



PIP Magazine

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The four PIP components

editorial

80% of the ACP export supply chain benefits from the work of the PIP!

Achieving this level of participation was assisted by the fact that the entire COLEACP network (an association of ACP producers/exporters and European importers) was already mobilised before the launch of the Programme. We should not overlook the fact that the PIP was set up and developed at the initiative of the COLEACP, and that the European Commission and ACP states were particularly receptive to the proposals put forward by the Association. The conception of the PIP was based on the needs of private sector companies, and this guaranteed that its activities were relevant as well as the commitment of its beneficiaries.

The setting up of a centralised Management Unit in Brussels made it possible to analyse the problems encountered in around thirty ACP countries, and to develop common solutions with a use of resources that was only made possible by this collective approach. Thanks to this methodology, and on behalf of the entire ACP supply chain, the PIP took on large-scale projects such as, for example, the defence of MRLs, the preparation of crop protocols, a comprehensive information service, and the development of a genuine system of training.

This Management Unit is comprised of men and women who have, for the most part, already experienced life as a producer/exporter in tropical countries. In this issue we want to put the spotlight on these people and their day-to-day work.

*Guy Stinglhamber
Director of PIP*



index

- 2 [Good company practice]**
"The number one rule: respect company strategies"
- 4 [Capacity building]**
Creating the right environment for companies to do business and grow
- 5 [Training unit]**
A "PIP training unit" to meet the needs of 28 countries!
- 6 [Regulation]**
Giving growers the tools to produce in accordance with the regulations
- 7 [Information and Communication]**
Alerting, informing and raising awareness

[GOOD COMPANY PRACTICE]

“The number one rule:
respect company strategies””

Sylvie Fontaine, Nursel Gumusboga and Cédric Delannoy make up the PIP’s “Good Company Practice” Component. As agronomists, all three are very familiar with the horticultural supply chain, and with Africa. They are in direct contact with producers and export companies in ACP countries. How do they rate the activities implemented by the programme?



*Sylvie Fontaine, Cédric Delannoy
and Nursel Gumusboga*

“All in all, with regard to the objectives originally set for the PIP, the results that we have achieved are positive, particularly concerning the establishment of food safety management systems and the sustainable training of personnel” declares Sylvie Fontaine, who leads the component. “We have succeeded in mobilising the vast majority of ACP companies in the horticultural export supply chain. In fact, the exporters and producers who have adopted a food safety management system with PIP support together export over 85% of the export flow targeted by the programme. Furthermore, these companies have made it possible to continue up the supply chain to their suppliers, of whom some 100,000 small-scale family farms have been able to benefit from the programme.”

Starting with the needs of the company

No two situations are the same. But when it comes to setting up a sustainable quality management sys-

tem, the general approach adopted is often similar. The first step is to conduct an assessment of the current system: what are the main procedures in operation, the human resources available, and the infrastructure? “We start from the actual needs of the company, this is very important. Each case is unique. The support needed by a company producing pineapples on a plantation in Ghana is not the same as the support that needs to be given to a company in the Dominican Republic exporting a variety of Asian vegetables, grown by hundreds of small-scale growers” explains Sylvie. Once the initial assessment has been conducted, we start to roll out the system, ensuring beforehand that the managers have been properly trained – which is essential for long-term sustainability. The PIP intervention is completed with a phase involving the external validation of the food safety management system put in place. The process involves a real, in-depth transformation of the company.

Increasingly, this external validation is taking on the form of private certification. “European buyers are demanding more and more certification from ACP producers. When a company’s clients require this, we point them in the right direction to ensure that they can maintain or increase their market share” explains Cédric Delannoy, a programme expert. “In this respect, there is no doubt that our efforts have borne fruit as 100% of the companies that have received assistance towards certification (in particular with the organisation of pre-audits and audits) have succeeded in obtaining the desired certification, whether GlobalGAP, BRC or organic.”

