

2024

ANNUAL REPORT

DRAFT



COLEAD

Message from the Chairman and the General Delegate

The year 2024 was a pivotal moment for COLEAD, at the crossroads of a world in transition and an organization undergoing transformation. Amidst an international landscape fraught with geopolitical instability, climate challenges, and economic tensions, we remained steadfast in our mission to fortify agri-food systems, making them more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. Through the implementation of its programmes and projects, COLEAD has successfully increased the impact of its actions by enriching its technical resources, developing its digital tools, and revitalizing its communities. The diversity of our actions—from online training to technical assistance in the field and inspiring, innovative initiatives, such as highlighting remarkable agripreneurs and holding the international competition “Voices of the Earth”—illustrates our desire to act on several levels and inspire those closest to producers, SMEs, and partner institutions.

Our strategic and operational focus is closely aligned with major international and European priorities, particularly the European Union's Global Gateway initiative. This initiative aims to build equitable and sustainable partnerships that support essential transitions. COLEAD is fully committed to this ambition by providing concrete support for the green transition, promoting agroecological practices, adapting value chains to climate impacts, and integrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles into agricultural sectors. Digital transformation is another pillar of the Global Gateway and is also at the heart of our work. We develop e-learning modules accessible to all, digitize our technical tools, and launch innovative information and educational platforms.

Regarding education and skills, we invest in the continuous training of field actors, coaching of young agricultural entrepreneurs, and production of teaching tools adapted to local needs. Finally, in line with the *Team Europe* approach, we are anchoring our development in a logic of sustainable partnerships by strengthening our links with European Union delegations, bilateral agencies, and all partners committed to inclusive and resilient agri-food development.



Stephen Mintah

*COLEAD's
Chairman*



Jeremy Knops

*General Delegate
of COLEAD*

The year 2024 will be marked by the launch of a major project: the collective development of our 2030 strategy. We want this new strategy to be ambitious, inclusive, and fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be based on a holistic approach founded on the theory of change. This approach will allow us to expand our efforts according to the three pillars of sustainability—economic, environmental, and social—and strengthen our ability to demonstrate the impact of our actions, from local to global levels.

We believe this strategy can only emerge from an open, participatory, iterative process that brings together the expertise and aspirations of all stakeholders contributing to our mission. That is why we have initiated a broad dialogue with our members, financial and technical partners, partner beneficiaries partners, and institutional allies. Together, we have the opportunity to conceive of and build a stronger, more agile, and more committed organization.

As COLEAD embarks on a new phase, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to all those who have contributed to the progress made in 2024 and who are committed to working with us to shape the future. Faced with the urgent need for action and the many transitions that lie ahead, it is through cooperation, a shared vision, and mutual trust that we will be able to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

COMMITMENT



5 COLEAD values

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**Why
we are
taking
action**

1. WHY WE ARE TAKING ACTION

The year 2024 provided yet another illustration of the structural vulnerability of low- and lower-middle-income countries. Geopolitical crises, climate shocks, trade tensions, and food inflation are interconnected phenomena that have severely strained the agri-food systems of the EU's partner countries. Their fragility is neither cyclical nor accidental. Rather, it is rooted in an accumulation of imbalances at three levels: global (macro), ecosystem (meso), and local (micro). This systemic understanding of the problems underpins COLEAD's *raison d'être*.

GLOBAL INSTABILITY DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS THE MOST VULNERABLE COUNTRIES (MACRO LEVEL)

In 2024, the ongoing war in Ukraine and renewed violence in the Middle East disrupted global supply chains, fuelling inflation in food prices and agricultural inputs. Geopolitical tensions led to increased market volatility, directly impacting net importing countries dependent on seeds, fertilizers, equipment, and commodities.

The climate crisis reached a new threshold in 2024 with record global temperatures, an increase in extreme weather events, and crop losses due to flooding in East Africa, drought in Southern Africa, and soil salinization in coastal West Africa. The poorest countries, which are the least responsible for climate change, are bearing the brunt of its consequences without having the means to respond.

Finally, the conditions for accessing international markets, particularly European markets, continued to evolve rapidly. In 2024, the European Union implemented new regulations: stricter traceability requirements

for imported organic products, regulations on products contributing to imported deforestation, and stricter controls on pesticide residues. These standards, although legitimate from an environmental and societal point of view, pose a major technical challenge for producers who have limited resources to anticipate, understand, and apply these new requirements.

Consequently, the most vulnerable countries are caught in a bind: they must confront mounting global challenges while grappling with increasingly complex rules, lacking adequate support, political leeway, and financial resources.

VALUE CHAINS THAT ARE STILL TOO FRAGILE AND AN UNFAVORABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT (MESO LEVEL)

Global shocks are exacerbated by structural weaknesses affecting the organization and competitiveness of agri-food value chains. These chains are often fragmented, poorly industrialized, and dominated by a multitude of small units with weak links between them. A lack of coordination among stakeholders (producers, processors, and exporters), inadequate transportation and storage infrastructure, and poor logistics hinder economic efficiency and reduce post-harvest losses.

Support services, such as agricultural advice, access to quality inputs, market information, and access to credit, are still inaccessible to producers or unsuited to their needs. Public institutions lack the means to provide effective support or enforce standards. Authorities responsible for SPS and food quality are under-resourced, limiting countries' ability to meet growing consumer and market demands.

More broadly, the business environment often hinders the development of modern, inclusive, and sustainable agriculture. This is due to difficulties accessing long-term financing, insecure land tenure, regulatory instability, and low recognition of producer organizations. The absence of coherent public policies or sectoral strategies that align with local needs prevents structural transformation dynamics from emerging.

Ultimately, actors in the agri-food sector struggle to meet market requirements, integrate innovative technologies, and comply with sustainability standards (including SPS). This hinders long-term development and makes the agri-food sector more vulnerable to external crises.

PRODUCERS AND SMALL-TO-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ARE EXPOSED AND LACK SUPPORT (MICRO LEVEL)

On the ground, 2024 was a particularly difficult year for millions of producers and small agri-food businesses, with disproportionate effects on women and young people. In East Africa, for instance, severe flooding led to significant losses of vegetable crops, directly impacting the income and food supplies of family farms. These impacts were especially harsh for women farmers, who are often responsible for subsistence crops and household food security, yet have less access to climate-resilient infrastructure, insurance mechanisms, and recovery funding.

Meanwhile, in several countries, young farmers—particularly young women—faced persistent barriers to forming or joining cooperatives. These included not only a lack of technical capacity and access to credit, but also discriminatory land tenure systems, limited representation in decision-making spaces, and cultural norms that

restrict women's active participation in the agricultural economy. Without targeted support and inclusive policies, these groups risk being further marginalized in the face of compounding crises.

Small producers in horticultural sectors face a double challenge: integrating demanding quality, traceability, and certification value chains while maintaining profitable production in a context of rising costs and high climate variability. Without accessible technical advisory services, strong market links, or organizational support, many abandon the sector or switch to the informal market.

Finally, the issue of value distribution remains central. Producers capture too little added value, while requirements for health compliance, packaging, and logistics are increasing. Without investment in local processing, compliance with standards, or collective infrastructure, producers remain at the bottom of the chain and are exposed to post-harvest losses and price instability.



A NECESSARY STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

COLEAD's work is grounded in the understanding that global crises can only be overcome by strengthening supportive environments and equipping producers to take charge of their own development. The events of 2024 demonstrate that agricultural issues extend beyond production; they intersect with commercial, climatic, institutional, social, and technological dimensions. COLEAD addresses this complexity and these injustices. **Structurally transforming the agri-food sector toward greater sustainability, inclusion, and resilience** is not just one ambition among many—it is a condition for collective survival. COLEAD is working toward this transformation through its programmes, particularly Fit For Market Plus (FFM+) and AGRINFO.



GLOBAL OUTLOOK 2024: VULNERABLE COUNTRIES ON THE FRONT LINE

The year 2024 was marked by the convergence of multiple crises that affected the entire planet, but whose impacts were particularly severe in lower-income countries.

Economy: An Uneven Recovery

While global growth rose slightly to around 3.2%, according to the IMF, vulnerable countries saw their prospects compromised by persistent inflation, rising interest rates, and the depreciation of their local currencies. In these countries, the high cost of food and energy imports has widened trade deficits, increased external debt (54 countries devote more than 10% of their revenues to debt servicing, according to UNCTAD) and slowed investment in productive sectors and rural infrastructure.

Society: increased food insecurity and precariousness

Social inequalities have deepened. According to the WFP and FAO, more than 280 million people suffer from acute food insecurity, the majority of whom live in Africa and South Asia. Rural areas are the most affected, particularly due to low agricultural incomes, lack of access to basic services, and persistent armed conflicts (Sahel, Horn of Africa, DRC, etc.). Young people and women are particularly disadvantaged: in 2024, less than 10% of rural women in the countries covered by COLEAD will have access to land titles, agricultural credit, or appropriate vocational training (source: FAO, SOFA 2024).

Environment: Accelerating Impacts of Climate Change

2024 became the hottest year on record, with extreme heat waves and significant climate anomalies. In East Africa, floods displaced hundreds of thousands of people, while drought decimated maize and vegetable crops in Southern Africa.

Access to water has become critical in several Sahelian areas, exacerbating tensions between farmers and herders (sources: IPCC, ReliefWeb, 2024). The climate vulnerability of Southern countries is all the more pronounced as they have few insurance mechanisms, few warning systems, and limited capacity to adapt due to chronic underfunding of agriculture.



2

**Who
we are**

2. WHO WE ARE

Founded in 1973, COLEAD (Comité de Liaison Entrepreneuriat Agriculture Développement) has its roots in tropical production and trade between the European Union and its partner countries. It has grown into an international organization working to transform the agri-food sector towards greater sustainability, inclusion, and resilience.

In practice, COLEAD is now a resource and expertise center, as well as a network of communities mobilized to implement programs and projects in line with its mission: *“To facilitate and implement all actions that directly and/or indirectly increase the contribution of the agricultural and horticultural sectors to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”*

Since 2015

Network + toolbox to help achieve the SDGs (agri-food sector, low- and middle-income countries, historical focus on Africa)

2030

Strategy currently being developed through a participatory process throughout 2025

1973-2000

Technical service working with DG 8 of the EC (horticulture sector, ACP-EU trade)

2000-2015

Programme manager for all ACP programmes (PIP, EDES) for the EC (agri-food sector, ACP countries)

Created in 1973

By economic operators in the international fruit and vegetable trade between Africa and Europe, as a non-profit association (under French law of 1901)

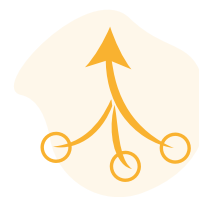
COLEAD: RESOURCE AND EXPERTISE CENTER

COLEAD's internal expertise is organized into seven specific areas, which correspond to seven departments and three major activity divisions:



FACILITATING MARKET ACCESS

- **Market Information:** Provides strategic information to agri-food sector stakeholders through market intelligence and business development services, enabling them to make informed decisions about exploiting new market opportunities.
- **Regulations and Standards:** Monitoring and providing information on market access, competitiveness, conditions, and requirements (with a focus on the EU market) and defending the key role of the agri-food sector in achieving the SDGs.
- **Research and Innovation (Brokerage):** Generating the knowledge, skills, and technologies needed to facilitate the transition of agriculture to more sustainable food systems.



STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

- **Technical Assistance:** Responding to the needs of private and public stakeholders by developing technical resources and expertise and establishing and coordinating the implementation of operational action plans.
- **Training:** Strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders to access national, regional, and international markets in a sustainable manner by complying with SPS regulations and market requirements while adapting to changes in their operating environment (e.g., climate change) and applying the best business management practices.



