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When rules become direction: food safety between public responsibility and private ownership

NEWSLETTER



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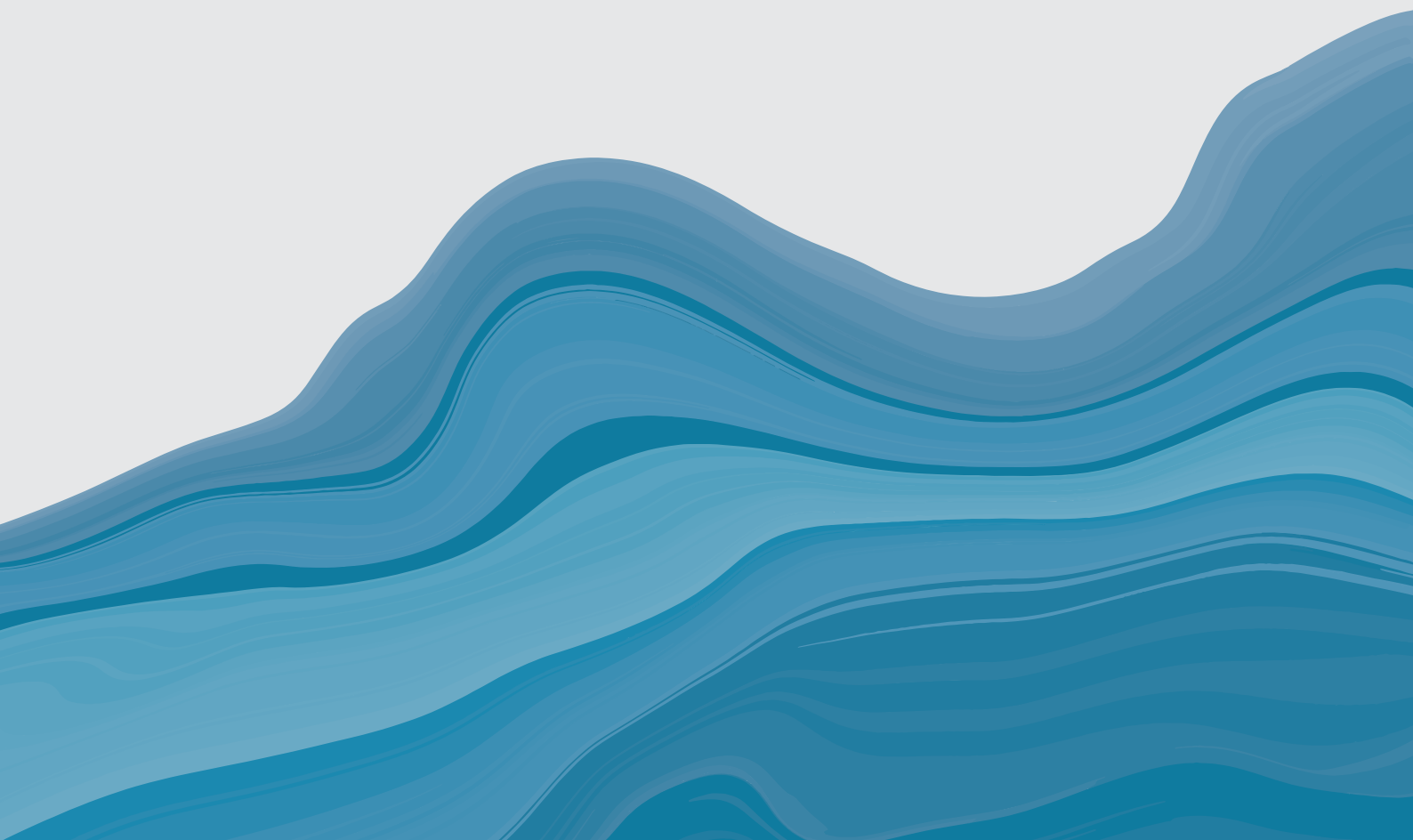
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Food safety starts on the farm, continues through processing, is verified through testing, and is ultimately confirmed through consumer trust.

We are now in an intermediate stage of implementation of the project “Improving the standards compliance through increased national capacities for residue monitoring” (hereinafter, the “EU–UNIDO project”). In this Newsletter edition, we look at the same transformation from several angles: strengthening a national system to operate in a coordinated way—grounded in data, dialogue, and shared responsibility.