Sylvie and Nursel also stress the fact that it is mainly local experts, trained by the PIP, that are providing support to the companies. Thanks to the PIP’s training and capacity building programmes, local experts have been given the opportunity to update and develop their skills in the various fields of “food safety”, a sector that has been revolutionised over the past few years. Now they are in a position to conduct assignments that were previously delegated to international experts, and they have been able to gain the trust of local companies that subsequently don’t hesitate to contract their services again with their own funds. Nursel explains: “Even during the crisis in Ivory Coast, when international experts refused to travel to the country, local Ivorian consultants successfully carried out all of the PIP missions. Export companies were thus able to meet their targets, despite the complicated political situation. They were satisfied with the services provided to them: the proof of this lies in the fact that they are continuing to use their services outside of the PIP framework.”

Be pragmatic and adapt

Since the beginning of the PIP in 2001, European markets have evolved and demands (particularly from the large-scale retailers) have become ever more stringent. As a result, certain value chains that had not seen any point in investing in the establishment of new systems “woke up” and came to knock at the door of the PIP once their European buyers began to demand from them food safety guarantees and certifications. This is true of the litchi sector, for

example: “For a long time, European litchi importers did not demand any certification. On the day when some German supermarkets demanded Globalgap certification from their suppliers, companies in Madagascar suddenly turned to us for support to set up control systems. Very quickly, several companies passed through the various stages necessary, and obtained the certifications demanded by the buyers” explains Sylvie. One of the strengths of this component is its ability to adapt and its capacity to react to the needs of companies as and when they arise. “Of course, our flexibility has its limits: our field of action, for example, is defined by programme” specifies Nursel Gumusboga, senior expert. It is out of the question for us to finance improvements to packhouses, for example; this is up to the companies themselves. “But we can often redirect our support according to need” continues Nursel.



Customising the assistance

As regards the introduction of a traceability system for fruit and vegetables, the “Good company Practice” component again has every right to feel satisfied with the work carried out. 75% of our beneficiary companies have installed a paper-based manual traceability system» Nursel tells us. “30% of them have then gone on to adopt computerised traceability systems”. Most have opted for the PIP’s “Hortitrace” software. However, a computerised traceability system is not essential to meet the regulatory demands, and is not an aim in itself. For certain small companies, for example, it would be too heavy an investment both in terms of equipment and human resources. “As always, we have to customise the assistance that we provide, and evaluate with every company the appropriateness of the different actions.”

The main aim of the “Good Company Practice” Component is to ensure the continued presence in

the market of as many as possible of the small-scale producers in the export chain. With the development of adapted training courses, the PIP has contributed to the promotion of Good Agricultural Practice among smallholders. Support has also been given to many companies who wished to obtain certification for smallholder groups. However, with the ever evolving buyer requirements, more and more demanding of certification, some companies that source produce from large numbers of smallholders are tending to select and reduce the number of growers with whom they work. The high cost of certification often leads the companies to certify only a part of their smallholder supply base.

The development of the private standards and the demands of the large supermarkets are today stepping up the pressure on horticultural companies, and making the position of smallholders and small-

medium enterprises increasingly difficult. “The support that we have so far provided to companies has focused mainly on the field of action of the programme, this is to say helping them to produce in compliance with the regulations (legislation) governing food safety and traceability”, explains Sylvie. “But a lot of work remains to be done to help them adapt to the commercial standards and to take into account environmental and ethical aspects.” Nursel adds, “Nor should we forget the processing companies that source from thousands of small growers, and who face the same problems as the fresh fruit and vegetable export sector.” These are areas of activity that could be addressed in another phase of the programme.



[CAPACITY BUILDING]

Creating the right environment for companies to do business and grow



“Through our activities we set out to create a favourable environment for companies to develop. It is essential that companies have access locally to quality services, expertise and advice, that help them meet the regulatory requirements as they evolve” state Bénédicte Werner and Morag Webb, who lead the “Capacity Building” component of the PIP for the French and English speaking countries respectively. Bénédicte and Morag manage and monitor the various PIP interventions directed towards capacity building of the local public and private sector service providers towards whom export companies will be able to turn for support.



