



Quality & Conformity Fruit & Vegetables

PIP Magazine

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editorial

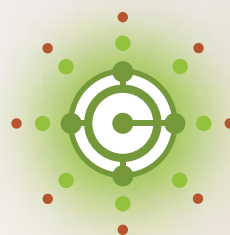
More than six years ago, COLEACP had to face a challenge on which its survival depended: the European Commission considered that it was no longer necessary to finance the ACP-EU operators' association and that from then on it should fend for itself. After a period of restructuring and painful staff cuts, the association had to find the means to provide support to its ACP members in order to cope with the DG SANCO pesticide harmonisation process.

Today, we would like to thank the ACP Secretariat and the European Commission for the confidence placed in us by entrusting us with the implementation of the PIP. This programme has been a success in many respects and has allowed COLEACP to lay the foundations of a new approach.

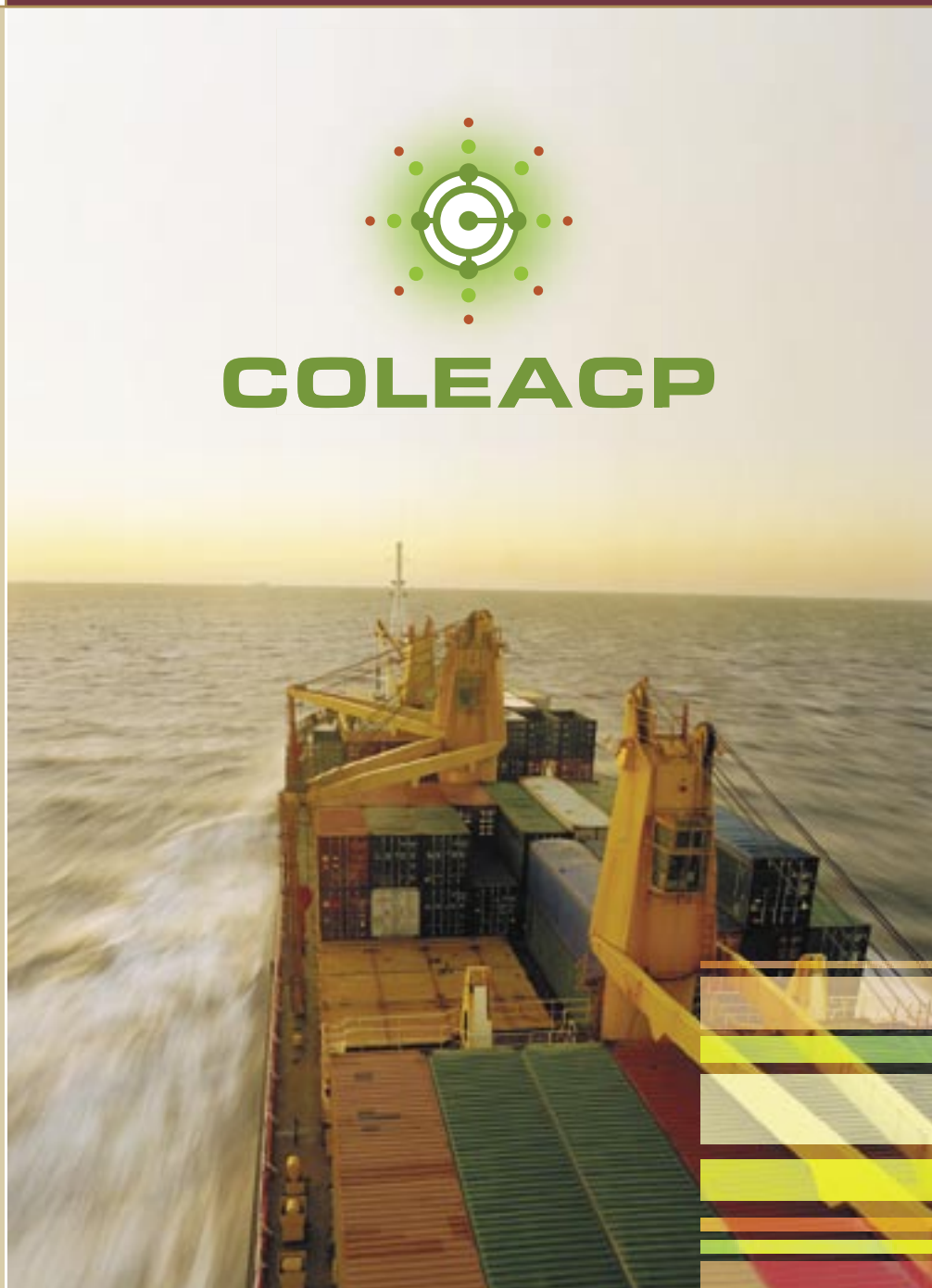
The redeployment strategy of our organisation, presented in the following pages, is proof of the will of COLEACP to maintain this method of financing and remain attentive to the needs of the ACP horticultural sector.

