Dear readers,

Welcome to the first edition of the One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) Initiative’s Newsletter, which covers progress made since its launch in September 2021. We are pleased to share details of the Highlights, Implementation and Coordination, Communication and Partnership, and Field Story. We urge all OCOP supporters to share this newsletter widely within their network to showcase what has been achieved and incentivize more engagement with the OCOP initiative.

This initiative aims to develop sustainable value chains for Special Agricultural Products (SAPs) and support small and family farmers reap the full benefits of a global market and ultimately help the transformation of current agrifood systems. We believe that prioritizing SAPs can create a world of difference in people’s lives, while also addressing more than one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities).

We echo the words of the FAO Director-General, QU Dongyu, to describe the OCOP: “Promoting sustainable development through better production; Improving competitiveness by branding national products.”

Thank you for embarking with us on this global, regional, and national endeavour with OCOP. We look forward to working together to ensure the continuous success in all the activities of the OCOP, and we wish you good health, prosperity, and happy reading!

Jingyuan Xia
Director, Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP)
OCOP Executive Secretary

53 SAPs that cover field and horticultural crops as well as forest and livestock products. The first-round demonstration project countries inclusive of all five FAO regions have been identified for the implementation of OCOP, and consist of Bangladesh, Egypt, Malawi, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uzbekistan promoting sustainable development of jackfruit, date palm, banana, cacao and sweet cherry, respectively.

• The OCOP Country Projects were launched on 3 November 2022 during the First FAO Global Conference on Sustainable Plant Production. Updates on the OCOP were provided by the Director-General, QU Dongyu, and the Deputy Director-General, Beth Bechdol, to FAO Members, FAO Programme Committee, the FAO Council in November-December 2022, and the FAO Global Think Labs on 13 December 2022.

• Regionally, the OCOP initiative was launched in all five FAO regions from March-July 2022, with the active participation of ministers, senior government officials, technical institutions, private sector, donors, and FAO partners.

• At the country level, nominations of SAPs were received from 82 countries across the five FAO regions to promote

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Implementation and Coordination

- Five Regional Coordination meetings were conducted with the participation of the OCOP Regional Focal Points, to discuss the implementation of OCOP at the regional and national levels.

- Two National Coordination meetings were held with the participation of the OCOP National Focal Points in the five demonstration countries to discuss the implementation of OCOP.

Field Story

Banana is a very important food crop in Malawi. However, 30,000 ha of banana plantations, representing 90 percent of total production are lost, due to the Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV) disease that is causing devastating losses since 2004. To meet the national demand for bananas, the country imports a minimum of 20,000 metric tonnes annually from the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique, which is the equivalent forex loss of USD 8 million.

In addition, banana crops are affected by abiotic stresses, but lack modern crop management technologies and an efficient processing industry. The Government of Malawi has requested FAO to support the development of their banana sector, and has been selected as one of five demonstration countries under the OCOP initiative.

In July 2022, Jingyuan Xia, NSP Director, conducted a site visit to the Malawian banana plantations and he also presented the OCOP at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi.

An assessment of the banana value chain was discussed with the Government of Malawi as an initial step to launch a Banana Sector Development Plan in Malawi. The OCOP Secretariat will provide support to the development of a technical network including national researchers, agriculture and extension specialists, farmers and agribusiness.