



Georgia lab ensures exports meet international standards

Wednesday, 7 January 2004: Fruits, vegetables, minerals, chemicals and other goods from Georgia will have easier access to markets in Europe and beyond, thanks to a new laboratory in Tbilisi, the capital, which will test and certify that they meet international standards.

The Quality Testing Laboratory can determine if these products conform to quality and environmental criteria set by the Geneva-based International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Georgians take pride in their products, and with ISO certification exporters hope to find new markets, especially within the European Union, and revitalize old ties with markets in Russia and elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

UNDP and the Association of Georgian Exporters are each providing US\$150,000 for the lab, and the TÜV Nord Group, a German scientific and technical firm, is contributing \$100,000. The lab opened in October and expects to receive Georgian and European ISO certification within a few months.

"Until now, not a single lab in Georgia could give international certification," noted Paata Gogolidze, Executive Director of TÜV Nord's Georgia office.

The laboratory will protect domestic consumers and also promote exports, noted Minister of Economics, Industry and Trade, George Gachechiladze. "Lack of international certification has hindered Georgian exporters, and certification will help our products reach new markets," he said.

"Our immediate purpose is to support Georgian exporters," said the President of the Association of Georgian Exporters, Tamaz Agladze. "The cost of certification in Europe is enormous, and the laboratory therefore has a vital role."

The lab staff underwent training to operate its quality control equipment, as well as in managerial, technical and marketing skills. In addition to testing

and certifying products for export, the lab will also help combat counterfeit items.

Among other Georgian products offered for export are timber, wine and brandy, mineral water, pharmaceuticals, fertilizer, engineering and construction materials, textiles, and oil and gas.

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