INCREASING IMPACT ON THE SDGS

- **Networks and Alliances:** Contribute to national, regional, and global alliances and networks by fostering trusting, sustainable, and transparent partnerships between the public and private sectors, universities, research institutions, and civil society organizations.

- **Access to Financing:** Improving investment conditions and access to appropriate financial solutions for agri-food MSMEs by supporting investor readiness (demand side) and collaborating with financial advisors, intermediaries, and investors who share COLEAD's vision and values (supply side).

COLEAD'S TECHNICAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE VIA SPECIFIC PLATFORMS

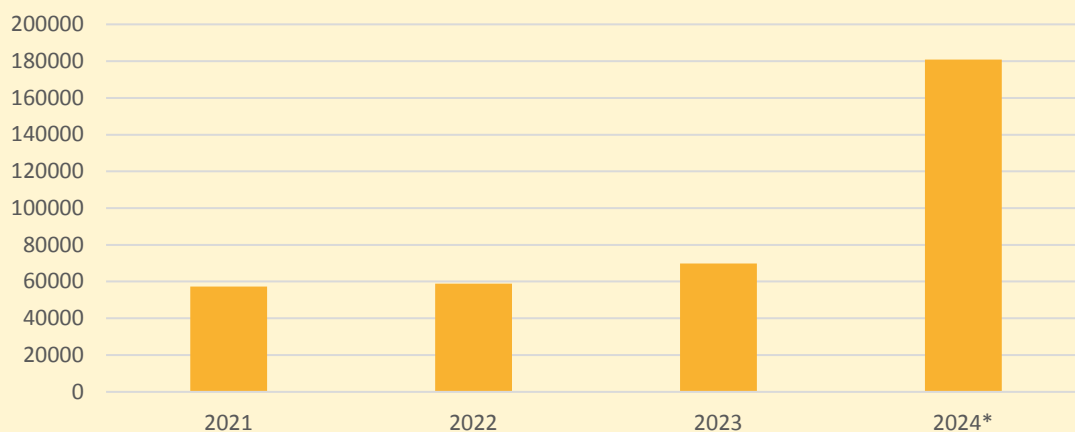
COLEAD has developed an online resource center comprising:

- **A vocational training system (ISO 21001 certified)**
- **Online databases for monitoring global trade flows of agricultural and food products**
- **An information and monitoring system for EU agrifood policies and regulations**
- **A crop protection database (good agricultural practices)**
- **A library of technical documents**
- **A series of international webinars and an entrepreneurs' forum.**

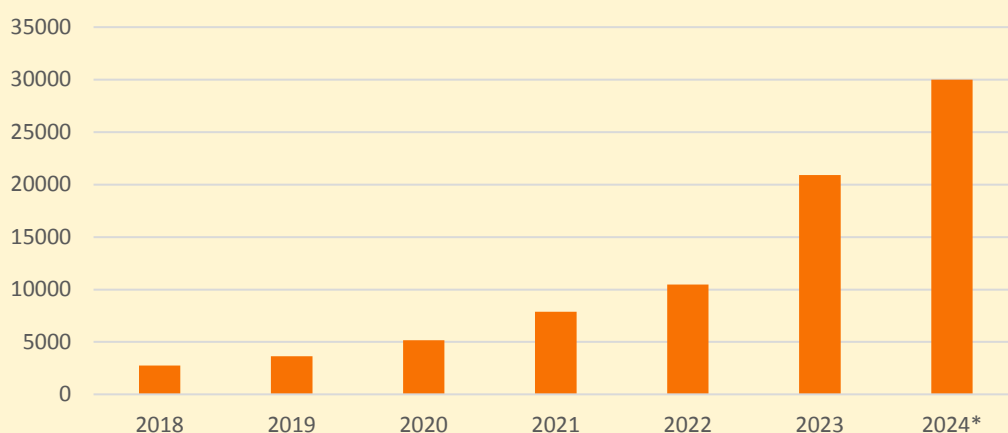
In 2024, the COLEAD Resource Center made several significant advances. The toolkit was enriched with valuable new content, including scientific, technical, and marketing resources, to better meet the needs of network users. Progress was made in improving digital integration and the user experience. Technological solutions incorporating artificial intelligence were successfully tested or piloted; however, their integration into COLEAD's daily operations is still pending. The toolkit was promoted more widely as part of communication and information dissemination activities carried out throughout the year. The renewal of ISO 21001 certification in November 2024 confirmed the robustness of COLEAD's training management system.

Finally, monitoring the use of resources by third parties has been strengthened. All these initiatives will require further development in 2025 and beyond, and significant efforts are still needed to increase the level of engagement and active use of these tools by all stakeholders.





Evolution of number of visits on COLEAD's websites
(excl. e-learning)



Evolution of number of registered users on the e-learning platform

COLEAD, NETWORK OF COMMUNITIES

COLEAD is a network of private and public stakeholders involved in the sustainable development of the agri-food sector. COLEAD is a network of companies, professional organizations, experts, and private and public partners working in the agricultural and food sector, the world of development, and the transmission of knowledge and expertise.

More specifically, the COLEAD ecosystem includes:

— IN THE FIELD

- A team and board of directors of 100 committed men and women based in Europe and Africa (Nairobi, Lomé)
- 500 members of the association

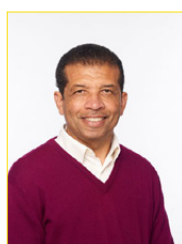
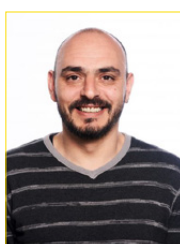
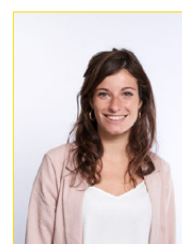
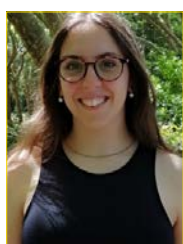
Global regions covered by COLEAD's digital training and information systems

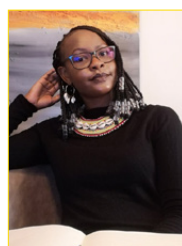
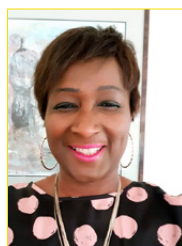
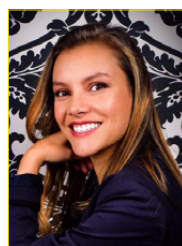


AFRICA	52.90%
EUROPE	27.99%
NORTH AMERICA	8.04%
ASIA	6.73%
CENTRAL AMERICA	2.18%
SOUTH AMERICA	1.49%
OCEANIA	0.66%
OTHERS	0.02%

- 1,200 local experts in 50 countries
- Thousands of partner operators in the agricultural and food sector (mainly in the EU and Africa)
- **ONLINE**
 - 30,000 users of training.colead.link
 - 10,000 participants in the webinar series (agrinnovators.org)
- 10,000 visitors per month on Agrinfo.eu
- Covering 180 countries, including ACP countries and 143 low-income EU partner countries

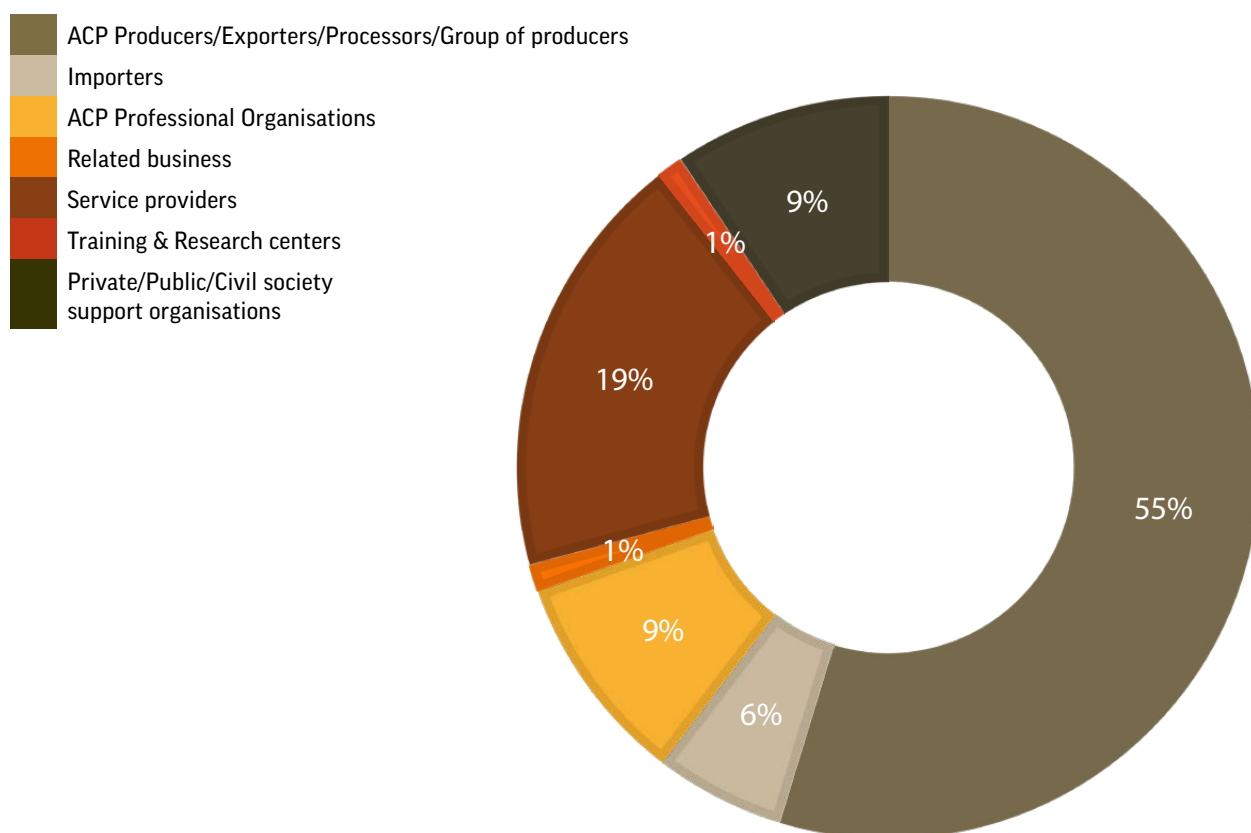
FOCUS ON THE COLEAD TEAM





FOCUS ON COLEAD MEMBERS

At the end of 2024, the association had 511 members, broken down as follows



Thanks to the opening of COLEAD working committees to members, the creation of WhatsApp communities for each working committee and country, and an increase in member meetings during COLEAD technical missions and the annual General Assembly, the association's activities were strengthened in 2024.



BENIN



CÔTE D'IVOIRE



ETHIOPIA



GHANA



GUINEA



KENYA



MADAGASCAR



NIGERIA



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



SIERRA LEONE



TOGO



UGANDA

AND MORE...

THE FOCUS IS ON... THE LAUNCH OF THE COLEAD EXPERT TRAINER CERTIFICATION PROCESS

In 2024, COLEAD began a significant initiative to enhance the quality and recognition of its network of expert trainers by introducing a COLEAD trainer certification. As an extension of the ISO 21001-certified Training Management System, this certification will validate trainers' skills, whether acquired through professional experience or capacity-building courses offered by COLEAD (or others). Trainers will be able to follow a progressive training path structured around job descriptions that define the expected skills according to the different functions performed (facilitation, coaching, educational design, etc.).

The certification will enable experts to obtain certificates corresponding to their validated skills with official recognition within COLEAD and beyond by other partners or sponsors. A public database will compile a register of certified trainers, thereby strengthening the credibility and transparency of COLEAD's network of trainers. Based on the principles of ISO 17024, the process has been designed to be operational quickly while remaining scalable. It takes into account the expectations expressed during the work carried out with the expert working committee in 2024.

