

Foreword



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East Asian countries have been among the winners of globalization. In recent decades, a number of East Asian economies have, famously, managed to achieve export-led growth and been recognized for increasing their share in global industrial output and manufacturing trade. This has resulted in more domestic employment, wealth creation and poverty reduction. What has received less attention is that a number of these countries have also been quite successful in expanding their agricultural and food exports.

Yet, even East Asian countries continue to face challenges that prevent them from reaping the full benefits of market opportunities in both international and intra-regional trade. To do so, countries need to comply consistently with product quality and safety standards which play an increasingly important role in shaping international trade flows and which are among the main gatekeepers to accessing global markets or supply chains.

In this context, since 2008, UNIDO has taken up the task of systematically analyzing the challenges faced by developing countries as regards compliance with trade standards in the agri-food sector. The results of this work have been widely disseminated and published in UNIDO's *Trade Standards Compliance (TSC) Report* series and its *Trade Standards Compliance Footprints*.

Building upon a history of joint research on a variety of development issues including trade capacity-building since 2007, IDE-JETRO and UNIDO have recently entered into a fruitful collaboration to regionalize this trade standards analysis as a complement to the global TSC work. Such regionalized analyses take specific regional circumstances and conditions into account more effectively, which in turn allows for a more specific tailoring of policy recommendations. In preparing these studies, IDE-JETRO is contributing its expertise on supply chains and the trade challenges faced by developing countries in various regions and particularly in East Asia.

The publication of the present UNIDO–IDE-JETRO *Regional Trade Standards Compliance Report for East Asia* represents the first outcome of this collaboration. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Brighton, United Kingdom, the main partner for the global TSC work, also contributed to this research.

With the publication of this regional TSC Report, our organizations aim to enhance transparency on trade standards and to increase awareness and understanding of compliance challenges among all stakeholders in East Asian countries, thereby facilitating and supporting the identification of country needs and priorities.

This TSC Report also represents a strategic decision-making support and policy guidance tool. It is intended to assist policymakers, private sector actors, donor agencies, and technical assistance organizations in taking more informed decisions regarding how to best strengthen the trade standards compliance performance of East Asian countries and how and where to make related investments. The report, thus, aims to support these stakeholders in the design and development of capacity-building programmes in the fields of trade and compliance.

We intend that this pioneering work by IDE-JETRO and UNIDO will lead to a series of regional reports. We are confident that the present and future regional TSC Reports will prove to be useful resource documents and provide important advocacy support for “smarter” and more targeted trade capacity-building and related quality infrastructure development. Ultimately, it is our hope that these reports and analyses, as global public goods, will contribute to stimulating trade and to increasing both the safety of consumers and the prosperity of producers in East Asia.