We have full faith in the capacity of the "new COLEACP" to collaborate with all funders in channelling their aid to meet the biggest needs of ACP operators.

Stanley HERI
Head of COLEACP



COLEACP



An experience of a lifetime thanks to COLEACP

by Ricky Wates, Valley Fruit Co., Jamaica.



In 1998 COLEACP introduced a middle management market exchange programme. In Jamaica, not many companies ever think of sending their middle managers or supervisors to their distributors in Europe. This initiative was introduced to assist companies who were willing to join the programme on a cost-sharing basis.

Our company is called Valley Fruit. We are based in Jamaica. We grow and export papaya to the UK and the Netherlands. We thought this initiative was fantastic and decided to sign up two of our supervisors. The objective was to follow a shipment of fruit from field to supermarket and witness every process along the way. Both of our customers in Europe agreed to host each supervisor at their operations for a week. COLEACP agreed to pay travel expenses and we paid for accommodation and some day-to-day expenses. Most other costs were covered by our distributors in the UK and the Netherlands, Wealmoor Ltd and FTK Holland.



Miss James is a quality control supervisor who works in our packing house. She is in regular contact with our customers on quality issues and this opportunity to travel and put faces to the faxes and e-mails was "an experience of a lifetime" as Miss James put it. Having never left Jamaica before the ten-hour trans-Atlantic flight was her initiation to air travel. On the same flight were 600 boxes of papaya packed that day under her supervision. At Gatwick Airport Miss James was met by the papaya buyer from Wealmoor who showed her how the shipment is unloaded from the plane, passes customs and is trucked to Wealmoor's facilities. At Wealmoor she spent time in every department of the company learning about every process along the way. On her final day she toured some supermarkets where she learned about distribution, price, demand and shelf space. There she saw some of the fruit that she had packed before leaving Jamaica on the supermarket shelves.

Mr. Fulton, our supervisor in charge of field production had a similar positive experience. He packed a shipment and sent it to FTK in the Netherlands where Ms. James met the shipment on its arrival. Members of the FTK team hosted her to a full tour of their facilities and process. FTK sells produce to a large variety of customers and we were surprised to learn that some of our Jamaican papaya was ending up in far away places like Moscow. To us it was amazing to think that from an island in the Caribbean our fruit would travel some 8,000 miles. This is modern trade at its best!

One downside was the weather. We were in Europe in late January. While visiting FTK there was one of those legendary North Sea cold spells where all standing water, lakes and canals were frozen solid. To this day Ms. James marvels at how people can live in a place that is as cold as her deep freeze.

I accompanied Ms. James during that two-week period and shot a video of the trip. I filmed the entire production flow from harvesting, packing, shipping, clearing, and distribution featuring our supervisors on the job. I did this so our farm staff could relate better to the entire experience. One funny episode that was filmed was when one of the boxes coming from our farm were unpacked it was discovered that it didn't have fruit of the same maturity level. We often have problems getting equal maturity levels in each box because when they are being packed they look the same, but on arrival in Europe they are not. One of the boxes that was cleared at FTK was mixed, but since each box bears the identification number of the packer Ms. James was able to point out on camera that the offender had been caught. Naturally there was much laughter.

Thanks to our customers and COLEACP we were able to considerably expand the knowledge of two of our employees who under normal circumstances would not have had the chance to experience this wonderful opportunity.

I hope that in the near future COLEACP can carry out this initiative again.

COLEACP

to enhance the competitiveness of horticultural trade

COLEACP is an inter-professional association comprising ACP and EU private enterprises. The aim of this network is to promote sustainable and competitive horticultural trade between Europe and ACP countries. The year 2006 will be decisive for the organisation as COLEACP will implement its strategy with a view to further promote the competitiveness of ACP horticultural trade.

