Highlights

FAO celebrates milestones of OCOP initiative and aims for scaled implementation during the second meeting for OCOP Steering Committee on 26 April 2024. The committee, chaired by FAO Director-General Mr Qu Dongyu, highlighted the initiative's progress, and emphasized the importance of prioritizing visibility, resource mobilization, and synergy with other FAO initiatives. Examples from different countries showcased successful strategies, ranging from sustainable production to technological integration and private sector involvement. The committee acknowledged the commitment from countries, with 16 demonstration countries leading the way. The meeting was moderated by FAO Deputy Director-General Ms Beth Bechdol and attended by Steering Committee members and relevant observers.

FAO launches new global project to scale-up OCOP initiative. Stakeholders from different countries convened virtually on 3 April 2024 to launch an OCOP global project expanding the initiative further. Funded by the FAO Flexible Voluntary Contribution, the USD 1 million project will be implemented from March 2024 to December 2025 supporting 11 countries with demonstration projects to promote their special agricultural products. The countries are: Algeria, Belize, Bhutan, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Nepal, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, and Zambia. The inception workshop facilitated discussions on project objectives, implementation challenges, and country-specific priorities. The workshop concluded with a call for collective actions for successful implementation of OCOP initiative.

Current status of the OCOP initiative

- 85 countries applied to promote 54 special agricultural products.
- Over USD 18 million received to implement OCOP field projects in 60 countries.
- 16 demonstration countries are leading and facilitating the OCOP implementation in other countries.
- Strengthening synergies among OCOP and other FAO initiatives is a priority for global implementation.
Implementation and Coordination

President of Kazakhstan presents iconic Almaty Aport apple to FAO in support of OCOP initiative. FAO Director-General Mr QU Dongyu and President H.E Kassym-Jomart Tokayev met on 19 January 2024 to discuss deepening partnership between FAO and Kazakhstan. The President highlighted his country’s participation in OCOP initiative emphasizing the government’s commitment to developing sustainable production and trade chains for apple. He presented FAO Director-General with the renowned Almaty Aport apple, symbolizing Kazakhstan’s recognition to the OCOP initiative. Director-General affirmed FAO’s readiness to further strengthen the partnership.

FAO establishes biological control plan to protect Albanian chestnuts. As part of the OCOP initiative, Albania has launched a project in February 2024 to monitor Asian chestnut gall wasps, develop a biological control plan, and train local farmers and extension officers. The invasive pest threatens Albania’s chestnut-growing regions, reducing fruit production by up to 70 percent. With Albania’s Ministry of Agriculture, FAO is designing the biological control programme and relevant guidelines. These efforts mark a milestone in safeguarding chestnut trees and supporting socioeconomic development in the country.

African countries share OCOP success stories during the FAO Regional Management Team Meeting in Ghana. The meeting, held in February 2024, included discussion on the OCOP initiative where countries shared their success stories: Ghana’s efforts in training and empowering communities to promote soybeans; Malawi’s success in enhancing the banana value chain; Lesotho’s strategic investments in technologies boosting potato yields; and increased teff production in Ethiopia through capacity building of farmers. These achievements underscored the OCOP’s contribution to transformation of agrifood systems across Africa.

Tajikistan presents apricot products during the president’s visit to FAO on 23 April 2024. The President of Tajikistan H.E Emomali Rahmon met with Director-General Mr QU Dongyu in Rome to discuss enhancing collaboration. The President emphasized the government’s commitment to food security, and transitioning to a green economy. He highlighted the importance of FAO initiatives including the OCOP initiative which supports promotion of apricot as Tajikistan’s special agricultural product. Apricot products were showcased at FAO headquarters during the visit. The President presented the Director-General with a local apricot tree to be planted in the FAO Park in Rome.

Asia and the Pacific countries prioritize leveraging science and innovation for OCOP implementation. At the 37th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific, ministers from Bhutan, Nepal, and Fiji emphasized the importance of leveraging science and innovation for OCOP implementation. They shared country achievements in promoting their special agricultural products, noting the impact of OCOP on nutrition security and economic development. FAO Assistant Director-General, Beth Crawford underscored the pivotal role of science and innovation in improving agrifood systems.

China launches OCOP initiative to promote sustainable tea industry. The country has launched the OCOP China Tea Programme and International Tea Day Campaign 2024 on 12 April in Guangdong province. The programme focuses on eco-friendly and low-carbon production approaches, technology integration, and market development. It aims to promote industry productivity, and green transformation to market high-quality Chinese tea globally. Led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the programme involves the Agricultural Trade Promotion Centre and the Tea Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

Communication and Partnerships

Innovative tools to boost undervalued nutritious foods across Asia-Pacific. FAO and China's Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) to employ the Geographical Indications, Environment & Sustainability tool for the OCOP initiative in the Asia-Pacific region. This innovative tool links consumers and growers of Special Agricultural Products (SAP) to promote their unique qualities and cultural significance. The agreement aims to enhance OCOP implementation by building capacities, helping technology transfer, and offering real-time data on geographical and environmental aspects of SAPs.

OCOP webinar explores the development of millets in India. The international webinar was organized on 18 April by FAO in collaboration with the government of India as part of the FAO OCOP webinar series. It was attended by representatives from academia, government bodies, private sectors, and farmer associations from different countries. Experts and industry actors shared knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned in the sustainable production, processing, and marketing of millets.

Webinar on amaranth in Latin America. An international webinar was organized on 25 April 2024 in collaboration with the government of Mexico and various stakeholders across Latin America. The webinar provided a platform for experts and industry actors from Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Plurinational State of Bolivia to share insights and experiences in the sustainable production, processing, and marketing of amaranth in the Latin America region.

*Learn more about the OCOP Initiative [https://www.fao.org/one-country-one-priority-product/ocop-global-action/en]*

Stories from countries

Apricot - the golden heart of Tajikistan

For centuries, apricots have been a cornerstone of culture and agriculture of Tajikistan. With around 10 percent of the world’s apricot orchards gracing its lands, the country reigns supreme as a producer of these golden fruits. Apricots are a key source of income as more than 100 000 people depend on apricot production, processing, and export for their livelihoods. Fresh and dried apricots are a major agricultural export, generating significant income for these communities. Apricots are an integral part of the diet in Tajikistan, cherished not only for their taste but also for their numerous health benefits.

The secret behind Tajikistan’s apricot success lies in its ideal climate as the drylands and mountainous regions provide the perfect conditions for these sun-loving fruits to thrive. Fresh apricots have a short shelf life, so the local farmers have perfected the art of drying them, extending their enjoyment and marketability. They can be transformed into delectable juices, jams, or canned delights, extending their enjoyment.

The future of the country’s apricot industry looks promising. FAO, through the One Country One Priority Product initiative, is actively supporting the country to sustain this key sector. By optimizing the production methods and value chain, and exploring new markets, Tajikistan can ensure its “golden hearts” continue to nourish and empower its people for generations to come.