Morag Webb and Bénédicte Werner

Beneficiaries of capacity building activities can be divided into four main categories: private consultants; laboratories, public services (including extension services and pesticide registration bodies); trade associations; and task forces. “We have obtained very good results with ACP consultants” states Bénédicte. Over 150 have benefited from practical and theory training courses, some leading to qualifications, that have allowed them to improve their skills in various fields linked to food safety and traceability. The consultants specialise and update their expertise thanks to the PIP training courses. This enables them to provide more effective and more relevant support to companies. In this way it has been possible for international expertise to be gradually replaced by local (ACP) expertise. When the programme was launched in 2002, only 20% of the consultants used by PIP came from ACP countries; today, they represent over 80% of the expertise used.

In Kenya, explains Bénédicte, “we have contributed to the support of a consultancy company which, in future, can conduct certification audits for a variety of commercial standards.” This provides an important advantage – particularly in financial terms – for Kenyan companies which, in principle, should no longer be obliged to use international certification bodies. It is also important to note that partnerships and networks have been nurtured and developed during PIP training courses. Consultants from different countries who met at PIP workshops are now working together and exchanging ideas and information. This is a very positive development that will undoubtedly contribute to the sustainability of the programme's actions in the future.

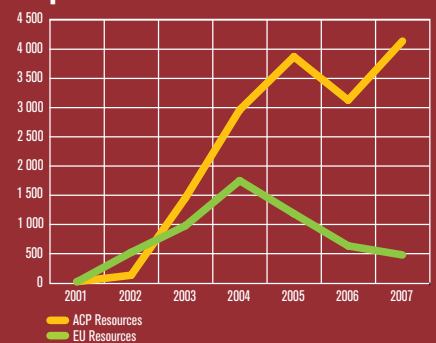
Laboratories are achieving accreditation

As far as laboratories are concerned, whether public or private, the aim is to help them introduce quality control systems that ensure the validity and recognition of results concerning pesticide residue analysis. The aim is also to improve or to validate specific analytical methods. To achieve this, the PIP has developed a range of activities including: a partnership programme with accredited European laboratories; organisational and administrative support (procedures); on-site training; training courses for technical staff; and training in equipment maintenance. The final goal is to enable the ACP laboratory

to gain international accreditation and, as such, to have the quality of its work recognised. It is important for export companies to have access to local analytical services. The feedback from laboratories is good, says Bénédicte: “Of all the laboratories that we have supported, over half should reach the required level of accreditation between now and the end of 2008.” Things generally move faster with private as opposed to public sector laboratories, where the decision-making processes and mobilisation of funds can take longer and be more demanding.

Another important objective of the component is to support national horticultural stakeholder platforms.

Growth in ACP expertise in comparison with European expertise



Today, over 80% of the expertise used by PIP is local.

The aim is to facilitate dialogue between the principal national players, both public and private, in order to identify and address the main issues affecting the sector. To this end the PIP has supported the establishment and functioning of some twelve national task forces. These bring together stakeholders including producer and exporter representatives, service providers, and government departments. Some, such as those in Kenya or the Republic of Ivory Coast, are particularly active and regularly organise workshops and discussions on themes that are of interest to the horticultural sector.

The component has also paid particular attention to supporting ACP professional associations (of producers/exporters) who, it is recognised, play a key role in supporting and representing the sector.

Finally, the PIP has carried out several successful actions with the national bodies in charge of the registration of phytosanitary products. As a result of this work, these bodies have been able to improve their registration procedures, as well as to install or update a pesticide database in order to facilitate access to information on registered products, instructions on use, and maximum residue limits (MRLs). "At regional level and in cooperation with the Regulations Component, we have also supported the Sahelian Pesticide Committee, regional harmonisation initiatives in East Africa and the Caribbean, and helped to set up the CPAC, the Pesticides Committee for Central Africa" concludes Bénédicte.