The COLEACP network is original in its remit and in its membership. The association began operating some 30 years ago in a bid to open European markets to relatively unknown tropical and off-season fruits and vegetables. *"In its early years COLEACP's main task was to promote exotic produce on EU markets,"* says Catherine Guichard, COLEACP's Delegate General. Over time it broadened its activities to adapt to the needs of its members, especially in the areas of trade information, technical and commercial assistance, negotiation and promotion.

COLEACP's membership overarches above the individual interests of competing companies that have come to understand that the challenges they face are best tackled together. Within the organisation the buyer-seller relationship is no longer a barrier to address the challenges of an industry that still offers considerable development opportunities. The traditionally lukewarm relationship between public and private operators has become one of dialogue and partnership thanks to the trust, respect and professionalism instilled by COLEACP.

For many years the European Commission had been a partner who encouraged the association to progress as well as an important source of funding to finance the services COLEACP was providing to the ACP-EU horticulture export sector. In 2000, the Commission encouraged COLEACP to become a financially independent organisation able to exploit its comparative advantage to generate revenue by providing efficient services.

The catalyst in the MRL challenge

The events leading to the creation of PIP go back as far as 1991 when the process of harmonising pesticide legislation began in the EU. But it was not until 1999 that



it became apparent that the lack of scientific data on some plant protection agents used on minor crops would lead to maximum residue limits to be set virtually at zero. Such an event would naturally have had a devastating impact on ACP producers since this affected many of the fresh fruits and vegetables they exported to the EU. Many of them would be at risk of exceeding pesticide residue limits when they used products to eradicate pests or diseases on their crops.

COLEACP was instrumental in mobilising players within the EU and ACP horticulture sector as well as within various Commission Directorates General when the impact of this regulatory change was just beginning to affect the industry. Recognising COLEACP's catalysing role in the pesticide conundrum and acknowledging

its extensive experience with the ACP-EU horticulture sector, the President of the Committee of Ambassadors of the ACP Group of States, solicited in a letter to a high Commission official in 2000, that COLEACP be granted the implementation of the PIP programme.

PIP, a conclusive experience

Nowadays COLEACP is perhaps best known for implementing the PIP programme although COLEACP continues to carry out less-publicised interventions. These include the setting up of the European Ethylene Task Force and diagnostic study on the implications of the new EU Regulation on official feed and food controls.

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ACP countries encouraged to adjust their national control systems

Before the Feed & Food Control Regulation (882/2004) was officially published COLEACP realised that changes in the overall operation of national control systems in the EU would require some adjustments of control systems on the part of third countries, especially in the plant sector.

The ACP Group of States and the Commission asked COLEACP to conduct an impact study on the new regulation requesting that it pay special attention to the implications on ACP exports to EU markets. The COLEACP/PIP published the study in September

2005. It showed that the new regulation does not introduce new technical, safety or quality standards, but that there is a clear need to strengthen the process of adjustment of ACP national control systems to SPS measures.

In line with the general consensus among donor agencies that developing countries should be supported in meeting global SPS requirements the European Commission allocated a budget of €30 million to be available from 2007 to help ACP countries upgrade their national control systems.

The results of PIP are overwhelmingly positive. Many reports by the OECD, World Bank, FAO, and other international organisations suggest that thanks to PIP a significant number of small and medium-sized ACP producers and exporters have survived and that a great many more outgrowers have remained in the ACP horticulture export industry where the multitude of compliance processes would normally have marginalised them.

And PIP proved to be a valuable experience for COLEACP. "PIP demonstrated how it is possible to target ACP producers, even the most vulnerable ones, and provide them quality services on a cost-sharing and demand driven basis," says Catherine Guichard.

A strategy for the next decade

"COLEACP is grateful to the European Commission and the ACP Group of States for the trust they have showed in the association," says Catherine Guichard. While COLEACP has been successfully implementing PIP since 2001, the organisation is keen to build on the success of PIP to strengthen its own position for the future.

A Strategy Group composed of COLEACP board members was created in 2004 with a view to devise a post-PIP strategy. A period of introspection naturally ensued, which included analysing the results of the PIP mid-term review and the appraisal of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses conducted by an independent consultant. "The work leading to this new strategy clearly demonstrated

the need to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the organisation after PIP draws to a close," says Ricky Wates, the President of the Strategy Group.

COLEACP recognises that certain services currently provided by PIP can be maintained and new ones offered, but that doing so requires overcoming a certain number of weaknesses. The organisation's representativeness and internal expertise needs to be reinforced. The association will of course exploit what it does well, namely its demonstrated capacity to detect potential problems and opportunities early on and its ability to bring together public and private players in the industry.

