

Pilot for Bangladesh/India (Tripura) Advocacy Dialogue to Reduce NTBs

Dhaka, Bangladesh- August 8, 2017 and New Delhi, India – August 17, 2017

CUTS International (India) and Unnayan Shamannay (Bangladesh)

Supported by Chemonics International Inc.

Background Note

India and Bangladesh have natural and cultural complementarities in terms of producing goods for everyday consumption. Given their geographic, linguistic and cultural proximity and hence, consumption patterns, it makes economic sense to trade in agricultural and other products across borders. However, in addition to the infrastructure bottlenecks which remains one of the major hurdles to higher cross-border trade between the countries, non-tariff factors such as regulatory barriers, non-harmonisation of standards and certification requirements across borders, lack of institutional as well as stakeholder capacity etc., negatively impact transboundary cooperation and exchange. Thus, it becomes important to weigh relevant regulations against consumer gains and look at possible ways out to work around such regulations so that consumer gains can be maximized without threatening concerns for healthy and safety.

Recently, Chemonics, with support from AMEG, organized a Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) Action Planning Workshop (December 2016) at Dhaka, which identified and prioritized many critical NTBs for trade between India and Bangladesh. CUTS has also completed a case study supported by the Asia Foundation which has identified a specific set of agricultural commodities, such as potato, green chili, tomato, and brinjal (aubergine), as important opportunities to:

- 1) legitimize and potentially increase bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the Northeast Indian State of Tripura;
- 2) increase commercial connectivity between these two areas; and
- 3) reduce the cost of these important constituents of consumer diets in the region.

Given this backdrop, CUTS International (India) and Unnayan Shamannay (Bangladesh) are partnering, with support from Chemonics International Inc., to organise two dialogue events — one in Dhaka, Bangladesh (August 8, 2017) and one in New Delhi, India (August 17, 2017).

The objective of these two events is to establish cross-border bilateral partnerships to address NTBs for a specific set of agricultural commodities, such as potato, green chili, tomato, and brinjal (eggplant), and create a framework for continued bilateral dialogues to address NTBs. It will aim to bring together relevant regulators, government agencies, private players, researchers and experts to do focus deliberations on addressing NTBs in trade of these identified four products in particular and for agricultural commodities in general. The dialogue events will provide a platform for identifying and agreeing to specific approaches for the removal of identified NTBs, developing and agreeing to a step-by-step action plan for the removal of NTBs and explore the possibility of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) between the two nations for trade on agricultural commodities.