From the voice of the business community, which is embracing European standards as a strategic direction, to food crisis simulation exercises, the modernisation of the animal health legislative framework, and investment in skills—these initiatives all converge towards one common goal: a safer, more predictable and more competitive food system.

I. Interview with Carolina Linte: “Responsibility is ours. The state sets the framework, but food safety and quality begin on the farm.”

Carolina Linte speaks calmly, yet firmly. We were keen to have an honest conversation with her. As Director of the National Association of Milk Producers, she is one of the strongest and articulate voices in Moldova’s agri-food sector. For her, alignment with European standards is not just a slogan—it is a practical necessity.

Since the launch of the capacity-building Programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), food business operators (FBOs) and farmers in April 2025, **Carolina Linte** has been actively involved in the Coordination Committee. *“I attended all meetings and I believe I also contributed to shaping the agenda—defining what the sector truly needs,” she says.*

Today, the programme brings together the dairy and meat sectors, processors and primary producers. For Ms Linte, engaging primary farms is essential:

“Processors depend on raw materials and their suppliers. If we want safe and competitive products, we must start with farms. The sector of products of animal origin is complex and requires sustained effort to adapt.”

PRACTICAL TRAINING, NOT ABSTRACT THEORY

For the business community, the relevance of the trainings delivered under the Programme for SMEs, FBOs and farmers is crucial. *“The fact that they are*

delivered in Romanian matters enormously. Understanding is deeper and details are not lost,” Linte underlines.

The staged design, as well as the dedicated spaces for exchanges between quality managers and company representatives, created a real platform for peer learning. However, the Director of the National Association of Milk Producers outlined two distinct priorities for the next phase. First, she recommended expanding the training programme to better

Figure 1. Carolina Linte, Director of the National Association of Milk Producers



reach entrepreneurs in the regions. Second, she emphasized the need for more active engagement of central authorities in the broader dialogue with the private sector.

“We are in a period of legislative transition. Correct interpretation of norms is essential. It is important that both, the authorities that shape policies and those that enforce them, are present in the dialogue with the sector.”

FROM INFORMATION TO APPLICATION

‘Trainings do not instantly produce specialists’, **Ms Linte explains**. But they deliver something fundamental: direction.

“They give you a core knowledge base and, importantly, they show you where to look for the right information. Implementation will come step by step, as European legislation is transposed and put into practice.”

For the sector she represents, the main benefit is clarity, which implies an accurate transposition of the original document and a correct interpretation of the regulatory act, Carolina Linte explains: *“Now we know the portfolio of normative acts and requirements we need to adopt. It is difficult to operate when you do not know where things are heading. Direction is essential.”*

REAL CHALLENGES: INFRASTRUCTURE AND COSTS

Residue monitoring remains a sensitive area. Correct interpretation of legislation, laboratory infrastructure, and the costs of external testing are all real challenges. “The state must ensure reference infrastructure, but it is also important to have independent private laboratories. Laboratory capacity needs to be developed to its full potential.”

At the same time, the association she leads acts as a multiplier: *“As soon as we receive information, we share it with our members. Not everyone can participate in trainings—especially those in the north or the south. We organise internal meetings and discuss within quality managers’ groups. Dialogue among operators is essential.”*

A CULTURAL SHIFT

For Carolina Linte, the essence of the transformation is not only technical—it is cultural:

“Responsibility for product safety lies with the food business operator. The state sets the framework. But food safety and quality begin on the farm.”

If the business community speaks about ownership and clarity, public institutions are strengthening their capacity to respond to critical situations. Because a modern system is not only about prevention—it is also about the ability to act quickly when risks emerge.

II. Moldova tests its response capacities to food crises

Being well-prepared and able to act fast in a food crisis is essential to keep consumers safe. A workshop on simulated food emergencies brought together the national Crisis Cell and the Food Safety Agency (ANSA), working jointly with Romanian and German partners to demonstrate how timely, coordinated action and swift decision-making can effectively prevent risks and contain them before they escalate.