To achieve its new goal COLEACP intends to extend its presence in the field by establishing a number of regional committees, starting with one in Eastern and Southern Africa and another in West Africa, in order to increase the

association's regional support capacity. The committees' main tasks will be to contribute toward greater public/private dialogue and to better respond to the sector's needs. The association's permanent team will also be expanded by a number of additional specialists.

"We are committed to implementing our new strategy and to making COLEACP an organisation that promotes the competitiveness of horticultural trade, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, food safety, human health and environmental protection," says Stanley Heri, the Chairman of the COLEACP Board of Directors. *"We are confident that through our cooperation with the European Commission, other donors and the ACP Group of States, we will be able to address future challenges and opportunities,"* says Mr Heri.

Campaigning to maintain ethylene in use

In 2003 COLEACP became an official "notifier" of ethylene, a gas commonly used for ripening bananas and degreening various fruits and vegetables. Failure to submit a dossier on ethylene under Commission Regulation 91/414 would have meant that ethylene could no longer have been used after 1 January 2006, thus creating major trade problems in the distribution of fresh fruits in Europe.

COLEACP, in close partnership with Freshfel-Europe, launched an initiative that led successfully to the creation

of a European Ethylene Task Force composed of suppliers and users of ethylene. The Task Force submitted a dossier to the Pesticides Safety Directorate in the UK, "rapporteur" to the EU for ethylene, before the deadline set at 30 June 2005. As a consequence, the use of ethylene has been maintained in 2006 until the review of the dossier is completed and allows for a permanent authorisation in future.

Focus on COLEACP members



Papa Amadou Dioum

Director General of CADA (Consortium Africain pour le Développement Agricole), Senegal.

Exports: mango; 350 tonnes. COLEACP member since 2005.

Mr Amadou Dioum's company is a recent member of COLEACP. Papa Amadou Dioum was drawn to COLEACP because it had a reputation of good service to its members. *"COLEACP was known for helping ACP producers export their products to the European Union, for confirming the arrival of products and providing product quality reports,"* says Mr. Dioum. CADA is also

a PIP beneficiary. Some of the company's food safety managers have received training in pest management and hygiene.

Mr Amadou Dioum says that the prices for his products should be more realistic. *"We're investing heavily in food safety,"* he says, *"we'd like COLEACP to support us in our discussions with importers."*



Jean-Pierre Tchato

Director General of Exotropiques, Cameroon.

Exports: pineapples; 1 000 tonnes. COLEACP member since 2003.

Long before becoming a member of COLEACP Mr. Tchato met the French importer SIIM at a COLEACP regional workshop. Today SIIM takes in about 80% of Exotropiques' exports of pineapples. *"It is thanks to COLEACP that I met SIIM,"* says Mr Tchato. COLEACP has also been helpful with *"mediation and training which we couldn't otherwise have had,"* claims Mr Tchato. Through PIP the company also has had a number of its staff trained on the use of pesticides and traceability at collective training and in-company training sessions. *"Exotropiques is also going through the EurepGAP certification process with the help of PIP,"* says Mr Tchato.

"We also made another intervention request because we had problems with black spots on our pineapples. A consultant came, made recommendations to solve the problem and things are much better now," explains Mr Tchato.

Mr Tchato thinks that COLEACP should have more information seminars to help small producers like himself learn more about the European market. *"It should also help producers with financing,"* says Mr Tchato, *"there are now additional costs because of food safety and traceability, but prices remain the same."*



John Henderson

Technical Manager of York Farm, Zambia. Exports: mangetout, peas "sugar snaps", fine beans, baby corn, baby leeks, baby carrots, and chillies; 4 000 tonnes. COLEACP member since 2001.

York Farm has been heavily involved in codes of practice in Zambia, especially as regards pesticides, which is how the company has come into contact with COLEACP. *"COLEACP has especially helped us in keeping up to date on pesticide issues,"* says John Henderson. And with the help of PIP some of York Farm's staff have been trained in traceability, integrated pest management, safe use of pesticides, and other requirements for specific standards.

should be used to limit the use of pesticides," says Mr Henderson, *"they should be steered away from bad agricultural practices."*

Mr Henderson is worried about the duplication of commercial standards and thinks that COLEACP has a role to play in stopping their proliferation. *"It is harder for small-scale producers to reach the first ladder of these standards,"* explains John Henderson, *"the costs represent a higher proportion of their earnings than larger growers and this limits market access."*

John Henderson says that he would like to see COLEACP help growers develop their capabilities further. *"COLEACP assistance*





Sant Mehta

Chairman of Minor, Weir & Willis, Ltd, United Kingdom. Imports: large variety of exotic fruits and vegetables. COLEACP member since 1999. Member of the COLEACP Board of Directors.

