies even after the project ends. These will help maintain momentum and understanding among farmers, food processors, and consumers.

9. Crosscutting issues

The twinning project actively incorporates and promotes crosscutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience in the following ways:

- **Gender and Equal Opportunity:** The project ensures inclusive participation of women and youth by ensuring inclusive participation of women and youth through the involvement of female inspectors, regulators and technical staff, and by ensuring that awareness and communication activities effectively reach women-led producer organisations and MSMEs. Special attention will be given to ensure gender-disaggregated data collection, and promoting women's leadership in food safety and quality roles.
- **Human Rights:** By strengthening food safety governance and consumer protection, the project upholds the right to safe and nutritious food, access to information, and public health. Institutional reforms and transparency mechanisms contribute to rule of law and accountability.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** Promoting GAPs and sustainable value chains reduces environmental degradation, pesticide misuse, and water contamination. The inclusion of organic certification and support for implementation of the EUDR directly promotes climate-smart agriculture and reduces the carbon footprint of agricultural exports.
- **Minorities and Regional Inclusion:** Activities will be designed to ensure regional balance in training and support, reaching remote producers and marginalised areas. ICT tools and communication strategies will consider local languages and access levels, including radio-based outreach.

10. Conditionality and sequencing

This twinning project is not dependent on the completion of any external procurement-based actions. Its results can be achieved independently but will complement other EU or national initiatives, including:

- Capacity building under TAIEX;
- Ongoing SPS-related infrastructure investments;
- Implementation of the national FSQA Strategy and broader quality infrastructure reforms.

However, certain assumptions must be met for optimal results:

- Functional commitment from public institutions (e.g., FSQA, PPS);
- Minimum laboratory infrastructure in place (building or space ready for equipping);
- Availability of focal points in ministries and agencies for coordination.

11. Indicators for performance measurement

Below are **performance indicators** aligned with the mandatory results (as outlined in the simplified logframe and Section 3.5):

Mandatory result 1: Strengthened regulatory and institutional framework for SPS, food safety and quality control

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Timeline
Key SPS/food safety legal and regulatory instruments revised or developed and aligned with international/EU standards	0	At least 3	By the end of implementation period
Institutional and regulatory framework (including procedures and coordination mechanisms) improved and operational	No	Yes	By the end of the implementation period

Mandatory result 2: Enhanced official import/export control, inspection, sampling and monitoring systems

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Timeline
Risk-based inspection and control system proposed/presented	No	Yes	By end of implementation period
Official inspection and monitoring plans implemented for selected priority value chains	0	At least 2	By end of implementation period

Mandatory result 3: Improved technical and operational capacity of FSQA staff in inspection, audit and risk-based control

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Timeline
FSQA staff demonstrate improved capacity in SPS control and audit (based on assessments)	No	Yes	By end of implementation period
Number of FSQA staff trained in SPS-related areas	0	At least 30	By end of implementation period

All indicators will be monitored via:

- Training completion reports;
- Ministry/agency records;
- Project progress reports;
- User data from traceability tools and outreach campaigns.

12. Facilities available

The following facilities and logistical support will be provided by the beneficiary administration to the RTA and their team:

- Office Space:
 - Fully furnished and secure office for the RTA within a partner government institution (e.g. FSQA or MoA building).
 - Desk space for up to 3 staff with basic furniture and internet access.
- Meeting and Training Facilities:
 - Access to meeting rooms for internal and stakeholder coordination.
 - Government and partner training centres will be made available for hosting:
 - Technical workshops
 - Seminars
 - Capacity-building activities
 - Additional arrangements with tertiary institutions for joint training sessions.
- Equipment and Supplies:
 - Basic IT infrastructure (laptops/desktops, printers, stable internet).
 - Access to project vehicles or transport for in-country missions.

- Audio-visual equipment (projectors, flipcharts) for training and communication purposes.
- Security and Utilities:
 - The office space will be within a secure compound with basic access control.
 - Utilities including water, electricity and internet will be ensured.
- Soft Infrastructure:
 - Support staff (e.g. administrative assistant, translator) as needed.
 - Access to government communication channels (e.g. national radio, social media pages) to support awareness-raising and outreach.

ANNEXES TO PROJECT FICHE

1. The Simplified Logical framework matrix
2. The Gambia Food Safety & Quality Act 2011
3. FSQA Strategic Plan 2026-2030
4. Final Validated National Food Safety Policy of The Gambia

Annex 1: Simplified Logical Framework

	Description	Indicators (Baseline -> Target)	Sources of verification	Risks	Assumptions (external to project)
Overall Objective	Contribute to the transformation of the horticultural sector in The Gambia into a resilient, equitable and nutrition-sensitive agri-food system.	- Export performance of the horticultural sector improved - Reduction in SPS-related border rejections	National statistics, trade data, international reports	External market shocks: climate impacts	Stable trade environment, continued sector investment
Specific Objective (Outcome)	Strengthen the SPS system, food safety and quality management capacities of the FSQA in the horticultural sector	- SPS control and inspection system functioning in line with international standards (No -> Yes) - Compliance of export consignments with SPS requirements improved (Low -> Improved)	FSQA reports, inspection records, export data	Limited institutional uptake, coordination challenges	Continued government commitment, stakeholder cooperation
Mandatory Result 1	Strengthened regulatory and institutional framework for SPS, food safety and quality control	- Key SPS legal/regulatory instruments revised or aligned (0 -> at least 3) - Institutional and regulatory framework operational (No -> Yes)	Official legal documents, FSQA records	Delays in legal adoption	Stakeholder engagement in reform process

Mandatory Result 2	Enhanced official import/export control, inspection, sampling and monitoring systems	- Risk-based inspection system proposed/presented (No -> Yes) - Inspection and monitoring plans implemented for priority value chains (0 -> at least 2)	Inspection reports, system documentation	Limited technical resources, weak inter-agency coordination	Effective collaboration between institutions
Mandatory Result 3	Improved technical and operational capacity of FSQA staff in inspection, audit and risk-based control	- FSQA staff demonstrate improved SPS control capacity (No -> Yes) - Number of staff trained in SPS-related areas (0 -> at least 30)	Training reports, assessment results	Staff turnover, limited absorption capacity	Staff retention, institutional support to training