COLEAD 2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY: STRATEGIC STRENGTHENING AND GLOBAL EXPANSION

On June 27, 2024, COLEAD held its Annual General Meeting in Rungis, bringing together members from over twenty countries in person and online. The meeting provided an opportunity to share updates from the past year and validate the association's strategic directions. In a global context marked by climate and economic disruption, COLEAD emphasized its commitment to adapting and developing. The discussions highlighted the association's strategic directions, team and member consolidation, partnership extension, financial security, and effective programme implementation to support sustainable agri-food systems. COLEAD's programmes' activities now cover more than 180 countries, with a particular focus on the African continent. COLEAD's key strengths lie in its human resources: a team and a Board of Directors of 100 committed men and women, around 20 national relays, an association of 500 members, and a network of 1,200 experts. The team is mobilized across COLEAD's three main operational centers in Europe (Brussels and Rungis), East Africa (Kenya), and West Africa (Togo).



FOCUS ON INSPIRING AGRIPRENEURS FROM THE COLEAD NETWORK!

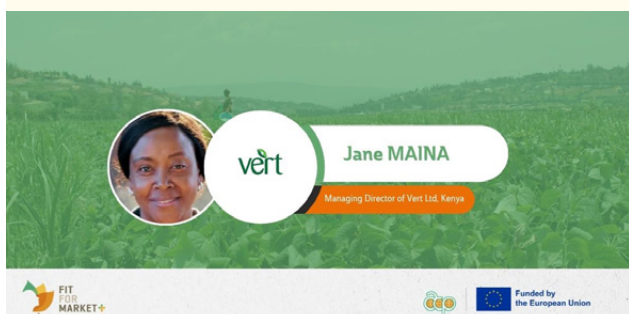
COLEAD regularly highlights inspiring individuals from across the network through its information and communication channels.

They are also featured in monthly articles in the COLEAD newsletter and invited to speak at events on topics relevant to the global agri-food system, especially in vulnerable regions.

COLEAD ensures that inspiring women entrepreneurs receive special recognition.

The [Agrinnovators.org](https://agrinnovators.org) platform, developed by COLEAD, features a gallery of nearly 200 portraits of innovative and inspiring individuals.

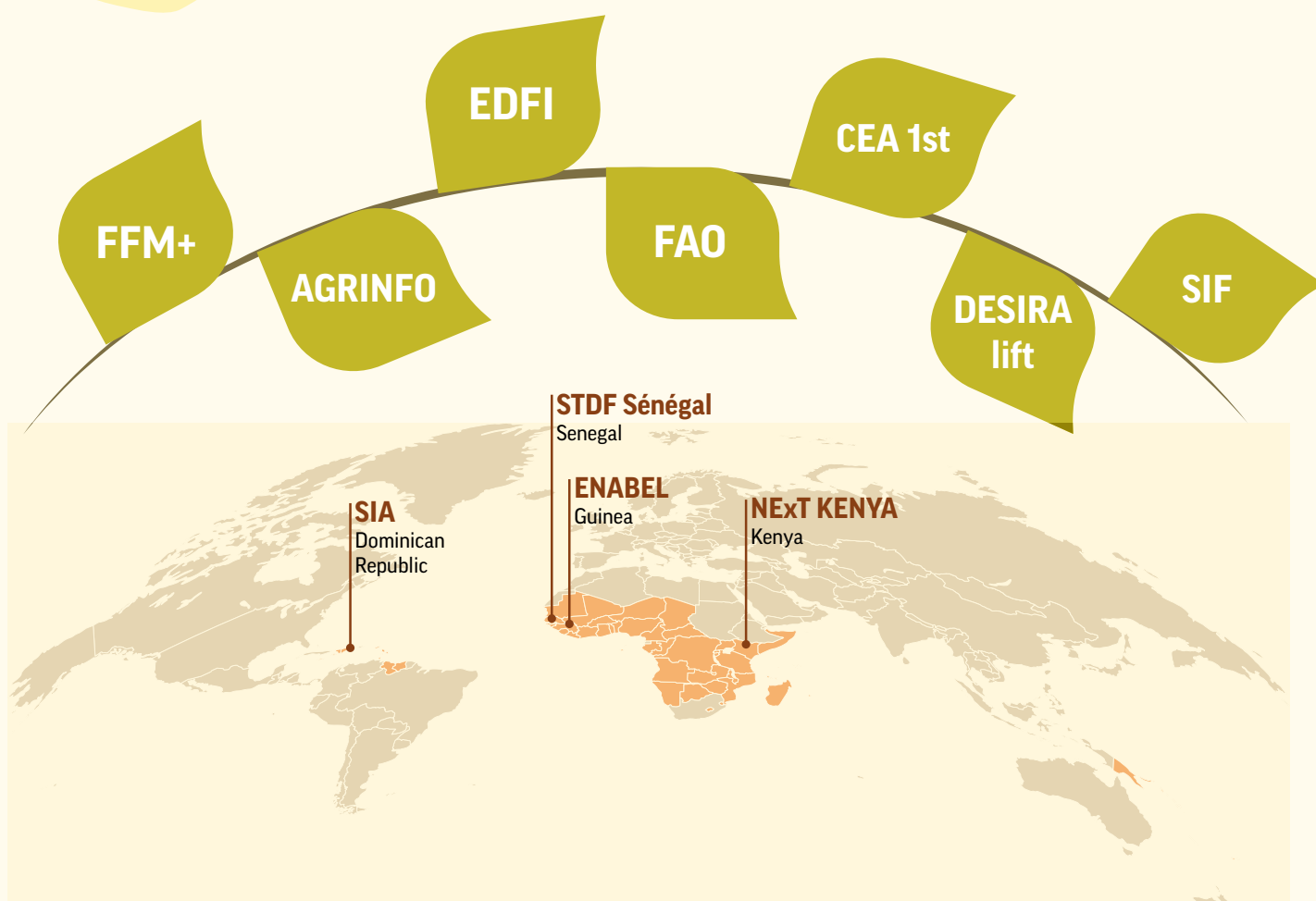
TWO EXAMPLES OF PROFILES PUBLISHED IN 2024



Jane Maina has been the managing director of Vert Ltd., a Kenya-based company that specializes in producing and exporting fresh and processed products to the EU and the US, since 2006. Portrait published in October 2024.



Hesma Tyson is the CEO and founder of the Caribbean Specialty Foods Company in Trinidad and Tobago. She founded the company in 2008 with the goal of changing the way hot sauces were made by eliminating artificial ingredients and showcasing her favorite condiment on an international stage.



These technical resources and community networks are used to implement projects and programs. National programmes and projects complement global, multi-country programmes, enabling more in-depth work and a response to individual needs within a country. National programmes and projects benefit from the achievements of global programmes.

FAO Multi-country programmes and projects active in 2024 **Project Country** National programmes and projects active in 2024 Countries receiving technical assistance

PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS ACTIVE IN 2024

Fit For Market Plus (FFM+), AGRINFO, SIA Dominican Republic, STDF Senegal, EDFI AGRIFI, CSRD Groupe Omer-Decugis, CEA FIRST, VC4D, NExT Kenya, DeSIRA-LIFT, Shared Interest Foundation, FAO e-learning, FAO-IPPC, Unido Guinea.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2024

FFM SPS, FANDC Guinea, UNIDO Guinea Bissau.

PROGRAMS DESIGNED IN 2024 AND TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2025

ENABEL Guinea, PASA Côte d'Ivoire; PRCC AFD; DUE Ethiopia; DUE Uganda.

All of the programmes and projects implemented by COLEAD are described on the organization's website under the following heading:
<https://www.colead.link/programmes-page/>

THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS PLACED THEIR TRUST IN US IN 2024:



Enabel



OECD



STANDARDS *and* TRADE
DEVELOPMENT FACILITY







3

**How
we act
and impact
the SDGS**

3. HOW WE ACT AND IMPACT THE SDGS

OUR APPROACH TO CONTRIBUTING TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR INTO A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM AND OUR IMPACT

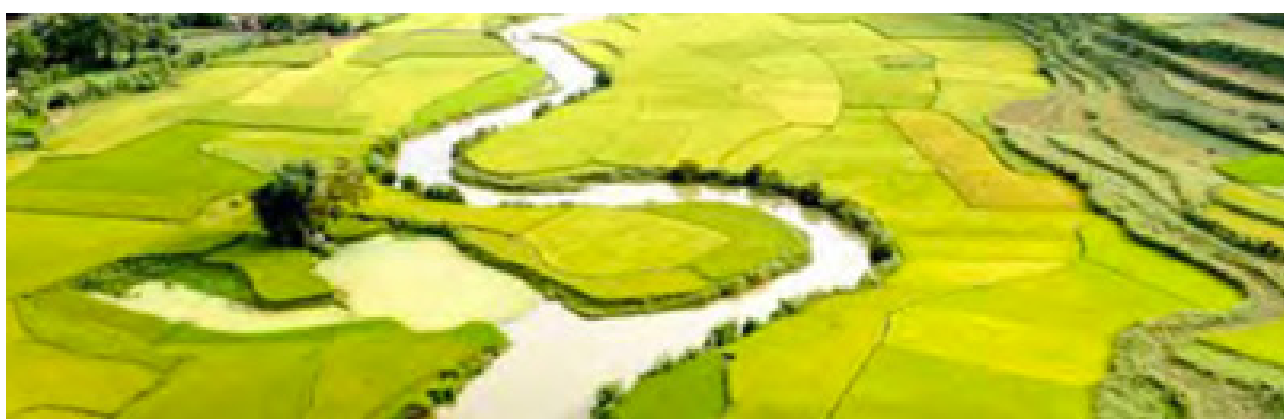
Level of problems and solutions MACRO	Problems Low-income and lower middle-income countries are vulnerable to external shocks.	COLEAD actions CREATE, TEST, INSPIRE, INFLUENCE
Level of problems and solutions MESO	Problems The agri-food sectors in vulnerable countries suffer from a lack of resources, limiting their adoption of sustainable practices and their competitiveness.	COLEAD actions INFORM, FACILITATE, ENCOURAGE, TRAIN
Level of problems and solutions MICRO	Problems MSMEs, including smallholder farmers, play a key role in sustainable development and food security, but their access to resources is limited.	COLEAD actions INFORM, TRAIN, SUPPORT, TRANSFORM

Recognizing the complexity of the food system, COLEAD acknowledges that sustainability requires consideration of numerous global and local factors. One of the main challenges of agricultural transition and development policy is addressing sustainability issues within diverse farms that vary in scale of operation, agronomic practices, agroecological conditions, socioeconomic circumstances, and trade in diversified markets. COLEAD also acknowledges that what is considered sustainable in one context may not be in another, necessitating context-specific solutions

that balance economic, environmental, and social criteria. COLEAD therefore takes a multi-level, integrated approach to the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental, and social.

This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the priorities of the European Union's Global Gateway. It improves the resilience of vulnerable countries' agri-food systems and enables them to seize opportunities for sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SUSTAINABILITY	TYPE OF PROBLEMS	CONTRIBUTIONS/SOLUTIONS COLEAD
ECONOMIC	Operators and their value chains are too often uncompetitive, threatening their economic viability. Human, technical, and financial resources are insufficient and ill-suited to local needs and contexts.	Strengthen operators' capacity to adapt to market requirements and needs, increase their access to finance, and support them in overcoming economic, climate, and health vulnerabilities that threaten their stability and growth potential to increase resilience.
ENVIRONMENTAL	Operators and their value chains are not resilient to climate change. Environmental degradation is caused by harmful practices that are still too common (e.g., soil, water, and air pollution).	Improve operators' practices regarding respect for and management of their environment, including soil, water, air, waste management, biodiversity, and inputs. Develop innovative practices that are resilient to the negative impacts of climate change and respectful of the environment as a whole.
SOCIETAL	Small producers—particularly women and young people—workers, and entrepreneurs do not have decent living standards.	Contribute to fairer trade practices. Include small producers, women, and young people in all actions as much as possible. Contribute to improving working conditions. Facilitate participatory governance.