Minor, Weir & Willis has been affiliated with COLEACP for quite a long time. *"For the past 15-20 years COLEACP would send us growers, government ministers and others to demonstrate the requirements of the UK market,"* says Sant Mehta. Mr Mehta says that for an importer of exotic fruits and vegetables COLEACP has proved itself especially helpful as a network of producers and exporters and consequently as a source of potential suppliers. *"COLEACP is highly regarded by European importers,"* explains Sant Mehta. *"It was especially good at lobbying when the introduction of MRLs came about."*

However, Mr Mehta says that COLEACP could be more pro-active. *"COLEACP has the potential of being an active lobbying organisation in the normal management of the industry rather than only on a crisis basis,"* explains Mr Mehta, *"but until now it has required some sort of crisis to use that mechanism. We should have some sort of influence in policy making before it becomes policy."* Sant Mehta also believes that COLEACP could do more to marry up importers and exporters. *"That would be incredibly valuable because it could tell producers and exporters that if they want to target this market then this is who they should talk to."*



Vincent Omer-Decugis

Director of SIIM (Société Internationale d'Importation), France. Imports: bananas, pineapples, mangoes, green beans and exotic fruits and vegetables. COLEACP member since 1982. Treasurer of COLEACP.

"COLEACP is the only forum in Europe that brings together in one room ACP producers, European importers, European authorities and other stakeholders to discuss common problems," says Vincent Omer-Decugis. Mr Omer-Decugis says that COLEACP's role as an effective lobbying organisation at national and European level is indispensable. *"The association is also very credible technically in its interaction with standard-setting organisations like OECD and UNECE"* claims Mr Omer-Decugis.

that the fact that PIP targets the private sector has a lot to do with this success.

For SIIM COLEACP has also served as a forum to meet potential suppliers like Exotropiques. Their collaboration is especially fruitful since Exotropiques is not only the largest exporter of pineapples by air from Cameroon but also a purveyor of very high quality products.

"The unique role of COLEACP has made it into a very powerful organisation that has notably lead to the creation of PIP, a great achievement in itself," explains Vincent Omer Decugis. He believes

Mr Omer-Decugis says that he is more than satisfied by COLEACP and he hopes that it will continue to defend the interests of the sector. He claims that if it weren't for COLEACP there would be no one else to support the ACP-EU industry.



Woni sees the benefits of its partnership with PIP and COLEACP

Woni Veg-Fru is a producer of fresh fruits and vegetables based in Kenya. The company's exports to the European Union grew by about 25% in the 2004-2005 season and the company expects 2005-2006 sales to reach 1,000 tonnes, an increase of 18%. *"This achievement is attributable to the valuable support Woni has received from COLEACP and PIP,"* claims Jane Mutiso, the Managing Director of Woni Veg-Fru.

Mrs. Mutiso is optimistic about the company's future. She believes that becoming Eureggap certified and the building of a packhouse complying with the BRC standard will further enhance Woni's export prospects. She says that it will enable Woni *"to add value to existing products and expand our share of the European supermarket sector."*

This success could hardly have been achieved without a helping hand from the PIP Programme. To maintain and potentially increase its business in Europe Woni requested PIP's support in 2003 to help the company comply with EU regulations on food safety and to meet the commercial standards requested by many European importers.

PIP assistance focused primarily on training. The first order of business was to train the company's middle management in training techniques and the latest food safety methods. Ten people were trained on the production side and three on the processing side.

Following these initial training sessions, the agronomists, field technicians and farm managers on the production side became responsible in turn for training the company's outgrowers and farm workers. A total of 107 outgrowers divided into two groups were trained, 33 of which are now Eureggap certified.



The three senior packhouse staff members received training in Good Manufacturing Practices (GPM), HACCP and hygiene. They subsequently trained the workers of the packhouse. Following this exercise the work ethic at the packhouse improved considerably resulting in greater work efficiency and enhanced food safety.