From 4 to 5 December, more than 30 members of the National Crisis Cell - including representatives of central institutions such as law enforcement, health services, justice, environmental protection, defence, as well as national laboratories — tested realistic scenarios and practiced swift, coordinated, and transparent response. Such capacity is vital not only for protecting public health, but also for maintaining consumer trust.

The workshop focused on four key components: clear procedures for food incident management, coordination between national and European institutions, the use of rapid alert systems, and, importantly, effective public communication in sensitive situations.

Training panels were moderated by experts from EU Member States, including Germany and Romania. A dedicated session presents Romania's experience in managing food crises.

Dr. Corina IVANCIU, representative of the **National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA)**, presented the Contingency Plan of Constanța County — one of the most well-structured at regional level, given its strategic role as an entry point for agri-food products into the EU market.

“A food crisis is the most severe type of incident because it directly affects the consumer and activates central intervention mechanisms. We have not had such situations in Romania precisely due to rigorous preparedness and a well-established contingency plan. I am honoured to share this approach here in Chișinău and to learn from the valuable experience of our Moldovan colleagues,” stated Dr. Corina Ivanciu.

VOICES OF INSTITUTIONS AND PARTNERS

In his opening remarks, **Radu Musteață**, **Director General of the National Food Safety Agency (ANSA)**, emphasized the importance of the exercise: “Strengthening the food risk management system is a national priority. This workshop, delivered with the expertise of European partners, helps us reinforce alert infrastructure, clarify roles, and work more efficiently together. Our common goal is clear — a safe and healthy product on the consumer's table. We expect that, in the end, this exercise will contribute to a clear roadmap for implementing European requirements and ensuring a coordinated response in crisis situations.”

Figure 2. International Workshop on Food Emergency Crises Simulation, Chisinau, December 2025



Ilona Grünewald, Programme Manager for agriculture, rural development and food safety within the **Delegation of the European Union**, highlighted the strategic value of preparedness: “We are pleased to have experts from the European Food Safety Authority alongside us and to strengthen this partnership, which is crucial for Moldova on its path towards EU membership. As emergency preparedness is a key responsibility of government, inter-institutional co-operation becomes vital in any food incident. The presence of EU colleagues confirms that Moldova is not alone in this process — European support is firm and active.”

Managing emergencies — from minor incidents to major food crises — is a vital component of modern food control systems. Early detection and effective response protect public health and minimize negative impacts on the economy and trade, both nationally and internationally.

The simulation exercise on food-borne outbreaks was organized by the National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), together with the EU–UNIDO “Improving the Standards Compliance through Increased National Capacities for Residue Monitoring”, with the participation of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL).

Beyond crisis management, system modernisation also requires continuous updates of the regulatory framework, especially in the area of animal health.

Figure 3. Discussion at the seminar on the Animal Health Law, Chisinau, December 2025



III. New European animal health regulations brought to the attention of economic operators

On 9 December 2025, a briefing seminar was held at the premises of the National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) on the transposition of EU legislation in the area of animal health and the control of products of animal origin.

The event brought together ANSA specialists, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAIA), as well as economic operators from the agri-food sector.

Participants were introduced to Regulation (EU) 2016/429 (“Animal Health Law”) and its secondary acts, reviewing new requirements on prevention, control, traceability and notification of diseases; animal identification and registration; and the responsibilities of authorities and economic operators.

The seminar was delivered by international and national experts within the EU–UNIDO project “Improving the standards compliance through incre-

ased national capacities for residue monitoring”. They presented the logic and structure of the 26 draft legislative acts developed to align Moldova’s framework with the EU acquis. Procedures for official controls, surveillance, sampling, reporting and the management of animal movements were also discussed.

Representatives of farms and the animal production chain discussed the new conditions they will need to meet, as well as how compliance will be verified through official controls.

The event provided participants with practical tools to better understand and apply the new European provisions, supporting a coherent and consistent transposition into national legislation. This process is essential in the context of Moldova’s pre-accession commitments and the modernisation of the national food safety system.

Beyond European regulations and the capacity to respond to crisis situations, the functioning of a modern food safety system also depends on its less visible infrastructure: laboratories that confirm, through scientific analysis, the quality and safety of food products. In this context, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova are examining the establishment of a coordination mechanism aimed at ensuring more efficient use of resources and more strategic planning across the national testing system.