ACTING AT THE MACRO LEVEL: ADVOCATING FOR FAIRER GLOBAL BALANCES

The organization is actively engaged in international advocacy for greater policy coherence for development, focusing on climate, economic, and social justice. It defends the interests of low- and middle-income countries by adapting international standards and regulatory frameworks to local realities.

COLEAD develops and promotes concrete, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable solutions that are tailored to specific local agroecological and socioeconomic contexts.

COLEAD creates information systems that make knowledge accessible to as many people as possible, especially regarding available resources, market access conditions (primarily to the EU market), and innovations. In collaboration with research centres and technical partners, COLEAD designs and implements pilot projects to test, validate, and disseminate innovative agricultural practices. The results and lessons learned from these pilot initiatives are systematically documented and shared openly to encourage their adoption by a wide range of stakeholders in partner countries and beyond.

Inspiration is at the heart of COLEAD's approach beyond technical implementation. COLEAD promotes and disseminates success stories, best practices, and proven innovations through testimonials, webinars, case studies, and exchange platforms. This approach aims to motivate farming communities, decision-makers, and economic operators to commit to the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems by demonstrating that change is necessary, possible, and full of opportunities.

This type of action contributes to the Global Gateway's "Sustainable Partnerships" priority in close cooperation with EU delegations and the Team Europe approach.



Support for multi-stakeholder platforms, co-construction of series with partners (e.g., PAFO, IICA, UN Women, OECD), sustainable practice guides, advocacy for greater climate justice and fairer trading practices, etc.



A monitoring and information system for EU agrifood policies and regulations



Support facility aimed at **strengthening the impact of the European DeSIRA initiative** to support research and innovation actors in the Global South in accelerating the sustainable, climate-smart and equitable transformation of agri-food systems



TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Team Europe approach, EU delegations

ACTING AT THE MESO LEVEL (I.E., AT THE VALUE CHAIN AND/OR COUNTRY LEVEL), COLEAD STRUCTURES ECOSYSTEMS AND STRENGTHENS VALUE CHAINS

COLEAD works to sustainably strengthen agricultural value chains and their environments at the country level, develop the capacities of local institutions, disseminate modern agricultural practices, and facilitate access to markets and finance. COLEAD takes a systemic approach, integrating the private and public ecosystems of economic operators (professional associations, competent authorities, training centres, financial institutions, etc.).

COLEAD also facilitates sectoral dialogue by creating spaces for consultation and coordination between public and private actors. COLEAD encourages synergies and the joint development of sectoral strategies, as well as the sharing of experiences at the national and regional levels. This networking work aims to strengthen the cohesion of agricultural ecosystems, identify systemic bottlenecks, and guide support policies for the sustainable and inclusive transformation of agricultural sectors.

A lack of technical and institutional infrastructure capacity hinders the development of sustainable value chains. COLEAD works to:

- Strengthen the capacities of professional organizations, research institutes, national authorities (particularly in the area of SPS), training centres, etc.
- Create links between economic, technical, and financial actors (ecosystem approach);
- Disseminate knowledge, know-how, innovations, and services adapted to local needs.

This type of dynamic aligns well with the Global Gateway's "Green Transition" initiative, which promotes the resilience of productive systems and the dissemination of agroecological solutions.

EXAMPLE OF ACTION



FFM+ example: improving communication processes and dynamics within value chains in terms of sustainable practices and SPS standards; improving the availability and use of financing and training for agricultural SMEs; improving the availability and quality of human resources through vocational capacity-building systems required by sustainable agriculture professions; improving the use of research and innovation results by producers and MSMEs; improving public-private interactions and developing local networks; increasing synergies between development partners, etc.

Proyecto SIA
SANIDAD E INNOVACIÓN AGROPECUARIA

"Con el financiamiento del"
BID

Dominican Republic: Strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary capacities

Since May 2024, COLEAD has implemented the Sanidad e Innovación Agropecuaria (SIA) project for the Dominican Ministry of Agriculture, with support from the IDB. The project supports the modernization of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) services in the Dominican Republic. A mixed team of experts is providing integrated support to strengthen national capacities in institutional organization, regulation, SPS intelligence systems, surveillance, and good practices.

AT THE MICRO LEVEL, INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT IS PROVIDED TO ECONOMIC OPERATORS ON THE GROUND

Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including farmer groups and smallholders, play a crucial role in low- and middle-income countries as key drivers of sustainable development, food security, and local job creation, especially in rural areas. However, these frontline actors are increasingly vulnerable and face multiple structural constraints. They often have limited access to appropriate financing, quality inputs, modern technologies, and context-specific technical assistance services. These gaps hinder their modernization and skills development.

Additionally, many agricultural MSMEs have organizational weaknesses and are insufficiently structured or supported to establish sustainable commercial relationships with upstream and downstream actors. Their efforts to professionalize and formalize are often hindered by an unfavorable environment that lacks appropriate, accessible services.

Significant needs remain in terms of management, planning, regulatory compliance, and production quality. This hinders their ability to access national, regional, and international markets, particularly those of the European Union. These markets offer opportunities for development. To meet these challenges, these operators need structured, targeted, and sustainable support to play their full role in transitioning to more resilient, equitable, and sustainable agri-food systems.

At the micro level, COLEAD provides individualized support to economic operators in the agricultural sector, as well as to national experts and support structures for small-scale producers. This support takes the form of individualized development projects designed in response to support requests from partner beneficiaries.

EXAMPLE OF ACTION



FFM+ example:

- 620 active projects in 54 countries, 60% of which are led by local SMEs.
- 30,000 users on the e-learning platform, 38% of whom are women.
- 167 sustainability self-assessments were carried out with supported companies.



NEXt Kenya example:

- 297 technical assistance and training activities (specific or collective) were implemented for SMEs and producer groups.
- One hundred actions were carried out to support the enabling environment for the Kenyan horticultural sector.

These projects aim to address the specific operational needs of partner beneficiaries. These needs may involve strengthening technical skills, improving agricultural practices, developing a commercial strategy, complying with sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, or accessing new markets. Depending on the situation, COLEAD mobilizes experts, primarily national ones, to carry out targeted diagnostic, advisory, training, and/or coaching missions tailored to the local context and the maturity level of those involved. These actions are based on the principle of transferring skills and strengthening the autonomy of partner beneficiaries. COLEAD ensures each mission leads to sustainable skill development through educational tools, practical training, and support for implementing management or quality control systems. The approach is participatory and focused on solving concrete problems.



Through this grassroots action, COLEAD contributes to strengthening the resilience, professionalization, and competitiveness of agricultural operators, particularly in fragile contexts. This personalized support is essential for sustaining local dynamics and transforming agri-food systems, enabling local actors to respond more effectively to the challenges they face.

Despite their isolation and undercapitalization, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including cooperatives supported by COLEAD, are a powerful driver of inclusive and sustainable growth. To strengthen their resilience and maximize their contribution to development, **COLEAD deploys an integrated approach that:**

- **strengthens the technical, entrepreneurial, and organizational capacities** of actors—from production to internal governance. In 2024, COLEAD continued to support actors in the agri-food sector by focusing on developing professional skills, structuring organizations, and building entrepreneurial capacity.

FOCUS ON... SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEMS IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (DESIRA-LIFT)

As part of the DeSIRA-LIFT project, COLEAD and RUFORUM have launched a call for experts to strengthen vocational training and continuing education systems in African universities. This initiative aims to fill the structural gaps that are hindering the development of agricultural innovation on the continent and to better connect academic training to the needs of actors in the field.



Read the news

- **facilitates access** to information, online certification training, professional networks, appropriate financing, and above all, markets, in order to remove barriers that hinder their expansion. In 2024, COLEAD has expanded the range of tools enabling agricultural enterprises to access information, online certification training, sector networks, and new commercial and financial opportunities.

FOCUS ON... WEBINARS ON ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR AGRIPRENEURS (FFM+)

As part of the Fit For Market Plus programme, COLEAD organized two webinars (June 18 and July 2, 2024) to raise awareness of platforms listing available sources of financing for agricultural entrepreneurs. These sessions enabled participants to explore the financing mechanisms available to different types of businesses and to better structure their fundraising efforts.



[Read the news](#)

- **promotes responsible**, climate-smart, and equitable practices in corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and business ethics that are aligned with international standards and market expectations. In line with these standards and expectations, COLEAD continued its efforts in 2024 to promote responsible and inclusive agricultural practices.



**FOCUS ON... GLOBALG.A.P.
CERTIFICATION RENEWED FOR THE KLO
MANGO ASSOCIATION (FFM+ GHANA)**

Thanks to support from the FFM+ program, the KLO Mango Farmers & Processors Association in Ghana has successfully renewed its GLOBALG.A.P. certification for 2024. This result illustrates the impact of COLEAD's targeted technical support to help producers adopt sustainable practices, thereby strengthening their competitiveness on international markets.



[**Read the news**](#)

(published in 2025)

This holistic approach allows these companies to become hubs for innovation, job creation, and regional development while strengthening food security and the competitiveness of agricultural value chains in partner countries.

This support is part of the “Education and Skills” and “Digital Transformation” components of the Global Gateway and includes certified e-learning tools and modules tailored to local conditions.



IN CONCLUSION, COLEAD ACTS ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF CHANGE THROUGH THREE INTERDEPENDENT PATHWAYS

PATH	LEVEL	DESIRED TRANSFORMATION
Conducive Environments	Macro – Public institutions, policies, regulations	Coherent policies, appropriate standards, incentive-based taxation, and increased public budgets support innovation, sustainability, and equity.
Service ecosystems	Meso – BMOs, training centers, research institutes, finance, SPS competent authorities	Intermediary organizations offer high-quality technical, financial, and commercial services that are aligned with market requirements and sustainability.
Capacities of economic actors	Micro – Producers, MSMEs, cooperatives, (including women and youth)	Actors have the skills, access to markets, financing, and resources to implement profitable, climate-resilient, and socially responsible practices.

These channels reinforce each other: a **supportive framework** stimulates an **ecosystem of services**, accelerating the adoption of innovative practices among economic **actors**.



4 What we have achieved in 2024

4. WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN 2024

In 2024, COLEAD's activities were implemented through global and national programmes that worked synergistically and complementarily. Each national programme benefited from the results and tools developed by the global programmes. Each national programme also enabled more in-depth intervention at the level of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and producer groups (MICRO) and their ecosystems (MESO) in the country concerned.

Overall, COLEAD's efforts reached 180 countries digitally (through information and training) and 50 countries with on-the-ground technical assistance.

The world map shows all ACP countries and 143 EU partner countries via AGRINFO, with a flat focus on countries with national programmes. A world map showing the digital footprint

of COLEAD platforms. One map is enough. See my email. Could the illustration on pages 8 and 9 be different? We'll talk about it later.

In 2024, COLEAD deployed a systemic and integrated approach that links interventions at different levels. At the **macro** level, it supports the evolution of regulatory and institutional frameworks. At the **meso** level, it structures value chains and strengthens support service ecosystems. At the **micro** level, it responds to the individual needs of local businesses, cooperatives, and service providers. This complementarity of scales is COLEAD's unique methodological approach to supporting agri-food transitions in partner countries.

I have numbered the different subsections. You don't need to keep them. They are just to help identify similar headings.