Mrs. Mutiso says she is very grateful for the support COLEACP and PIP have provided them over the past few years. Such assistance will no doubt continue to prove beneficial in increasing its production of quality produce for many years to come.

COLEACP in unique position to facilitate trade growth



Gary Quince is the Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific at the European Commission's EuropeAid Co-operation Office. Mr Quince has extensive experience working with issues on Africa and Asia. He is a former head of the European Commission Delegation in Kenya and has also worked at the Commission delegations in Ghana and the Pacific.

What were the main objectives behind the European Union's decision to provide support to the ACP horticulture sector?

The recent "European Consensus" reconfirms that the primary goal of EU Development Policy is poverty reduction. This can only be achieved on the basis of growing economies, including the active participation of ACP countries in international trade. A number of ACP countries have flourishing horticultural sub-sectors that not only supply the domestic market but also successfully export to the EU market. It is vital to strengthen the capacities of ACP public and private institutions and operators to respond to ever increasing market requirements, including consumer safety standards, thereby enabling them to continue to export successfully.

How would you rate the results of the PIP programme?

The PIP programme is an integral part of the EU's strategy to strengthen national trading capacities in ACP countries so that they can compete successfully in a globalised economy. To this end, the PIP programme has provided essential analysis and information, established networks among stakeholders and trained experts in the horticultural industry in order to ensure compliance with EU maximum residue levels for pesticides.

How do you view the role of an organisation like COLEACP?

Being a private non-profit association with longstanding expertise in the horticultural trade, COLEACP plays an important role in bringing together horticultural market operators from ACP countries and Europe,

thereby fostering ACP-EU trade. Having its roots in linking ACP and European market operators, it is in a unique position to facilitate trade growth.

Was an organisation like COLEACP the right choice for implementing the PIP programme?

A multitude of institutions and organisations, public and private, are involved in the implementation of programmes financed under the European Development Fund. As a private business based ACP-EU initiative, COLEACP shares our development objectives and we regard the organisation as a competent and committed implementing partner.

Does the Commission anticipate reinforcing its support to ACP countries in complying with EU food safety regulatory requirements?

Indeed, food safety issues have been a major concern of ACP countries, particularly in respect to the EU Official Feed and Food Control Regulation that came into force earlier this year. Through the European Development Fund (EDF) the European Commission is supporting a number of significant initiatives that address these issues. In addition to the PIP and other initiatives two additional interventions are in the pipeline, one that will enhance the participation of African nations in SPS standard-setting organisations and a capacity building project for SPS measures in ACP countries.



“Having an organisation like COLEACP to implement PIP was definitely a plus”



Héléne Fiagan is an expert on ACP access to international markets at the ACP Group of States Secretariat in Brussels. She saw the birth of the PIP programme in 2001 and has closely monitored its evolution since then.

Could you describe the need for supporting the ACP horticulture sector?

When DG SANGO decided to withdraw a number of pesticides over a five year-period, the manufacturers of these pesticides no longer wanted to support these products. The MRLs for these pesticides no longer applied and their residue levels dropped down to 0, which is virtually impossible to achieve.

COLEACP informed the ACP Group of States that something should be done. It organised meetings in ACP countries and Brussels informing importers and exporters about the new EU rules and gathering their views. That was before 2002. Then a study was carried out to analyse how ACP producers could be helped to comply with the new EU regulations and the requirements of EU importers.

The PIP was then created, but the total financing amount of the programme was not enough to cover all exported produce from ACP countries. But if producers were trained to comply for one crop then they would know what to do for other crops. The programme has been helpful in providing the infrastructure to help producers as well as in promoting good growing practices.

Was an organisation like ColeACP the right choice for implementing the PIP programme?

Having an organisation like COLEACP to implement PIP was definitely a plus. It's an organisation that has been around for a long time and having extensive experience in promoting ACP exports to the European Union they are very knowledgeable about how the sector works.

How do you view the future of the ACP fruit and vegetable sector?

The sector has a future if the appropriate means are put into it. It couldn't have done it on its own. Programmes like PIP have helped but they need to ensure the long-term viability of the sector. Five years for a programme like PIP is not enough. Producers are doing much better but PIP should be extended to further build the capacity of the sector.

PIP focused essentially on the private sector but other programmes should focus on the public sector because it is they who must ensure that production is safe and complies with EU norms. To this end the funds put aside for Food and Feed should be put into action as soon as possible.



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