Figure 4. National authorities and development partners exchange views on the Laboratory Coordination Council, Chisinau, February 2026, ANSA headquarters



IV. Towards a more coherent national laboratory system: authorities consider the establishment of a Laboratory Coordination Council

At the end of February, representatives of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, line ministries and key public institutions convened for an extended meeting dedicated to strengthening the national laboratory system and aligning it with European Union quality requirements.

Participants agreed on the need to establish a Laboratory Coordination Council (LCC) — an inter-institutional mechanism designed to ensure coherent strategic planning, efficient use of public resources, and the preparedness of the state laboratory system for European integration.



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LCC AS A PRIORITY UNDER THE REFORM AGENDA 2025–2027

Deputy Secretary General of the Government, Lilia Dabija, emphasised that the initiative is included in Moldova’s Growth Plan and forms part of the national Reform Agenda.

“The functionality of the laboratories foreseen under the Reform Agenda is not subject to significant risks, and the State Chancellery will monitor their implementation and operationalisation within the established timeframe,” she stated.

She also highlighted the importance of optimising the laboratory system as part of the broader public administration reform.

“The state has a responsibility to improve the efficiency of public institutions and the use of budgetary resources. All laboratories, regardless of the ministry under which they operate, have public institution status and should be assessed in terms of performance, functional overlaps and financing arrangements,” Dabija noted, inviting relevant institutions to engage in a joint working platform of National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) under the coordination of the State Chancellery.



STRONG LABORATORIES AS A PREREQUISITE FOR EFFECTIVE OFFICIAL CONTROL

Director General of ANSA, Radu Musteață, stressed that the development of laboratory capacity is essential for the state’s ability to ensure official control and consumer protection. He clarified that the objective is not to restructure or dismantle existing institutions, but to improve system-wide performance and cooperation among laboratories.

“Republic of Moldova needs strong laboratories capable of applying methods compliant with the EU acquis. The bilateral screening process with the Eu-

European Union confirmed that additional efforts are required in several areas, and strengthening laboratory capacity is key to success, including for control authorities,” **Musteață stated.**



TOWARDS A COHERENT LABORATORY SYSTEM AND MORE EFFICIENT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Deputy Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, Adam Grodzicki, highlighted the crucial role of laboratories for public health protection, fair trade and access to the European market.

According to him, an effective food testing and control system contributes to consumer confidence, supports domestic production and enhances economic competitiveness.

“Moldova’s food safety laboratory network remains fragmented. Resources need to be optimised to avoid duplication of testing, under-utilisation of high-cost equipment and loss of qualified specialists,” the EU official noted.



THE ROLE OF THE LABORATORY COORDINATION COUNCIL

During the meeting, **UNIDO International Expert Dr. Bert Popping** presented the findings of the national laboratory system assessment and outlined the concept of the Laboratory Coordination Council. He noted that, in the absence of a national coordi-

nation mechanism, investment decisions, analytical capacities and sample flows are currently managed separately by individual institutions, without an integrated system-wide perspective.

The proposed Council would function as an inter-institutional advisory body under Government authority, tasked with reviewing the functioning of the laboratory system and providing strategic recommendations for its modernisation. By coordinating investment planning, promoting efficient use of high-value equipment and reducing functional overlaps, the LCC could enhance transparency, optimise public resource allocation and strengthen testing capacity in line with EU requirements.

Previous assessments have shown that decisions regarding laboratory infrastructure development are currently taken at institutional level without a comprehensive evaluation of national capacity, which reduces the efficiency of both investments and infrastructure utilisation.

CONTEXT

The event was organised within the framework of the EU–UNIDO project “Improving the standards compliance through increased national capacities for residue monitoring”, which provides technical support to the authorities of the Republic of Moldova in strengthening national testing and residue monitoring capacities.

And finally...

From our discussions with farmers, processors, partners and beneficiaries, we have repeatedly heard the same—very legitimate—questions: what will change, in concrete terms? In the farmer’s day-to-day work, in the inspector’s work, in laboratory capacity and, ultimately, in consumer trust. Below we summarise the key answers that capture the significance of the ongoing transformation.