MACRO LEVEL

ANTICIPATING AND SUPPORTING REGULATORY CHANGES

The rapid evolution of regulatory frameworks, particularly in Europe, poses a strategic challenge to the agricultural sectors of EU's partner countries. In 2024, actions carried out under the AGRINFO programme strengthened the capacity of stakeholders to anticipate and adapt to new requirements. This prevented market disruption and ensured the gradual compliance of operators.

AN OPERATIONAL MONITORING AND ANALYSIS SYSTEM

During the year, more than **180 European regulatory texts** were monitored and analyzed in depth. These texts covered critical issues such as maximum residue limits (MRLs), plant protection products, animal welfare, labeling requirements, sustainability, and the fight against deforestation.

The results of these analyses were disseminated through:

- Summary records targeting the topics, sectors/products, and countries affected by these regulatory changes;
- Bimonthly multilingual newsletters and thematic bulletins sent to over 4,000 subscribers.
- The AGRINFO web platform is constantly improving and attracts nearly 10,000 visitors per month.
- There are also multi-country information webinars and webinars aimed at an EU partner country, in collaboration with the Embassy in Brussels.



OTHER EXAMPLES OF TARGETED, HIGH-IMPACT INTERVENTIONS:

COLEAD's efforts have also resulted in concrete technical support in response to critical developments:

- **Support for the vanilla sector (Madagascar and the Comoros Islands):** In response to the European Union's lowering of nicotine MRLs, COLEAD coordinated under FFM+ a scientific and institutional mobilization that led to the revision of the draft European regulation and the reinstatement of the MRL at 0.3 mg/kg in February 2024. More than 600 samples were collected and analyzed as part of this effort.
- **India-EU workshop on new phytosanitary and food contaminant requirements:** during the workshop organized in Antwerp in June 2024 with the Federation of Indian Exporters, in the context of AGRINFO, COLEAD raised awareness among more than 70 participants about emerging regulatory impacts, particularly on mineral oils, pesticides, and mycotoxins affecting tea, rice, coffee, and spices.
- **Philippines webinar on trade in seafood products with the EU:** in connection with bilateral trade negotiations, an information session under AGRINFO brought together more than 200 professionals from the fishing and processing sectors, facilitating a better understanding of European requirements in terms of traceability, food safety, and sustainability.

COLOMBIA (SEPTEMBER 2024): 100 REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR ARE MOBILIZING TO BETTER UNDERSTAND EU REGULATORY CHANGES

Colombia: Anticipating European standards is a strategic challenge for exporters

On September 24, 2024, COLEAD, in partnership with PROCOLOMBIA—a Colombian government agency under the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism—organized a presentation of the AGRINFO programme in Bogotá for 100 private sector representatives, primarily from the agricultural export sector.

Funded by the European Union, AGRINFO provides clear, up-to-date, and accessible information on EU regulatory developments affecting agri-food exports to trading partners. The challenge goes beyond providing information; it involves helping companies anticipate new standards to secure their access to the European market, limit commercial risks, and seize opportunities for differentiation linked to sustainable transitions.

COLEAD's work is part of a proactive approach to supporting partner countries' sectors by transforming regulatory constraints into levers for innovation, competitiveness, and long-term resilience.

REPRESENTING PARTNER COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL AND TRADE BODIES

Changes in international standards and trade regulatory frameworks directly impact market access for ACP countries, as well as EU partner countries more broadly. In 2024, particularly within the framework of the FFM+ programme, COLEAD increased its technical representation and strategic advocacy to protect the interests of these countries in forums discussing agri-food trade standards and regulations.

COLEAD ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTES TO THE FOLLOWING KEY REGULATORY FORUMS AND INITIATIVES:

- **Global G.A.P.:** As a member of the committee dedicated to developing the Environmental Standard (ESS Framework), COLEAD secured significant adjustments to better reflect the realities of ACP producers in the revision of environmental criteria.
- **COLEAD is an active participant in the Freshfel PEFCR initiative,** which is a standardized methodology and tool for measuring the environmental footprint of the fresh produce sector.



- **Coalition Against Unfair Trade Practices:** COLEAD collaborated with partners Oxfam, the Fair Trade Advocacy Office, and IFOAM Organics International to develop a position paper published in January 2025. The paper assesses Directive (EU) 2019/633 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural supply chain. It reiterates that “farmers must receive fair and sufficient income and not be forced to sell below production costs.” This position paper represents a strong call to action.¹
- **Global Coalition for Fresh Produce:** COLEAD is a founding and active member of this coalition, which works to defend the interests of the global fruit and vegetable sector within a sustainable framework. In 2024, COLEAD participated in a survey about costs and incomes in the global fruit and vegetable sector as part of the FFM+ programme, consulting its network.
- **European public consultations:** COLEAD provided technical input on several major reforms that directly affect the agricultural sectors of partner countries, such as the revision of organic regulations, the inclusion of growth promoters, and the updating of phytosanitary rules.
- **Regular dialogue with European institutions:** COLEAD facilitated technical exchanges with DG SANTE, DG AGRI, and DG INTA. This enabled the realities of agricultural actors in the Global South to be brought directly to the heart of EU regulatory discussions.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AS LEVERS FOR INFLUENCE AND AWARENESS-RAISING:

- **Fruit Logistica 2024 (Berlin):** Through the FFM+, NEXt Kenya, and AGRINFO programmes, COLEAD and its partners highlighted the challenges of sustainability and climate justice in African horticultural value chains. During the panel organized by Fairmiles.org, COLEAD emphasized the importance of preserving air exports from Africa, which provide a livelihood for millions of families while contributing to global efforts to reduce carbon emissions. These discussions strengthened collective advocacy for a just and differentiated transition based on regions’ historical responsibilities for greenhouse gas emissions.
- **OECD session (Slovakia, September 2024):** COLEAD contributed to training quality inspectors on international marketing standards for fruits and vegetables. Drawing on lessons learned from FFM+ case studies, COLEAD illustrated the challenges and concrete solutions encountered by export sectors in ACP countries, particularly in the fresh citrus fruit sector.

COLEAD IS RECOGNIZED AS A RELIABLE TECHNICAL PARTNER.

COLEAD's advocacy work is grounded in in-depth technical expertise and the ability to address the unique challenges faced by producers, processors, and exporters in EU partner countries within forums where industrialized countries’ perspectives often dominate. In 2024, this technical contribution

¹ For more details, see the position paper on the assessment of Directive (EU) 2019/633 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain, Coalition Against Unfair Trading Practices.

FRUIT LOGISTICA 2024: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR HORTICULTURE

As an exhibitor at Fruit Logistica 2024 in Berlin, COLEAD mobilized its teams and programmes (FFM+, NExT Kenya, AGRINFO) to strengthen ties with existing partners and meet new players in the global horticultural sector. Several highlights marked this edition. The visit of H.E. Valerie Rugene, Ambassador of Kenya to Germany, highlighted the importance of international alliances in promoting market access. Stakeholders such as Fairtrade Africa discovered the AGRINFO programme's tools, which are useful for supporting producers in dealing with European regulatory changes. Fruit Logistica is also a barometer of commercial trends. African companies emphasized how compliance with European standards, often among the most demanding in the world, is a lever for credibility in accessing other global markets, from the Middle East to emerging countries. Sustainability was also at the heart of the debates, particularly during the panel organized by Fairmiles.org. The issue of emissions linked to the air transport of fresh produce highlighted the complex dilemmas between reducing carbon emissions and maintaining the livelihoods of millions of African farming families. These discussions reaffirmed the importance of climate justice and the need for balanced and inclusive approaches. Ultimately, this 2024 edition fully resonated with COLEAD's mission: to contribute to a more sustainable and fairer global food system that creates economic opportunities, while supporting its partners in the transitions that are essential to meet climate and trade challenges.

enabled the better integration of field constraints into global normative discussions. This strengthened the capacity of actors in partner countries to adapt to new requirements while maintaining vital market opportunities.

PRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE OPEN RESOURCES TO LEVERAGE LOCAL CAPACITIES

Sharing practical knowledge and access to shared tools is a key part of COLEAD's strategy. In 2024, the organization consolidated an extensive portfolio of educational, methodological, technical, and digital resources aimed at strengthening the autonomy of economic and institutional actors in partner countries.

A RECOGNIZED AND ACCESSIBLE VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM.

- **ISO 21001 certification** was confirmed, guaranteeing the educational quality of COLEAD's vocational training programs. This international recognition attests to the robustness of the implemented processes.



- **The e-learning platform** has nearly **27,000 active users**, including **14,252 from ACP countries** (with **38%** female participation). These users have taken online modules covering technical and managerial skills tailored to agricultural sectors.
- **The freely accessible resource catalogues**, including job descriptions, teaching modules, skills frameworks, and practical guides, continue to expand, facilitating the gradual upskilling of businesses and support services.

COLEAD TAKES A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT.

As part of the **FFM Plus programme**, COLEAD is implementing a research and innovation brokerage strategy focused entirely on sustainability. Each action is based on **integrated crop management (ICM)** and the circular economy.

At the operational level, this approach translates into:

- A **smart irrigation pilot project** based on digital solutions to optimize water management in the avocado sector in Kenya;
- **Integrated pest management (IPM) protocols** target green bean and cucumber nematodes in Madagascar and fall armyworms on sweet corn in Burkina Faso.
- **Systemic IPM** is applied to tomatoes and cabbage (intercropping with native species), ginger (in Nigeria), and pineapple (through intercropping, rotation, and sustainable fertilization).
- A **trial** is underway to recover pineapple residues for use as animal feed, which illustrates the program's commitment to the circular economy.

Seven trials have already been **completed**:

- Two residue trials validated good agricultural practices for export to the EU: one focused on avocados (oxymatrine and matrine) and the other on mangoes (fludioxonil).
- An efficacy trial focused on controlling potato late blight using copper hydroxide, copper oxychloride, valifenalate, and cymoxanil.
- A trial of good agricultural practices secured ginger production in Nigeria after last year's losses.
- An IPM trial evaluated armyworm control techniques in Burkina Faso (report in progress).
- A post-harvest trial on dasheen in Saint Vincent identified alternatives to old pesticides to comply with European MRLs (report in progress).
- An IPM trial in Madagascar combined biopesticides and cover crops to control gall nematodes in cucumbers and green beans (report in progress).

Eleven other trials are underway to generate efficacy data for registration, including trials on sulfur (carrot powdery mildew and strawberry and raspberry mites), *Bacillus thuringiensis* (lettuce and raspberry caterpillars), acetamiprid (rosemary leafhoppers), fludioxonil (*Botrytis* on spring onions), and *Beauveria bassiana* (citrus false moth and fruit flies on peppers). Additionally, there is a GIC trial combining tomatoes, cabbage, and native species; work to select tomato varieties tolerant of drought and *Tuta absoluta*; and a second trial to recover pineapple waste.

A **multi-year trial** launched in Benin in 2023 will continue until 2025. The trial aims to improve the sustainability of pineapple production through intercropping, crop rotation, and optimizing mineral and organic fertilization together. Regulatory activity is also progressing. Five dossiers have been approved by the PCPB in Kenya (one for avocado, three for mango, and one for basil). Additionally, a fungicide (azoxystrobin + tebuconazole) has been registered by the Sahelian Pesticide Committee for nine West African countries. One final dossier is awaiting additional toxicological studies before being submitted to the same committee.

Through FFM+, COLEAD is rolling out a comprehensive response to challenges in agricultural value chain resilience. This response combines technical innovation, reduced chemical inputs, rational management of natural resources, and waste/by-product recovery.