"From one country to another, the circumstances of the export sector vary, as do the results of our work" explains Bénédicte. Certain sectors are better organised and more robust than others. The work that needs to be carried out with the various players is also different. In a country where the horticultural export chain is smaller, or where activities are organised around short- or medium term export seasons, the players are, in general, less well structured, and trade organisations have few resources, particularly in terms of permanent staff. Under these circumstances it is more difficult to ensure the sustainability of capacity building activities. In countries where the horticultural sector is large and the trade organisations better organised, they have been able to develop their capacity to mobilise and inform their members, thereby consolidating their representation and lobbying powers, while actively taking part in setting up a constructive public/private dialogue.

A "PIP training unit" to meet the needs of 28 countries!

In order to develop a genuine "training system" that is coherent and covers the diversity of needs of its beneficiaries, the PIP set up a "Training Unit" that works hand in hand with the management unit. Close daily cooperation with the "Good Company Practice" and "Capacity Building" components has enabled numerous actions to be implemented in the field.

Helping companies to install food safety management systems is not enough in itself: it is essential that the personnel in charge of implementing them have sufficient capacity to do so. Alongside PIP activities that supported the reorganisation of companies and adoption of good practices, it was important for the PIP also to ensure that the various operators in the company were trained: the managers that install the system, the technicians who oversee the smallholders, the employees, and the small-scale growers themselves.

The PIP has established a methodology that is directed at company technical managers who are, in turn, responsible for implementing an internal company training system for workers and small-scale growers.

Using experience gained over time, PIP has developed a range of tools and methodologies for different types of training courses. These include: syllabuses on 8 main themes (food safety, traceability, safe use of pesticides, etc.) for technical managers and consultants; training handbooks for trainers; brochures and demonstration materials for employees and smallholders; etc. IT tools have also been developed such as the "self-training" classroom included in the PIP Toolbox (CD-ROM).

A series of standard collective training courses have been organised for managerial staff (including technical training on food safety management, traceability, crop protection, etc.). "This type of collective training was recommended to all export companies. In total almost 1,150 participants have taken part in these courses" explains Annick Schubert, an expert in charge of this project.

To build on and put into practice the collective courses, the PIP has also developed an "in-house training service", which is adapted to the specific characteristics of each company. "We have trained over 160 ACP consultants who are now themselves capable of organising collective or in-house training courses" explains Bruno Schiffers, Head of the Training Unit and Professor at the University of Gembloux. The in-house training courses are designed to encourage changes in behaviour that are sustained in the long term. They cover very diverse themes such as the safe use of pesticides, internal audits, organic farming and the training of employees and outgrowers. "In all, over 5,000 technicians from around 150 ACP companies have been able to benefit from this training", states Maud Delacollette, responsible for this service.

The training programme developed by the PIP has borne fruit: over three quarters of companies supported by the PIP have now introduced an internal training system. However, it is important to maintain this support. As the conditions that govern access to European markets continue to evolve, the content of the training manuals will need to be updated with new material. In addition the "pool" of available local experts must be expanded, and the capacity of internal company trainers needs to be continually reinforced in order to ensure the sustainability of in-company training systems.



Maud Delacollette, Bruno Schiffers, Annick Schubert

Giving growers the tools to produce in accordance with the regulations



Roland Levy, a doctor of Chemistry, and Gilles Delhove, an agronomist and specialist in crop protection, are members of the PIP “Regulations” component. They have directed the work on the establishment of technical itineraries, to allow ACP companies to produce in accordance with pesticide regulations currently in force.