V. Beyond the numbers: what the EU–UNIDO project changes for food safety in the Republic of Moldova

1. It is one of the few projects in the Republic of Moldova dedicated **specifically to residue monitoring in the production chain of foods of animal origin**—a key area for consumer protection and access to external markets.
2. It is one of UNIDO’s projects currently being implemented in the Republic of Moldova and stands out through its **direct link between food safety, animal health, public health and economic competitiveness**.
3. **The approach is innovative in the way it brings actors to the same table:** producers, competent authorities and experts work together—rather than in parallel systems or in “control–sanction” dynamics.
4. For the first time, the Republic of Moldova applies the **“One Health” principle in a coherent manner**, recognising that food safety, animal health and human health are interdependent and cannot be addressed separately.
5. **When antimicrobial resistance emerges in animals, its effects inevitably reach humans;** the project treats this reality not as a sectoral issue, but as a matter of national health security.
6. **Strengthening laboratories serves not only the agri-food sector, but reinforces the entire health chain**—from veterinary diagnostic capacity to preventing hard-to-treat infections in humans.
7. **The system is shifting from “knowing” to “seeing in real time”** through the development of a modern laboratory information management system, enabling fast, targeted and data-driven decisions.
8. **A unified national system for antimicrobial resistance surveillance is beginning to take shape**, aligned with standards of the World Health Organization, WOA and FAO, facilitating cooperation between ANSA, the National Public Health Agency, veterinarians and farmers, based on the same rules and protocols.
9. **The data generated will be usable not only for controls, but also for smarter public policies**, including monitoring antibiotic imports and preventing epidemiological outbreaks.
10. **Residue monitoring thus becomes an anticipation tool**, not only a reaction mechanism—optimising public spending and reducing late and costly interventions.
11. **For producers, the project supports a fairer and more predictable environment**, where demonstrable quality becomes a competitive advantage rather than a bureaucratic obstacle.
12. **For consumers**, the benefit is not only safer food, but **greater trust grounded in functional systems**, not statements.
13. **For the state**, it supports a shift from fragmented controls **towards data-based governance, inter-institutional coordination and accountability across the entire food chain**.
14. Ultimately, this intervention lays the **foundations for a cultural shift** in which food safety is no longer a formal obligation, but a value that protects lives, supports the economy and brings the Republic of Moldova closer to real European standards.

VI. Project at a Glance



Funded by the European Union



MINISTERUL AGRICULTURII SI INDUSTRIEI ALIMENTARE AL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA



UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



IMPROVING THE STANDARDS COMPLIANCE THROUGH INCREASED NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR RESIDUE MONITORING

CONTEXT

After signing the Association Agreement, Moldova has undertaken the task of adapting its national food safety legislation to the requirements of the relevant EU laws and regulations. To reduce the technical barriers to trade and to increase access to and trade with the EU market, Moldova needs to achieve a higher level of compliance with EU technical requirements such as standards, technical regulations and product-related directives and needs to upgrade related controls or conformity assessment.

Thus, the overall objective of this Action is to enhance national consumer safety and access to safe, healthy and nutritious food and to improve trade opportunities and create a conducive business environment for SMEs, thus contributing to resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economic development as well as paving the way to a fully-fledged Green Deal for the Republic of Moldova.

This Action will specifically support Moldova in improving the standards compliance through increased national capacities for residue monitoring.

STRATEGY

The intervention will contribute to increasing national capacities for residue monitoring in animal feed and products of animal origin (pesticides, veterinary medicine, contaminants, and prohibited substances). Actions under this intervention can be clustered as:

- Supporting harmonization process with the EU regulation on official control and animal health, conducting sector analyses and providing policy advice at the macro level.
- Enhancing the capacities of the competent authorities, and public and private laboratories at the meso level.
- Providing specialized training and capacity building for producers at the micro level to strengthen their competitiveness and market access.

IMPACT

- Improved practices of competent authorities (ANSA and MAFI) through strengthened institutional and analytical capacities, and revamped legal and regulatory frame work and effective enforcement of official control at central and regional levels.
- Improved practices of public and private laboratories through expanded testing capacities, demonstrating proof of compliance.
- SMEs and Food Business Operators (FBOs) application of best practices enhanced, quality awareness raised and culture for quality among producers, consumers and support institutions promoted in the value chains of meat, poultry and milk products.

