



Capacity Building Programme for Export-Oriented Women Entrepreneurs in the Agriculture Sector



Programme Report | 2023–2025

19 women-led companies	2 programme focus areas	AGRI sector focus	GERMANY international exposure
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1. Executive Summary

Implemented by the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) in collaboration with the Import Promotion Desk (IPD), Germany, the programme strengthened the export readiness of women-led businesses in Sri Lanka's agriculture and food processing sector. Implemented during 2023–2025, the initiative combined practical capacity building, expert coaching, EU market knowledge, responsible business practices and international market exposure. A total of 19 women-led companies were developed under the programme, while four companies were selected for a Market Exposure and Capacity Building Programme held parallel to BIOFACH 2025 in Germany.

2. Programme at a Glance

Implementing institutions	Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) in collaboration with Import Promotion Desk (IPD), Germany
Implementation period	2023–2025
Sector focus	Agriculture and agriculture-based food processing
Companies developed	19 women-led companies

3. programme focus areas

- **Capacity development** – Develop the knowledge, skills and export readiness of women entrepreneurs to enter the European market.
 - Market access & handholding – Identify and handhold suitable women-led businesses for IPD sourcing and market exposure activities in Europe.
 - Practical export preparedness – Strengthen company-level capabilities in EU requirements, CSR, costing and pricing, technical documentation and due diligence.
- **International exposure & linkages** - Identify and handhold suitable businesses for trade missions, exhibitions and business networking programmes organised or supported by EDB.

4. Participant Profile & Capacity Building

Nineteen women-led companies participated in a structured capacity-building and coaching programme designed for businesses with the potential to enter or expand in the European market.

Minimum 50% women ownership	Manufacturing facility for agriculture-based products	Own processing facility	Minimum food safety certification
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Knowledge areas covered | CSR Basics • Export Market Entry Requirements • EU Market Requirements • CSR Advanced • Costing & Pricing for the EU Market • Technical Data Sheet • Due Diligence

5. Expert Coaching & Technical Capacity Development

The programme combined international expertise from IPD, local experts from IPD and the EDB coaching team of 12 officials. This blended approach enabled participants to understand European market expectations and apply the learning to their own businesses.

- CSR Basics and Advanced – strengthening awareness of responsible business practices and sustainability considerations.
- EU Market Requirements and Export Market Entry – understanding the requirements and considerations for accessing European markets.
- Costing, Pricing, Technical Data Sheets and Due Diligence – improving practical export documentation and buyer-readiness.

This component highlighted that international competitiveness increasingly extends beyond technology and pricing to responsible resource use, environmental management and sustainability practices.

6. International Exposure – BIOFACH 2025, Germany

Four companies were selected for the Market Exposure and Capacity-Building Programme conducted parallel to BIOFACH 2025 in Germany. The participating SMEs gained valuable first-hand exposure to the European market, particularly to developments in the organic sector.

Key exposure and learning areas:

- European market trends and developments in the organic sector
- Regulatory frameworks and compliance considerations in the organic sector
- Market research covering trends, innovations and competition
- Understanding opportunities and requirements for Sri Lankan products in the EU market

7. Market Research & Business Learning

As part of the market exposure programme, each participating women-led businesses conducted market research for its respective product sector. This provided practical insight into European market trends, product innovations and competitive conditions, while helping companies assess their own positioning and opportunities in the EU market.

Key areas examined included:

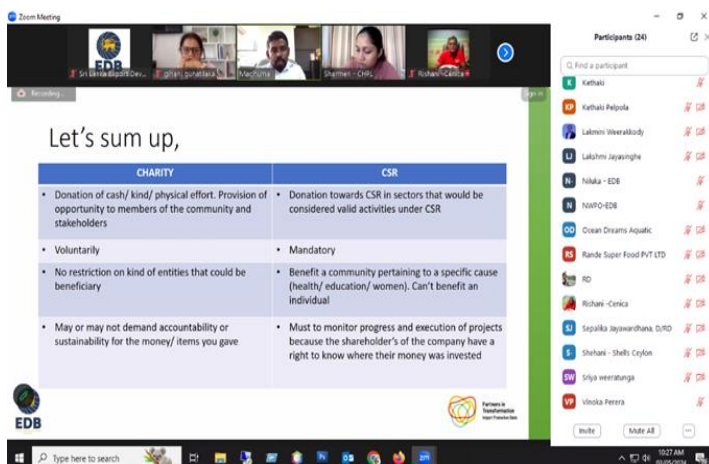
- Market trends and emerging consumer/product developments
- Innovations relevant to the respective product sectors
- Competitor products and market positioning
- European regulatory and market requirements
- Potential opportunities for Sri Lankan products
- Areas requiring further improvement for EU market entry

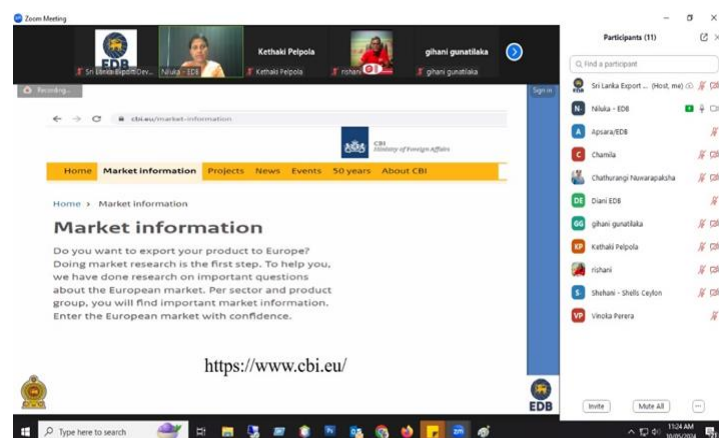
8. Key Outcomes

Capacity development 19 women-led companies developed through structured capacity building and coaching.	EU market readiness Improved understanding of European market entry requirements and buyer expectations.
Technical preparedness Enhanced knowledge of CSR, EU requirements, costing and pricing, technical data sheets and due diligence.	Expert support International and local IPD experts worked with an EDB coaching team of 12 officials.
International exposure 4 companies selected for market exposure and capacity building parallel to BIOFACH 2025 in Germany.	Market research Participating SMEs researched market trends, innovations and competition within their product sectors.
Organic sector insight Direct exposure to developments and regulatory frameworks relevant to the European organic sector.	Export orientation Stronger understanding of the steps and improvements required to pursue European market opportunities.

9. Strategic Value

The programme moved beyond general awareness creation by combining practical capacity development, expert coaching and international market exposure. The structured training and company-level handholding helped women-led businesses strengthen their understanding of EU market requirements and practical export preparedness. The BIOFACH 2025 exposure further enabled selected SMEs to observe the European organic market first-hand and conduct sector-specific market research, creating a stronger foundation for future market entry and international competitiveness.





10. Conclusion

The EDB-IPD Capacity Building Programme contributed to strengthening the export readiness of Sri Lankan women-led enterprises in the agriculture sector. By linking capacity development with practical coaching and international exposure, the programme provided participating businesses with a clearer understanding of European market requirements and the capabilities needed to pursue international market opportunities.

