

# RED GOLD RUSH

## MANAGING QUALITY FOR AFGHAN SAFFRON EXPORTS



International  
Trade  
Centre

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Managing Quality for  
Afghan Saffron Exports

## About the guide

Saffron, the world's most expensive spice, offers great potential for Afghan exporters. Developing a consistent brand for quality is the key to unlocking a 'red gold' rush, a priority sector of Afghanistan's national export strategy.

This guide outlines how to build a quality saffron sector based on mandatory requirements, voluntary standards and market preferences for three major markets: Europe, India and China.

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## Foreword

Supporting greater diversification of products and export markets is a priority for Afghanistan and its development partners. This is a concrete aim of the work of the International Trade Centre (ITC) in the country and is fundamental to the *Afghanistan National Export Strategy 2018-22*.

Saffron – the ‘red gold’ of the spices sector – has great potential for Afghanistan. As a priority sector of the country’s national export strategy, the success of Afghan saffron will bring significant economic and social advantages to the country.

As the highest-value spice in the world, the long-run profits generated from quality saffron cultivation could be an important incentive to farmers to pivot away from illicit opium production towards an industry with genuine export potential. The high labour requirements of saffron production offer significant employment opportunities in both peak and off-peak seasons, especially for women and youth.

International spice connoisseurs have already acknowledged that Afghanistan has the potential to produce globally competitive saffron, as shown by awards received at international competitions. Yet, quality problems persist and consistency must improve for Afghan saffron to develop a brand identity that is synonymous with high quality.

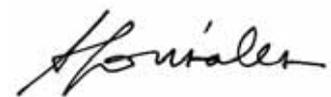
Navigating the quality arena can be a challenge for any small firm. Quality tends to be a fast-moving target anchored in a large array of technical regulations, standards and rapidly evolving consumer preferences.

In this context, we are pleased to launch this guide for the saffron sector, as a complement to the *Afghanistan National Export Strategy 2018-22*. The publication is an implementation action of the export strategy roadmap and serves as an important tool toward developing Afghanistan’s export potential and creating an environment where entrepreneurship can grow.

The guide sheds light on quality-related requirements for Afghan saffron, as well as elaborating on the three key markets identified in the strategy: China, Europe and India.

We look forward to this guide contributing to a deeper understanding of saffron quality requirements among stakeholders in the Afghanistan saffron sector. The hope is local and international partners will widely disseminate this publication and that ITC and national initiatives associated with quality will help make the ‘red gold’ a reality in Afghanistan.

ITC would like to thank the European Union for its support to the ‘Advancing Afghan Trade: EU Trade Related Assistance’ project and the Ethical Food and Fashion Initiative in Afghanistan. This important work would not be possible without its commitments to the vision of ‘Peace through Prosperity, Prosperity through Trade’, the stakeholders’ quality management vision ‘Quality brings changes and boosts prosperity’, and the national sector vision, ‘Saffron: spicing up Afghan exports’.



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