Sabine Helbig, Roland Levy, Gilles Delhove, and Béatrice Verdickt

“One of our objective indicators was to develop technical itineraries in accordance with the European regulations for the crops that account for 90% of the flow of fresh fruit and vegetables (excluding bananas and citrus fruits) exported from ACP countries to the EU”, explains Roland Levy, head of the component. “Thanks to the implementation of the studies entrusted to Gilles, by the end of the programme we will have covered 95% of these flows, for traditional and organic crops”, he declares. With the help of specialist institutes (University of Gembloux, NRI, CUECDA, Cirad and Real IPM), 9 technical itineraries have been developed for the main ACP crops (pine-apple, mango, green beans, papaya, avocado, passion fruit, cherry tomato, peas and okra). Between now and the end of April, “Guides to Good Phytosanitary Practices”, concentrating mainly on the “crop protection” aspect, will be finalised for 16 additional minor crops. Specialist bodies (ICIPE, Real

IPM, CIRAD, etc.) as well as independent experts, have participated in the preparation of these guides.

The aim is to give producers the tools necessary to control the main pests and diseases, as well as information on authorised active substances and their application, in due observance of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP). With these guides, ACP producers have all the facts at hand to grow their fruit and vegetables in accordance with European and local regulations governing pesticide maximum residue limits.

The establishment and validation of the technical itineraries has been a long drawn out process that required collaboration between different players, which is not always easy to arrange. “It was not a simple matter to convince producers to provide us with information on the products they are using. It was necessary to send crop specialists on site”, explains Gilles. “Similarly on the side of the pesticide manufacturers, it was also not always easy to obtain complete information on the GAPs that must be observed in order to remain within maximum residue limits,” continues Roland.

At the end of a field trials programme on active substance residues - an essential stage in the validation of the itineraries - it became apparent that for some crop-active substance combinations, “Import Tolerance” (IT) ⁽¹⁾ applications needed to be submitted to the European authorities. This task of the

component, which consists of adjusting the European and local regulations as and when necessary, is extremely important. “To date, 54 IT applications have been submitted and 41 obtained. Another 13 are still being investigated” declares Roland. Over the years, the PIP has developed close links with the responsible authorities in the EU in order to keep track of any changes to the regulations and to be able defend the interests of the ACP producers.

The work does not end here. European regulations are constantly evolving and this will require the itineraries to be adapted accordingly. Furthermore, as Gilles explains, it will also be necessary to take into account the private sector demands, mainly from the retailers that often pose a problem for producers: “To date, we have focused exclusively on the levels of pesticide residues officially fixed by European regulations. But in future it will be necessary to take on board the growing demands of European buyers with regard to environmental protection, for example,” explains Gilles. He goes on to say that “certain private bodies go as far as to ban products that they consider as dangerous, even though these may be authorised by the EC”, and not forgetting that retailers are also capable of cutting the official MRLs by a factor of two or three, without any scientific basis.

(1) An Import Tolerance is a maximum residue limit (MRL) fixed for a food product imported into the EU from a country outside the EU.

Developing a regional approach to product registration

Another mandate entrusted to the “Regulations” component was to ensure that all substances recommended in the technical itineraries were also authorised by the regulatory authorities in the producer countries. Cooperation with ACP regulatory bodies has been established to register the essential phytosanitary products. “In certain ACP countries, few plant protection products were registered for use in vegetable or fruit crops”, explains Roland.

Due to this situation, and to the large number of countries, the PIP chose to develop a regional approach in order to permit and facilitate the registration of these products. Cooperation agreements have been established with the main regional harmonisation bodies in the ACP, such as the Sahelian Pesticide Committee (CSP), which covers 9 countries. A programme of biological efficiency trials – essential to obtaining registration – has also been set up to obtain product authorisations. “We are particularly pleased to have succeeded in obtaining the urgency procedure and mutual recognition. This has vastly accelerated the registration procedures and made them achievable within the timescale of a programme such as the PIP,” explains Roland.

The PIP has also contributed to the setting up and running of other bodies such as the Central African Pesticides Committee (CPAC) which brings together 6 countries under a joint registration procedure, and which have also adopted the urgency procedure. In the English-speaking countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, progress is also being made with the South African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC).

“It is thanks to the establishment of cooperation networks between the international players, in Brussels and in the ACP, that we have been able to achieve these results in the area of harmonisation of registration procedures”, concludes Roland.

