

USDA-funded Bangladesh Trade Facilitation Project

WTO and Trade Facilitation Consultant

Assignment Budget Code:	BTF201 Trade Harmonization
Assignment Manager:	Fuad M Khalid Hossen, Deputy Chief of Party
Assignment Title:	WTO and Trade Facilitation Consultant
Assignment Dates:	Starting from March 2025
Estimated Level of Effort:	24 Workdays
Assignment Location:	Dhaka, Bangladesh

I. About the Bangladesh Trade Facilitation Project:

The Bangladesh Trade Facilitation project (BTF), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), supports the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to expand regional and international trade in agricultural goods. The five-year project is implemented by Land O'Lakes Venture37. USDA initiated the project in response to GoB's request for technical support from the development partners to achieve the WTO-TFA Category C measures covering Test Procedures, Risk Management, Perishable Goods, and WTO Notifications and Formalities.

II. Background

The BTF project aims to address systemic constraints and trade hinderances impacting import and export procedures for food products and agriculture commodities. Project objectives include reforms to existing legislation and developing new legislative tools to facilitate trade. The Import Policy Order (IPO) is an overarching and guiding legislative order that directs Bangladesh Customs on procedures and compliance steps for clearing import consignments. The IPO clauses are based on other existing legislation and regulations, some of which have not been updated for many years and may have clauses that are not harmonized with international standards or best practices or could be considered a "technical barrier to trade".

Simplifying and reforming the IPO can contribute to streamlining clearance procedures for imported finished goods and consumer products, and is, likewise, significantly important for the competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports because imported inputs (e.g. livestock and aquaculture feed for shrimp industry) and raw materials (e.g. cotton for garment industry) play a major role. The present structure of the IPO document is complex with about 100 pages and an orientation that is neither organized by HS Code, nor organized according to the industrial sector. This makes it difficult for Customs officers—who are based at ports and refer to the document multiple times every day—to assess compliance or procedural requirements for a particular consignment or type of product.

BTF's first objective is to support GoB, principally the Ministry of Commerce, to modernize the IPO, ensure that compliance clauses are based on science and international standards and practices, and to improve its organization and ready accessibility for Customs officials and traders. As an outcome the IPO would be reformed, reorganized, and put into a searchable digital format.

For GoB to fully implement and comply with the measures of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) there are many legislative and regulatory instruments and procedures directed by the legislation or regulation that must be amended. BTF identified about 60 agencies and other entities that are involved with cross-border trading processes. The GoB agencies are guided by and responsible for administering 100s of rules and regulations. To reform, updated, or amend these legislative instruments, while critical, would be extremely time-consuming.

BTF's second objective is to support GoB, principally the Ministry of Commerce, to advocate for, draft, and introduce a new and overarching Trade Facilitation Act. This Act is a tool that the Ministry

of Commerce could utilize to expedite implementation of trade facilitation measures in the country. The proposed Trade Facilitation Act would enable or empower the Ministry of Commerce, through legislation, to encourage and hold other agencies accountable for implementation of the TFA. Moreover, there are provisions in the GoB regulatory regime such that the Trade Facilitation Act can be implemented using an automated system to address any systemic delays. As such the proposed legislation would be called the Electronic Trade Facilitation Act.

To support implementation of the two trade-facilitating initiatives, BTF seeks a WTO and Trade Facilitation Consultant. The Consultant will provide expert and practical advice to the BTF Technical Team and Ministry of Commerce officers coordinating and implementing WTO and Import and Export rules and regulations and will facilitate discussions with the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant policymakers to take the initiatives forward.

III. Objective and Tasks:

The objectives of the Assignment are to (i) prepare substantive arguments and present proposals and an implementation plan to modernize the IPO and introduce an automated tool and (ii) to contribute ideas, proposals, and guidance to draft, and seek approval for, an Electronic Trade Facilitation Act.

Specific tasks under this assignment include but are not limited to:

- Organize and lead meetings with the leadership of the Ministry of Commerce to present the idea of complete restructuring and reform of the Import Policy Order;
- Coordinate dialogue with relevant stakeholders for designing and implementing IPO reform;
- Guide legal and other experts contracted by BTF to draft the IPO in line with the objective;
- Coordinate with the Ministry of Commerce for formal approval of the IPO;
- Organize and lead consultation with the Ministry of Commerce for drafting the Electronic Trade Facilitation Act;
- Coordinate with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to get buy-in for the development of the Act;
- Work closely with other Consultants engaged by BTF to guide the drafting of the Act; and
- Advocate with the Ministry of Commerce for finalization of the Act.

IV. Deliverables

- A. Assignment report and recommendations for IPO restructure based on discussion with MoC.
- B. Assignment report and recommendations on drafting the Electronic Trade Facilitation Act.

V. Qualifications for Consultants

- Post-graduation degree in the field of International Trade, Business Management, Public Policy, Economics.
- Complete understanding of existing Bangladesh legislation and regulations governing all agencies and Ministries regulating and/or promoting international trade.
- Demonstrated deep understanding and practical work experience in trade facilitation, international trade negotiations, WTO requirements and issues.
- Practical knowledge of GoB systems, procedures, and authority structures.
- Experience working with the Ministry of Commerce and other trade-related private and public stakeholders.
- Experience implementing legal reform.
- Skilled communicator and ability to collect, analyze, prepare, and present information to guide and influence decision-makers.
- Highly motivated to produce results within the deadline.

VI. Timeline

12 (twelve) working days over two-month timeframe from the date of contract. The Consultant's assignment may be extended based on necessity.

VII. Travel

International travel is neither planned nor required for this assignment. Domestic overnight travel in Bangladesh is also not anticipated for this assignment. If necessary, all overnight travel requires prior written approval from the Assignment Manager noted above. Such approval will be provided in advance via email to Consultant from the Assignment Manager or his designee and will indicate logistical instructions, duration of trip, travel expense procedures, authorized per diem rates for meals and incidental costs, and/or other assignment-related expenses.

VIII. VAT and AIT Taxes:

The BTF project is exempt from Value-Added Tax (VAT). Venture37/BTF will deduct Advance Income Tax (AIT) from the Consultant's remuneration as per the rules of the Government of Bangladesh.

How to apply:

Interested applicants are requested to submit their CV and cover letter highlighting their relevant experience and suitability for the positions in a single document.

Please send your application to umtama@landolakes.com by 7 March 2025.