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Q1: Respondent details

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Q2: Country or Customs territory

- INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Q3: Organization

Public sector

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Q4: Title of case story

T4SD: Sustainability Map: Helping businesses chart a path to more sustainable trade

Q5: Case story focus

E-commerce development and efforts to bridge the "digital divide".

Q6: Case story abstract

Sustainability Map is the new online gateway to help businesses chart the path to more sustainable trade. Developed by ITC's Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) programme as a free and user-friendly platform, it offers access to wide-ranging information for trade-related sustainability initiatives and standards.

Building on well-established online tools, such as Standards Map, the platform will offer new features such as the Sustainability Network. Sustainability Map enables users, regardless of their position in the value chain, to better understand the sustainability initiatives landscape and to connect with business partners. Sustainability Map will be launched on 1 February 2017.

Q7: Who provided funding?

Bilateral donor, Multilateral organization, NGO

Q8: Project/Programme type

Multi-country

Q9: Your text case story

The challenge

Driven by demand from sustainability-conscious consumers, large buying and trading companies have shifted towards responsible sourcing strategies, especially in the agriculture and textiles/apparel sectors. They demand more socially responsible and environmentally sustainable production methods – methods that are being increasingly implemented by companies worldwide.

Here's where the problems arise. For buyers or traders, showing evidence of such sustainable commitments throughout their value chains is not straightforward. This lack of transparency has created confusion in the market, exacerbated by costs associated with the rising complexity of sustainability requirements (or, on the flip side, 'greenwashing' that seeks to benefit from an environmentalist halo but delivers few real benefits). For upstream producers, especially smaller ones, the cost of complying with multiple conformity assessments and audits, and the growing number of new standards and codes of conduct, is daunting.

The solution

Sustainability Map includes four main features:

Sustainability Standards

- Enables users to analyse standards-related data and self-assess their sustainability-related performance. The site currently covers more than 220 initiatives applicable across more than 80 sectors and 180 countries.

Sustainability Network

- Virtual marketplace that allows users to share their business and sustainability profiles with buyers, traders, standards organizations, certification bodies, financiers, and others.

Sustainability Community

- Provides users with access to capacity-building information and contacts for sustainable agriculture, forestry and aquaculture.

Sustainability Trends

- Offers a comprehensive overview of production-related market information on some of the major sustainability-related standards.

The future

By generating data analytics and diagnostics based on the information shared by these upstream actors, the project will support evidence-based decision-making. The goal is to build transparency and resilience in global supply chains and demonstrate upstream improvements in sustainable and responsible production. At its core, Sustainability Map aims to enable small-scale farmers, agribusinesses and small and medium-sized enterprises to derive greater benefits from participating in global value chains. This project will initially focus on the agro-food and textile-apparel supply chains, with other sectors envisioned to come onboard later.

Q10: Lessons learnt

Sustainability Map is intended to contribute to efficiency in global value chains by demonstrating an openness to sharing good practices, data, and fostering trust and inclusiveness at all levels of the value chain. During the development stages, ITC confronted the complexities of mapping value chains. Issues such as hardware/software constraints, literacy levels, fluency in IT system use and lack of internet/broadband all contribute to making it difficult to reach out to the lowest levels of value chains. To address connectivity issues, the latest technologies are used to enable offline data capture; visual questionnaires are used to compensate for literacy issues. By building upon the preexisting user base of our tools and working with specific firms and governments, we have found that there is great interest in the tool and partners will be able to help assist in the dissemination and user onboarding process.

Access the site as of 1 February 2017 at: www.sustainabilitymap.org