Alerting, informing and raising awareness

The tasks of informing our target audience about the programme, and of laying down efficient PIP communication channels to reach them, falls to the PIP “Information and Communication” Component. This operates hand in hand with the other PIP components in order to get essential information across to programme beneficiaries in a manner that is as accessible and relevant as possible.

“The first essential step” explains Emmanuel Bourcelet, Head of the Component, “was to alert professionals in the ACP-EU horticultural supply chain about changes to European regulations in the area of food safety and consumer protection.” Operators in the supply chain had to be made aware of the serious market access difficulties that they would face if they did not adopt practices that complied with the new European rules. The aim was also to encourage their participation in the PIP by explaining how they stood to gain from the support offered by the programme. Very quickly several initiatives were launched and tools created such as leaflets presenting the programme, a website, the development of an MRL database, etc.

Over time, to keep stakeholders up to date with developments, but also to motivate them, technical, regulatory and commercial information was posted on the website. A restricted area was then set up for beneficiaries: an initiative prompted by a desire to foster solidarity between players in the horticultural supply chain. This gave them the opportunity to join a group of professionals pursuing common objectives, creating, in effect, a “club” of producers/exporters.

PIP Infocom is at the service of the other PIP components, particularly to facilitate training initiatives. For example, it has helped to produce a user-friendly

and accessible range of highly technical documents such as the Production Guides and Technical Itineraries, as well as the materials used by the PIP Training Unit (including teaching aids, posters, puzzles, etc.). “We do not only set out to make all the materials produced, and all the information accumulated in the course of the programme, available to as many people as possible, but also to make them applicable outside the framework of the PIP”, explains Emmanuel. With this in mind, agreements have been signed with consultants and organisations active in the field of agriculture and training so that they can freely use all of the PIP outputs.



Perrine Mahieu and Emmanuel Bourcelet

The component has also developed various electronic supports including the "Toolbox". This is a virtual library made available to beneficiaries, and it offers a solution to the problem of accessing information. The pesticide database, technical itineraries, a glossary, video library, photo library and a question and answer forum are all at the service of users. The Toolbox also allows users to self-tutor in the fields of food safety and traceability. This is a valuable tool for beneficiaries, and one that is adapted to the conditions encountered in ACP countries.

One of the objectives of the component is also to defend the ideas and position of operators in the supply chain. Specific topics, such as private standards or "food miles", are broached through the pages of the PIP Magazine or the electronic newsletters. This creates an opportunity to give a voice to each and every link in the supply chain, as well as to institutional players in the EU and ACP.

Sharing and learning

The PIP has participated in an international network by regularly taking part in exchanges in the arena of market access and development cooperation. The

World Bank, IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development), NRI (Natural Resources Institute), UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation), PAN (Pesticide Action Network) and others belong to this informal network of organisations. These exchanges provide an opportunity to share experiences and collectively draw lessons to achieve more efficient collaboration.

Other initiatives are carried out in cooperation with ACP and European institutions to ensure the visibility of the programme outputs. To this end the film "Aid for Sustainable Trade – The Bean Story" produced by the PIP, also an exhibition of photographs on the same theme, were presented in December 2007 at the General Secretariat of ACP states in Brussels during the Council of Ministers. In January 2008, EuropAid welcomed the PIP to a lunchtime conference during which the public learnt about the COLEACP/PIP through the film, exhibition and exchanges with team members. Other similar initiatives are planned in the coming months.



"The Bean Story", a film produced by the COLEACP, is invaluable for spreading the word about the work carried out in the field by the COLEACP over the past 7 years within the framework of the PIP programme. It was financed by the European Development Fund, and is quite an achievement in its own right. The witness accounts gathered during the preparation of this film, and I am thinking in particular of those of the smallholders and agricultural workers, or those of the administrative managers and exporters, clearly illustrate the involvement and professionalism injected by all the players in the production and export chain into this programme, and clearly underline the expectations of all concerned. This very valuable film should prove useful in publicising the existence of this programme as well as the results harvested to date.

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