PARTNERSHIPS TO BROADEN AUDIENCE AND IMPACT

The series of webinars conducted in partnership with international actors reached a wide audience in 2024

AGRIFOOD PARTNERSHIP SERIES	NUMBER OF SESSIONS SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THE FFM+ PROGRAMME	NUMBER OF REGISTRATIONS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
PAFO-COLEAD Innovation Series	15 sessions (n°8 to n°22 incl.)	10,428	2,705
IICA-COLEAD Caribbean Agrifood Business Series	13 sessions (n°4 to n°16 incl.)	7,884	2,578
OECD-COLEAD Fruits & Vegetables Industry Series	7 sessions (n°2 to n°8 incl.)	5,327	1,616
PFO-COLEAD Series of Roundtables on the agro-processing sector in the Pacific Islands	4 sessions (n°1 to n°4 incl.)	1,337	192
UN-Women-COLEAD South-South Series on Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs	1 session	776	297

Number of sessions, registrants and participants to the sessions since the beginning of the FFM Plus programme

This mobilization demonstrates COLEAD's ability to inspire through the creation of cross-disciplinary forums that promote experience sharing, entrepreneurial innovation, and the dissemination of best practices.

STENGTHENED UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS IN AFRICA TO STIMULATE INNOVATION, WITH A FOCUS ON THE DESIRA-LIFT PROJECT

The DeSIRA-LIFT project (2021-2025) is the result of a collaboration between Agrinatura, EFARD, and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA). It supports the development of innovation capacities in Africa. As an example of activity, COLEAD, in partnership with the NRI and RUFORUM (a consortium of 170 African universities), has strengthened cooperation through DeSIRA LIFT Area 2. The objective is to analyze national science, technology, and innovation ecosystems in order to transform academic research into viable businesses. The focus is on developing agri-food entrepreneurship among students and teachers. Preliminary results are being incorporated into a study on innovation financing that will be presented at the RUFORUM triennial conference in Namibia in August 2024. This initiative aligns with COLEAD's strategy of strengthening universities as drivers of innovation and job creation in close connection with industry needs and the economic development of the continent.

STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO SECTORAL KNOWLEDGE

- **Agrinnovators.org**, the platform launched in 2023, continues to grow by integrating additional resources, such as videos, blogs, forums, and webinar recordings, to facilitate networking and promote African innovations.
- **Market information:** the redesign of the interface and the expansion of functionalities in 2024 now allow users to interactively cross-reference market data with SPS interceptions. In 2024, several other key deliverables were achieved in terms of market information:
 - **Information sharing:** 8 webinars organized as part of FFM+, bringing together 1,150 participants, and available on COLEAD's YouTube channel.
 - **Sector studies:** analyses on mangoes, avocados, citrus fruits, flowers (Kenya), and a market profile on papayas.



NNAEMEKA IKEGWUONU: INNOVATION AT THE SERVICE OF SMALL PRODUCERS

The founder of ColdHubs in Nigeria, Nnaemeka Ikegwuonu offers smallholder farmers solar-powered cold storage solutions. These cold rooms extend the shelf life of fruits and vegetables by up to 21 days, thereby reducing post-harvest losses, which are often high due to a lack of access to electricity and suitable equipment. Each ColdHub is equipped with an advanced monitoring system (CARMS) that allows for real-time performance tracking. ColdHubs is already present in 22 Nigerian states and plans to expand into East, West, and Southern Africa.

For Nnaemeka, the challenge lies in combining traditional knowledge with technological innovation to strengthen the resilience of African farmers in the face of climate change and improve their access to markets.

Nnaemeka is a member of the [Agrinnovators.org](https://agrinovators.org) platform.

- **Trade fair presence:** participation in more than 10 international events (Fruit Logistica, Biofach, Macfrut, SIAL, etc.), enabling monitoring of major trends and value chains.

SHARED TOOLS TO STRENGTHEN PARTNER AUTONOMY

- **Sustainability self-assessment system (SAS):** applied to more than **167 companies** in 2024 as part of FFM+, this tool enables companies and institutions to gradually structure their sustainability approaches in economic, environmental, social, and governance terms.
- **Sustainable production guides:** 15 technical roadmaps are being finalized and six have already been published (e.g., taro, pineapple), incorporating practices for pest management, input reduction, and the valorization of agricultural co-products.

SHARED RESOURCES FOR SYSTEMIC DEPLOYMENT

By strengthening free access to high-quality resources, COLEAD facilitates the large-scale dissemination of the knowledge and professional practices needed for the sustainable transformation of food systems. These structuring tools enable partners to progress independently and in a manner adapted to their realities.

CONTRIBUTING TO GLOBAL AGENDAS: SOIL, CLIMATE, AND RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

COLEAD is actively involved in international efforts to strengthen the sustainability, innovation, and resilience of agricultural systems in partner countries. In 2024, several major contributions were made to support agroecological transitions and promote better scientific integration between Africa and Europe.



SUPPORTING AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABLE SOIL MANAGEMENT

In 2024, the *Research and Innovation Brokerage* (R&IB) department processed nearly 59 requests for support (via FFM+), particularly for the organic export sector. It contributed to the EGTOP dossier on pineapple flower induction and to consultations on Regulation 2021/1665 on plant protection products authorized for organic use, leading to the authorization of ethylene and certain microorganisms for export to the EU. These advances have helped secure the incomes of many small-scale producers. Several technical guides have been updated to support sustainable production: guides on taro and pineapple have been finalized, 11 technical itineraries (cassava, ginger, papaya, citrus fruits, etc.) have been updated, and revisions are underway for eggplant, passion fruit, okra, and cucumber. COLEAD is also continuing to improve its *crop protection database*, which provides producers with up-to-date information on plant protection products and good agricultural practices, with moves towards automated updates and the integration of dashboards. In Benin, trials on crop rotation, intercropping and pineapple residue recycling are being conducted with the University of Abomey-Calavi to improve soil quality, reduce mineral fertilizer use and enhance the sustainability of cropping systems.

At the **2024 African Summit on Fertilizers and Soil Health**, organized in Nairobi by the African Union, COLEAD participated in the context of DESIRA LIFT, alongside IFAD and CAADP-XP4 in the development of structural commitments for the decade 2024–2034:

- Adoption of the Nairobi Declaration;
- Development of the African Soil Initiative (ASI);
- Design of a ten-year action plan and a dedicated financing mechanism.

In this context, COLEAD hosted a side event on integrated soil fertility management, bringing together researchers, SMEs, and decision-makers around innovations developed by African producers and agri-food companies. In addition, particular attention was paid to the development of organic and bio-organic fertilizer value chains, creating economic opportunities for small-scale producers.

STRENGTHENING AFRICA-EUROPE SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

As part of the European **CEA-FIRST** project, in 2024 COLEAD led the mapping of **242 multi-stakeholder initiatives** active in the Africa-Europe space on food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture (FNSSA) issues.



CEA–FIRST

Consortium Europe-Africa on Research and Innovation for Food Systems Transformation



This analysis made it possible to:

- identify existing geographical imbalances in current scientific cooperation;
- highlight Africa's low involvement in certain strategic mechanisms;
- formulate concrete recommendations to strengthen the coordination of efforts and contribute to the establishment of the future AU-EU **International Research Consortium (IRC)**.

MOBILIZING KNOWLEDGE FOR AGRI-FOOD TRANSITIONS

Drawing on its thematic expertise and institutional networks, COLEAD acts as a catalyst for cooperation between research programmes, development institutions, and actors in the field. Its position enables it to connect scientific knowledge production with the operational needs of agricultural sectors, thereby facilitating the emergence of concrete solutions to the challenges of sustainable productivity, soil health, and climate change.

A POSITION AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ACTION IN THE FIELD

COLEAD's contribution to major continental initiatives illustrates its role as a technical interface between research, institutions and agricultural sectors. This coordination promotes the structured development of skills in agricultural ecosystems and local ownership of the innovations needed for effective and equitable agri-food transitions.

CEA-FIRST IN 2024 - MAPPING FOR BETTER COOPERATION

As part of the European CEA-FIRST project, COLEAD helped to map 242 multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) in the field of human rights, social and cultural rights, and the environment (FNSSA) active in Africa and Europe. This analysis reveals geographical imbalances, low African involvement, and risks of fragmentation. COLEAD has made concrete recommendations to strengthen coordination of efforts, feed into the International Research Consortium (IRC), and build a more inclusive, sustainable, and strategic Research & Innovation ecosystem between the European Union and the African Union.

PROMOTING ECONOMIC INCLUSION: GENDER, YOUTH, AND ACCESS TO FINANCE

The sustainable transformation of agri-food systems necessarily requires the effective inclusion of women, young people and small agricultural enterprises in economic and institutional dynamics. In 2024, COLEAD continued to pursue an integrated approach aimed at removing structural barriers to the economic participation of these key groups, while strengthening their capacity to access the financial resources essential for their development.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

Gender equality remains at the heart of COLEAD's intervention strategy, particularly within the framework of the FFM+ programme deployed in ACP countries. In 2024, the implementation of the **COLEAD Gender Action Plan** made it possible to structure gender mainstreaming at each stage of interventions, around four complementary axes:

- Ensuring balanced participation of women and men in agricultural value chains.



- Strengthening the entrepreneurial and technical skills of women producers and processors.
- Facilitating women's access to markets, financing, and support services.
- Systematically integrating gender into diagnostics, training, and technical assistance tools.

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD
30%, based on attendance to training sessions organised by COLEAD since 2016	40%	28% (excl. e-learning platform) 51% on the e-learning platform (out of those that disclosed their sex)

Percentage of women trained among partner-beneficiaries under the FFM+ programme

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD
48% women among employees from MSMEs and producer groups (excluding Kenya)	50%	49%

Percentage of women trained among partner-beneficiaries under the FFM+ programme

The **Sustainability Self-Assessment System (SAS)** also plays a key role in helping companies make progress in terms of inclusive governance and social performance.

At the same time, concrete actions have been taken on the ground, such as:

- **training for trainers** that incorporates gender issues;
- support for women-led micro-enterprises in **Casamance (Senegal)** on accounting management, processing local products (dried mango, ginger, cereals) and improving economic profitability.

MOBILIZING YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO BUILD THE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS OF TOMORROW

With a predominantly young African population (median age of 18.3), mobilizing emerging talent is a key challenge for the future of the agri-food sector. In 2024, COLEAD has:

- organized a specific webinar on youth in horticulture (November 21, 2024, FFM+ programme) to promote entrepreneurial and professional opportunities in the horticultural sector, including:
 - technological innovations (e.g., drones, digital tools);
 - collaborations with institutions such as Kenyatta University (Kenya);

- inspiring presentations by young professionals, such as Jared Onduso (COLEAD trainer) and Derrick Mulei (student intern at East African Growers).
- continued its collaboration with the **RUFORUM (170 African universities)** university network as part of DeSIRA LIFT:
 - case studies on university agri-food entrepreneurship;
 - launched a co-certification scheme for innovation facilitators;
 - analyzed self-training platforms in agricultural innovation management.

All of these actions aim to encourage the emergence of a new generation of change makers capable of combining technical expertise, entrepreneurial vision, and social commitment.

FACILITATING ACCESS TO FINANCE AND STRENGTHENING THE BANKABILITY OF HORTICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

Access to finance remains a recurring obstacle for agricultural MSMEs. In 2024, COLEAD structured a specific support offer through the FFM+ programme:

- **770 participants sensitized** to financial management, business plan development, and strategic planning.
- Formalization of a “**ready-to-invest**” methodological pathway offered to partner MSMEs, combining diagnostics, individualized support, educational tools, and networking with local or international financial institutions.
- Expansion of the network of experts and identification of sources of financing adapted to the realities of the ACP horticultural sector.

At the continental level, this pathway is now being disseminated to regional networks of producers and agricultural financing institutions to extend its systemic impact.