REGION



GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

COUNTRY



DURATION

February 2023 – January 2027



TOTAL BUDGET

Total 4,040,000 (EU – 4,000,000 and UNIDO/Germany – 40,000)



PARTNERS

- European Union (EU)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- National Food Safety Agency (ANSA) and its national reference laboratories
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI)
- Sectoral and Business Associations



CONTACT

unido@unido.org
standards-moldova@unido.org

WORKING TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



VII. Additional Information

Counterparts and Contributing Entities

National Food Safety Agency (ANSA)

The National Agency for Food Safety is the administrative authority responsible for implementing state policy in the field of regulation and control for food safety in the areas of sanitary veterinary, zootechnical, plant protection and phytosanitary quarantine, seed control, quality of primary products, food, and feed.

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI)

The primary mission of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) is to ensure the effective implementation of the governmental programme regarding the development and execution of a sustainable state policy in the agribusiness sector. This is to be achieved by enhancing competitiveness and productivity while ensuring compliance with established international and European safety standards for food, thus providing the necessary conditions for continuous growth and welfare.

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations with a unique mandate to promote, dynamize, and accelerate industrial development. Its mandate is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9: “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”, but UNIDO’s activities contribute to all the SDGs. UNIDO supports its 172 Member States through four mandated functions: technical cooperation; action-oriented research and policy-advisory services; normative standards-related activities; and fostering partnerships for knowledge and technology transfer. UNIDO’s work is concentrated on three focus areas: ending hunger by helping businesses from farm to fork; stopping climate breakdown by using renewable energy and energy efficiency to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions; and supporting sustainable supply chains so that developing country producers get a fair deal and scarce resources are preserved.

Project Core Team

Giorgi TODUA:	Project Manager / Industrial Development Expert
Cristian-Ioan DUICU:	International Technical Adviser
Lali MADZGARASHVILI:	International Key Laboratory Expert
Elena SCRIPNIC	National Technical Expert
Elizaveta AKIFYEVA:	Project Associate
Olga POPOVICI:	National MEAL Expert
Ana TRIFAN:	National Communication Expert
Renata CATER:	National Project and Language Assistant

Available Online Resources

- [European Union and the Republic of Moldova](#)
- [UNIDO Open Data Platform](#)
- [Analysis of the Capacities of NQIS Institutions and the Demand for their Services from the Meat, Poultry and Dairy Value Chains in the Republic of Moldova](#)

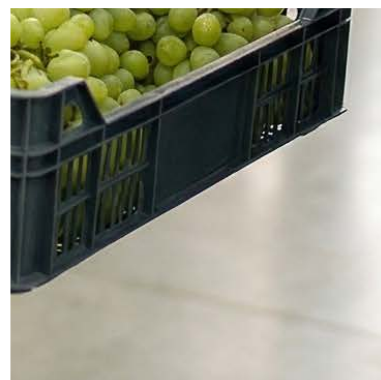
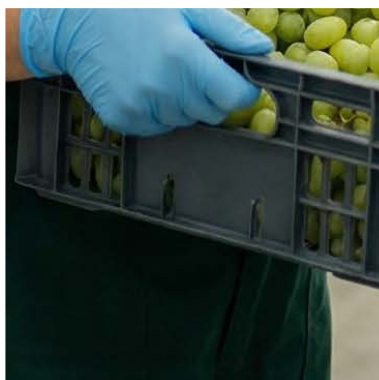
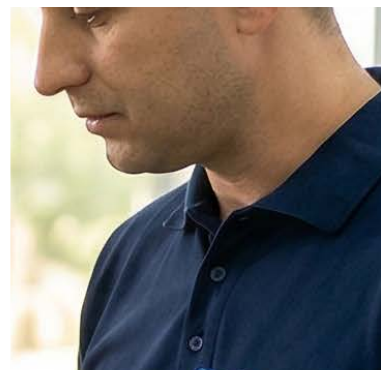
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Contact Details

standards-moldova@unido.org

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UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

 UNIDO Project Management Unit
str. Alexei Șciusev, 105
MD-2012 Chișinău
Republica Moldova

 +373 22 999 190
 www.unido.org
 unido@unido.org
 standards-moldova@unido.org