



Call for proposals:

Food loss in international trade in Asia-Pacific: Country case studies and implications for trade facilitation

(deadline for application: 31 March 2021)

United Nations ESCAP is seeking up to three separate research consultants (or up to three teams of consultants, henceforth the terms “consultant” refers to either an individual or a team of consultants) to carry out 3 separate country case studies on food loss in international trade - one in **Bangladesh**, one in **Thailand**, and one in **any other Asia-Pacific economy** member of ESCAP. A consultancy budget of up to USD 10,000 is available for each case study, including literature review, development of analytical framework, data collection, analysis and implications for trade facilitation implementation.

Background

The seminal 2011 FAO report estimated that that as much as a third of the world’s food is wasted every year.¹ More recent studies put the amount of food wasted at 931 tonnes, or 74kg per capita per year globally.¹ Food loss contributes to hunger, food insecurity, inequality and causes direct economic losses. It has also been suggested that if food loss were a country, it would be the third largest contributor to greenhouse emissions globally.² As such, Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 aims to halve food waste and reduce food loss by 2030.

The vast majority of food waste is estimated to occur at the household level, followed by food service and retail sectors.³ However, the scale of food loss in international trade is little understood. Indeed, FAO (2011) report suggested that the “impact of growing international trade on food losses still has to be better assessed.” However, it is understood to be an important contributor to food loss, and international trade cooperation or free trade agreements to reduce delays in moving perishable food products across borders are recommended.⁴

ESCAP (2018) points out that one measurable aspects of food loss is through border rejections due to non-compliance with national standards/non-tariff measures,⁵ as food imports that fail to meet requirements are either returned or destroyed.⁶ However, ESCAP & ITC (2019) report further suggests that it is most often domestic procedural obstacles at home countries that are burdensome, and

¹ FAO (2011). Global Food Losses and Food Waste: Extend, Causes and Prevention. Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/i2697e/i2697e.pdf>

² UNEP (2021). Food Waste Index Report 2021. Available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35280/FoodWaste.pdf>

³ FAO (2019). The State of Food and Agriculture; Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction. Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6030en/ca6030en.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ESCAP (2018). Facilitating Compliance to Food Safety and Food Quality for Cross-border Trade. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/facilitating-compliance-food-safety-and-quality-cross-border-trade>

⁶ The requirements can be private, as in the case of companies, for which data is not available, or legal requirements, where some data is available such as through US FDA system and EU’s RASFF. See FAO (n.d.) Border rejections. Available at <http://www.fao.org/in-action/globefish/border-rejections/en/>

therefore have the potential to cause food loss.⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests that unnecessary delays at borders are not uncommon. For example, an expert group meeting on non-tariff measures noted that border delays are particularly detrimental to perishable goods, implying that there are opportunities to reduce food loss.⁸ As such, streamlining border procedures – both outward and inwards – are assumed to be the main focus of interest.

Careful balance, however, must be ensured as inadequate SPS measures can facilitate the cross-border spread of pests and diseases and can potentially have a detrimental effect on food security and cause significant economic losses (e.g. African swine fever). Indeed, many technical regulations on food imports are very necessary and positively contribute to sustainable development.⁹

Expected output

A report on food loss (as opposed to food waste, see footnote 3 for reference) in international trade, including extent, causes and proposed solutions, focusing on one or more selected perishable agricultural product(s). Each case study is expected to include analysis of relevant food import and export regulation and procedures and impact on food loss, and feature evidence-based and practical recommendations/guidelines on food loss-reducing import and export regulation and procedures (assuming evidence is found during the research that current trade regulation and procedures indeed result in significant food losses). It is hoped that the studies would contribute to understand not only the target countries' and products specific circumstances, but generate lessons learnt that can be applied more generally to other products, including providing estimates of the aggregate extent of food losses in international trade in the pilot countries, as well as in other countries.

Target length of the report: 5000 words, excluding tables, figures, references and appendices, free of grammatical and stylistic errors. Based on previous experience, it is expected the report would undergo several rounds of peer reviews, and the selected researcher/research team should be ready to address feedback in a timely manner.

It is expected that the engaged consultant(s) will carry out background secondary research of relevant national statistics, literature and legislation, as well as carry out consultations with stakeholders, including but not limited to, the private sectors engaged in international trade of the selected product, industry associations, and government officials (such as customs, export promotions, standardization, etc). The engaged consultant will be responsible for obtaining any necessary approvals and consent from participants to use the information gathered to be used in a published report.

Application process

To apply and/or for any questions, please email to (**before 31 March 2021**):
Kravchenkoa@un.org, copied to nattabhon.narongkachavana@un.org

Please include in the subject line: "FOOD LOSS FROM TRADE STUDY PROPOSAL". In 500 words or less, describe your proposed approach and scope of research, as well as proposed budget/fee, and which one(s) of up to 3 country case studies you propose to conduct. Please also attach your/your team members' CVs and samples of past publications.

Selection will be informed, tentatively, by 15 April 2021.

⁷ ESCAP & ITC (2019). Company perspective on non-tariff measures in Asia-Pacific. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/company-perspectives-non-tariff-measures-asia-pacific>

⁸ ESCAP (2019). Report of the meeting of the Expert Group Meeting on "Navigating Non-Tariff Measures toward Sustainable Development" Available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Report_EGM_APTIR_2019.pdf (Mr. Allwyn Netto, p.6)

⁹ ESCAP & UNCTAD (2019). Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: navigating non-tariff measures towards sustainable development. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/publications/APTIR2019>