PARTNERING WITH IMPACT PARTNERS TO AMPLIFY FINANCIAL ACTION

In October 2024, COLEAD reached a strategic milestone by becoming a shareholder in Kampani, an impact investment fund specializing in long-term financing for agri-food SMEs and cooperatives. Alongside partners such as Oxfam, Alterfin, the King Baudouin Foundation, and Rikolto, this investment will enable us to:

- strengthen the financing ecosystem dedicated to “missing middle” enterprises in the Global South;
- offer an innovative combination of financial capital, technical assistance, and strategic support through COLEAD programmes (FFM+, etc.);
- create concrete synergies between Kampani’s investments and enterprises already receiving technical support from COLEAD.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION AS A STRATEGIC LEVER FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS

The cross-cutting approach taken in 2024 on gender, youth, and financing issues illustrates COLEAD’s commitment to ensuring that no agri-food actor is left behind in the ongoing transformations. By strengthening entrepreneurial capacities and access to key resources, the organization is actively contributing to more inclusive, equitable, and resilient agricultural growth.

KAMPANI
Investing in family farming

MESO LEVEL

STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS WITHIN NATIONAL ECOSYSTEMS

THIS IS A STRATEGIC LEVER AT THE HEART OF THE COLEAD APPROACH.

The MESO level is one of the cornerstones of the systemic COLEAD approach. It links global advocacy, regulations, technical resources and international engagement (the macro level) with direct interventions targeting producers, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises - MSMEs (micro level). The goal is to collaborate closely with intermediary sector structures, such as professional and inter-professional organizations, technical centres, competent authorities, and multi-stakeholder platforms for public-private dialogue. These structures ensure the professionalization of economic services for producers, production quality, and the collective skill development necessary for sustainable transitions.

In 2024, the strategic importance of these interventions at the intersection of public policy and local operations was confirmed. In an international environment marked by multiple shocks (geopolitical, health-related, economic, and climate-related), these collective mechanisms secured partner value chains, supported increasing regulatory adjustments, and ensured market opportunities for millions of producers.

VALUE CHAIN STRUCTURING AND COLLECTIVE GOVERNANCE

The interventions led by COLEAD in 2024 involved more than 50 ACP partner countries. The interventions focused on organizing value chains around six main areas:

- **Direct support to professional and interprofessional organizations:** Under the FFM+ programme, 65 structures were supported, and 19 intra-organizational missions were implemented to strengthen their governance, strategic management, and capacity to provide technical services to their members.
- **The development of sector strategies and collective roadmaps** was another focus. These strategies were often developed through multi-stakeholder dialogue involving public authorities, the private sector, and civil society.
- **Strengthening quality and standard interpretation guidelines**, including finalizing several national and regional guides for interpreting international standards (GlobalG.A.P., SPS standards, phytosanitary standards).
- **Cross-cutting support for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) authorities**, enabling the security of sensitive agri-food exports while meeting the evolving requirements of export markets.

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD
8 public-private stakeholder platforms functional and sustainable (based on FFM SPS assessment)	At least 10 functional and engaged public-private stakeholder platforms	Public-Private dialogue supported by FFM+ in 11 countries

- **Technical and institutional consolidation of vocational training centres and interprofessional platforms**, particularly in the horticultural, beekeeping, cereal, root and tuber, and emerging crop sectors.
- **Gradual strengthening of national and regional mechanisms for regulatory monitoring**, in synergy between the FFM+ and AGRINFO programmes.

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD
N/A	At least 20	26 technical and vocational training centres supported through development projects

Number of vocational training centres/universities, supported by the programme, with resources and/or adapted curricula to better link young graduates to target operators' needs



SUPPORT FOR SMALLHOLDER SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The initial conclusions drawn from the analysis of support requests received from these structures (excluding Kenya) are as follows: 66 percent of these structures directly recruit smallholders as members, representing around 335,000 farmers. Four percent of these structures count farmer groups and cooperatives as direct members, representing approximately 4.5 million farmers, according to reported figures.

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE REPORTING PERIOD
0	At least 20	19

Number of smallholders support structures supported by the FFM+ programme on the establishment of fair and sustainable commercial relationships between smallholders, farmers' groups and MSMEs

Support for intermediary structures that assist small producers is the operational foundation for sectoral transformation. These structures play a pivotal role in pooling investments in technical services, logistics, market access, and collective certification processes. By 2024:

- Organizational coaching mechanisms have enabled many cooperatives and unions to improve their internal procedures, economic governance, and commercial negotiation capacity.
- Specific training cycles have been rolled out for networks of agricultural advisors and sector technicians in order to professionalize local technical support.
- Several sectoral public-private consultation groups have been strengthened at the national level, promoting ongoing strategic dialogue on issues of competitiveness, quality, and sustainability in the sectors.



CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS IN 2024

MALI: QUALITY AND LOGISTICS STRUCTURING OF THE MANGO SECTOR

The Regional Guide to Good Practices for Mangoes, developed in 2024 as part of FFM+, covers Mali and eight other West African countries. It now serves as a common tool for harmonizing post-harvest practices, improving food safety, plant health, and strengthening the credibility of exports to European and regional markets.

BENIN AND SENEGAL: STRENGTHENING LINKS BETWEEN PRODUCERS AND OTHER VALUE CHAIN ACTORS THROUGH ENHANCED LOCAL EXPERTISE

As part of the FFM+ programme, COLEAD supported experts in completing an 8-month ICRA training course (September 2023 – June 2024) on the theme “*Boosting Agribusiness: Building Trust for Sustainable Growth*.” These experts are now available to support FFM+ programme partners in strengthening the relationships between producers and other stakeholders along the value chains.

KENYA: STRUCTURING HORTICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS WITH NEXT KENYA AND FFM+

In addition to macro and micro actions, the NExT Kenya and FFM+ programmes have supported the rollout of value chain best practice guides (avocado, beans, peas). Professional organizations benefited from training and coaching cycles to consolidate their managerial skills and ensure compliance with export standards in highly competitive sectors.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE WITH THE FETBACI FEDERATION

In January 2025, training on social dialogue and collective bargaining was organized for the 10 member unions of FETBACI, covering 98% of Côte d'Ivoire's fruit exports. This support prepares social actors for future sectoral agreement negotiations, in line with European regulatory developments on due diligence.



ETHIOPIA

Identification of synergies between programmes (FFM+, AGRINFO, CEHA, ATI), preparation of future structured support starting in 2025.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: INSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION OF SPS SYSTEMS WITH THE SIA PROJECT

As part of the *Sanidad e Innovación Agropecuaria* (SIA) project, co-financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), COLEAD supported the modernization of Dominican national capacities in sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) security in 2024. The intervention strengthened the public institutions responsible for sanitary and phytosanitary controls, developed 26 harmonized procedure manuals, and implemented risk surveillance and management strategies adapted to international requirements. This concerted effort also promoted the creation of logical governance frameworks, facilitating inter-institutional coordination and public-private dialogue in support of the sustainable competitiveness of the Dominican agricultural sector.

FACILITATION OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUES

Beyond technical support, COLEAD continues to play its role as a facilitator of public-private dialogue in support of sectoral transitions. In 2024, support for the strategic development of the West African Cross-Border Trade Association (AOCTAH) helped to strengthen intra-regional trade facilitation dynamics. In addition, several sectoral consultation platforms were consolidated in West Africa, Kenya, and Guinea, promoting better coordination between public policies and sectoral expectations.

(SEPTEMBER 2024) WEST AFRICA: STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR THE REGIONAL ASSOCIATION AOCTAH

Based in Togo, the West African Association for Cross-Border Trade in Food, Agro-Sylvo-Pastoral and Fishery Products (AOCTAH) is an umbrella organization for professional organizations that brings together private socio-professional organizations in the agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries sectors, whose members are involved in the marketing of food or agro-forestry-pastoral and fisheries products within or between ECOWAS and CILSS countries. AOCTAH's mission is threefold: (i) to promote solidarity in food and nutrition security and trade in the CILSS and ECOWAS regions; (ii) to initiate, lead, and manage actions related to cross-border trade in food, agro-sylvo-pastoral, and fishery products; and (iii) to carry out trade facilitation activities in West Africa, collecting data on cross-border flows, and setting up trade information and assistance offices at borders.

AOCTAH has around 100 members, 50% of whom are active in the fruit and vegetable sector. Each member represents thousands of producers. COLEAD, as part of the Fit For Market Plus (FFM+) programme, recently provided support to AOCTAH in developing a strategic development plan for the coming years (2025/2029). A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) of the organization was carried out, focusing on internal factors and the global environment in which it operates. This analysis identified and prioritized the areas in which it should strengthen itself in order to fully implement its mission.

FACILITATING THE EMERGENCE OF EFFECTIVE NATIONAL COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

Phytosanitary support (PCE and R-SAT): in collaboration with the IPPC (FAO), COLEAD supported the transformation of phytosanitary capacity assessments (PSCAs) in 11 African countries into operational projects in 2024, thereby structuring national strengthening proposals in line with donor expectations.

Senegal, like many countries in the Sahel region, faces major challenges in securing its food supply in the face of rapid population growth and urbanisation. The threat posed by climate change, with the increased spread of pests and transboundary diseases, poses a significant risk to the country's agriculture and food security. In this context, the Senegalese Ministry of Agriculture, led by the Directorate of Plant Protection, has launched a major initiative to strengthen its phytosanitary system through a new STDF funded project entrusted to COLEAD.

Started in 2024, the aim of the project is to strengthen national phytosanitary capacity in order to contribute to food security and the development of fruit and vegetable exports in Senegal. Based on the results of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) conducted in 2023, the project proposes a series of updates and improvements to current plant health management frameworks to bring Senegal up to international phytosanitary standards. It has four main thrusts: revising the legal framework, strengthening operational capacity, improving the skills of the staff involved, and stimulating communication and cooperation between the various stakeholders. The project targets stakeholders within the national phytosanitary system, including the NPPO, other public administrations, producers, exporters, their professional organizations, and research and academic institutions.

THE MESO LEVEL, A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS AND COMPETITIVENESS

COLEAD's action at the MESO level provides an essential infrastructure for:

- Embedding quality and compliance with standards as a strategic lever for market access.
- Accelerate the professionalization of agricultural value chains and their commercial upgrading.
- Strengthen systemic resilience to exogenous shocks (climate, health, markets).
- Promote shared and inclusive value chain governance for competitive, sustainable agriculture that creates local jobs.
- Prepare sectors to adapt to future regulatory requirements in terms of social, economic and social sustainability.

NEW NATIONAL PROGRAMMES ARE BEING PREPARED TO AMPLIFY THE IMPACT ON THE AGRICULTURAL ECOSYSTEM OF PARTNER COUNTRIES

Following on from its multi-country action through intra-ACP programmes such as Fit For Market Plus, COLEAD continued to develop targeted national programmes in 2024, in partnership with bilateral donors and European Union delegations. These new interventions further strengthen COLEAD's roots in national dynamics and specific value chains, while following the same approach of structuring sectors and strengthening the capacities of public and private actors.

Although the operational implementation of these programmes will begin in 2025, an important phase of technical and institutional preparation was carried out in 2024.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: STRENGTHENING THE COMPETITIVENESS AND FOOD SAFETY OF AGRI-FOOD VALUE CHAINS

The Food Safety Support Programme for the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire (PASA-Côte d'Ivoire), entrusted to COLEAD by the EU, aims to strengthen the contribution of the Ivorian agri-food sector to economic growth and food security. Working closely with the relevant authorities, the programme will improve the capacity of private actors in value chains to manage food safety and plant health, integrate regulatory standards (SPS) and meet the commercial, social and environmental requirements of international markets.

UGANDA: SUPPORTING SPS COMPLIANCE IN EXPORT HORTICULTURAL SECTORS

As part of the programme "Improving sanitary and phytosanitary standards in horticulture in Uganda (SPS Uganda)," COLEAD will work alongside CABI (lead of the programme). The activities planned for 2025 aim to support private companies and producers in the horticultural sector to strengthen the quality of production and handling practices, improve SPS compliance and secure exports of fresh fruit and vegetables to the European Union.

GUINEA: INITIATING A GRADUAL AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION OF VALUE CHAINS

The programme "Support for the agroecological transition of pineapple, potato, and market gardening value chain in Guinea," is entrusted by ENABEL to the COLEAD-ICRA consortium, targets the Kindia and Mamou regions. Prepared in 2024, it will strengthen the skills of operators in the targeted sectors to move towards agroecological practices that are compatible with quality and market access requirements, while promoting youth employment and women's inclusion.

ETHIOPIA: STRENGTHENING THE ETHIOPIAN HORTICULTURAL ECOSYSTEM WITH THE MAHEBER PROGRAMME

In 2024, COLEAD also prepared, in conjunction with the European Union Delegation in Addis Ababa, the launch of the MAHEBER programme – Mobilizing Horticulture Actors for Entrepreneurship and Resilience in Ethiopia. This programme aims to support the modernization and competitiveness of Ethiopian horticultural value chains by combining support for the relevant authorities, particularly in the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) field, with assistance in strengthening the Ethiopian Horticulture Producer Exporters Association (EHPEA). The objective is to sustainably structure the ecosystem of support services for horticultural producers and exporters in the country, strengthen compliance with international standards, and secure access to export markets.

MICRO LEVEL

STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL ACTORS

Working closely with local communities, COLEAD pursues an individualized approach to support businesses, cooperatives, support institutions, and national experts in partner countries. In 2024, this tailor-made action was rolled out through several programmes (FFM+, AGRIFI, NExT Kenya, SIF, etc.), with the central objective of transferring skills and consolidating professional practices in a sustainable manner.



SCORE OBTAINED BY SMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE FFM+ PROGRAMME IN THE “ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT” SECTION OF THE SAS

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE FFM+ REPORTING PERIOD (YEAR 3)
Average score of 30% (n=140), after the first iteration of the SAS	Average score of 50%	Average score of 30% (n=208)

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE FFM+ REPORTING PERIOD (YEAR 3)
Average score of 60%, after the first iteration of the SAS (n=140, end of period 2)	Average score of 70%	Average score of 65% (n=208)

SCORE OBTAINED BY SMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE FFM+ PROGRAMME IN THE “FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT” SECTION OF THE SAS

SCORE OBTAINED BY SMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE FFM+ PROGRAMME IN THE “SOCIAL PRACTICES” SECTION OF THE SAS

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE FFM+ REPORTING PERIOD (YEAR 3)
Average score of 74% (n=140), after the first iteration of the SAS	80%	Average score of 375% (n=208)

MONITORING OF MPME PARTNER PRACTICES BENEFITING FROM FFM+ THROUGH THE COLEAD SELF-ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (SAE) – FFM+ YEAR 3

Each intervention stems from a formal request by partner beneficiaries and results in the joint development of development projects. A wide range of tools and formats are used to provide support and address the specific challenges of each structure, including diagnostics, technical training, coaching, certification support, commercial structuring, and quality management. This approach addresses challenges such as insufficient technical skills, noncompliance with market standards, organizational fragility, and difficulty accessing finance. Local ownership is strengthened by involving national experts in a shared skills development approach.

SUSTAINED MOMENTUM AND A DIVERSE RANGE OF BENEFICIARY PARTNERS

In 2024, FFM+ interventions reached a wide range of structures:

- More than 620 active development projects in 54 OACPS member states were established from 1,095 applications for support.
- **SMEs and cooperatives represent nearly 60% of partner beneficiaries.**

The majority of the supported structures remain small: 80% have a turnover of less than €250,000, and nearly half have a turnover of less than €50,000. However, these locally rooted enterprises often source their supplies from small producers (70%), thereby strengthening local spillover effects.

(JULY 2024) EDFI MC ENTRUSTS COLEAD WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE AGRIFI FACILITY

COLEAD was selected by the EDFI Management Company to provide technical assistance for the AgriFI facility, an innovative blended finance mechanism supported by the European Union. This contract enables COLEAD to leverage its expertise and network to support private-sector agri-food companies operating in agricultural value chains in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in OACPS member states. Launched in 2018, the AgriFI facility supports “middle-of-the-market” companies that collaborate with smallholder farmers and struggle to access financing from traditional commercial banks. The goal is to finance environmentally and socially responsible projects with growth and impact potential. EDFI Management Company is a leading European development operator that brings together nine European development finance institutions, including BIO (Belgium), Proparco (France), and DEG (Germany).

(OCTOBER 2024) ROME, OCTOBER 7-11, 2024: IPPC (FAO) AND COLEAD JOIN FORCES TO STRENGTHEN PHYTOSANITARY SYSTEMS

From October 7 to 11, 2024, the IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention - FAO) and COLEAD co-organized a workshop in Rome on phytosanitary capacity building, bringing together 46 participants, both in person and online, from eight African countries (Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Rwanda). The workshop enabled NPPOs, facilitators, and national ECP coordinators to share their experiences and develop nine concrete projects based on ECP assessments and the R-SAT methodology developed by COLEAD. The work focused successively on the prioritization of national actions, project design and logical frameworks, funding opportunities, and the mainstreaming of gender. Coordinated by COLEAD and FAO teams, with support from the EU, the workshop promoted peer learning and the development of operational skills in project formulation. Participants highlighted the practical value of the approach, which is an important step towards the sustainable strengthening of national plant health systems.

Oct 2024

THE 1,000TH REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WAS REGISTERED UNDER THE FFM+ PROGRAM

What we have achieved in 2024

This request illustrates the programme's growing impact, as it continues to play a crucial role in providing technical assistance and promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural development in OACPS countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The 1,000th request was made by a small, emerging agricultural enterprise in Senegal. This moment is particularly significant because this enterprise, like many others in similar situations, had never before received COLEAD support. This highlights one of the FFM+ programme's main objectives: extending COLEAD's reach to new members, ensuring small businesses can access the technical expertise they need to grow and prosper despite the many challenges they often face. The company, established in 2023, runs a small farm dedicated to horticulture and agroforestry in Senegal.

With a team of women and a commitment to sustainable practices, this young company embodies the innovative spirit the FFM+ programme supports. Thanks to this intervention, the company will receive support to comply with international standards, strengthen its capacities through training, and address major challenges, such as equipment needs and resource management. Reaching this milestone demonstrates the confidence businesses in OACPS member countries have in the FFM+ programme and the programme's ability to connect with those who need it most. COLEAD is dedicated to supporting small agricultural enterprises in OACPS countries, empowering them to overcome obstacles and develop sustainably.



Dec 2024

SUPPORTING COMPANIES FACING THE CSRD: THE EXAMPLE OF THE OMER-DECUGIS & CIE GROUP

The European **CSRD** directive requires companies to publish in-depth reports

on their sustainability performance, including double materiality: the company's impact on the environment and society and the risks these issues pose to the company. This framework is part of the European Green Deal strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context, the Omer-Decugis & Cie Group (OD) has entrusted COLEAD with developing a robust, operational reporting framework. The mission includes:

- **Mapping issues** according to dual materiality.
- Define **appropriate indicators** and ambitious targets.
- Mobilizing **internal and external stakeholders**.

Beyond complying with regulatory obligations, the OD Group aims to fully integrate sustainability into its practices and strengthen its positive impact, particularly on vulnerable communities in its supply chains. Through these initiatives, COLEAD demonstrates its proficiency in assisting international companies in navigating new European requirements, transforming constraints into catalysts for inclusive, sustainable development.



Dec 2024

THE SHARED INTEREST FOUNDATION AND COLEAD PROVIDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO FINANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE SUSTAINABILITY AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF COOPERATIVES IN THE COCOA AND COFFEE SECTORS

The partnership between COLEAD and SIF continues to progress in its mission to strengthen cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire, Rwanda, and Uganda. Launched in February 2024, the project entitled "Design and Management of a Training and Technical Assistance Program" has successfully implemented three of its four main components.



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Baseline assessments:** An in-depth evaluation of the governance and financial frameworks of the eight participating cooperatives was conducted. The diagnostic reports provided a clear path for addressing gaps and improving management practices.
- **Cooperative governance and management training:** This training, launched in July 2024, equips cooperative boards and management teams with the skills necessary for effective leadership and operational excellence. Targeted roles include presidents, general secretaries, treasurers, and accountants.
- **Business and Financial Planning:** This training improves financial knowledge, develops sound business strategies, and prepares businesses for the market.

NEXT STEP

The final phase, scheduled for January and February 2025, prioritizes climate change awareness sessions. These sessions involve extension agents and key farmers to promote adaptation strategies and build resilience to environmental challenges.

IMPACT OF THE COLLABORATION

This initiative underscores COLEAD's pivotal role in bridging the gap between technical assistance and financial access. This strengthens the sustainability and operational efficiency of cooperatives in the cocoa and coffee sectors. By integrating governance reforms, financial planning, and climate-smart practices, the project advances shared goals of resilience and sustainability.

COLEAD is dedicated to bolstering the frameworks and capabilities of cooperatives, enabling them to confidently navigate dynamic economic and environmental landscapes.

TANGIBLE RESULTS AND PROGRESSIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

All of these interventions with MSMEs and producer groups are part of a sustainable capacity-building approach. In 2024, the SAS (Sustainability Self-Assessment System) was used in more than 167 FFM+ assessments, resulting in concrete progress plans, particularly in governance (+22%), SPS compliance (+17%) and environmental practices (+15%).

Post-training follow-up (within six months), requalification of local experts, and the creation of contextualized educational resources (guides, videos, e-learning) consolidate these achievements. Many partner training centres (26 in 2024) have started to integrate these capacity building tools into their reference frameworks.

FOCUS ON STRENGTHENING LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

As part of the FFM+ programme, COLEAD has developed a specific support mechanism for technical service providers (consultants, trainers, auditors, private or semi-public technicians). The aim is to professionalize these local actors who directly support producers and agri-food companies in ACP countries.

The support has included:

- Targeted face-to-face and distance training on SPS standards, private certifications (GlobalG.A.P., BIO, etc.), agricultural input management, post-harvest management, irrigation and adaptation to climate change.
- Individualized coaching enabling service providers to refine their diagnostics, better structure their support, and adapt their practices to the realities of client farms and businesses.

- Access to shared educational resources: technical guides, digital libraries, e-learning modules, diagnostic tools, and updated content.
- Integration into exchange and learning communities (e.g., Agrinnovators) that promote peer-to-peer experience sharing and the emergence of professional best practices.



NUMBER OF EXPERTS SUPPORTED BY THE FFM+ PROGRAMME AND TRAINED TO PROVIDE SPS SUPPORT AND OTHER MARKET REQUIREMENTS TO SMES AND PRODUCERS (DISAGGREGATED BY SEX)

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE FFM+ REPORTING PERIOD (YEAR 3)
0	100 experts, including 30% women	117 experts, 31% of whom are women

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF THE FFM+ REPORTING PERIOD (YEAR 3)
0	40 experts, including 30% women (12)	44 experts, including 26% women (11)

NUMBER OF EXPERTS TRAINED BY THE FFM+ PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TO SMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS (DISAGGREGATED BY SEX)

During the first three implementation periods of the FFM Plus programme, 117 experts were trained and supported to provide technical assistance on sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and other market requirements to MSMEs and farmers in OACPS member states. Thanks to these ongoing efforts, the proportion of women among the experts supported now stands at 31%, exceeding the programme's initial target of 30%. With this enhanced support, service providers are playing an increasingly important role in ensuring high-quality, local assistance and guaranteeing the sustainable dissemination of innovations and sustainable agricultural practices within value chains.

A VARIETY OF SUPPORT MEASURES, ROOTED IN DIVERSE NATIONAL CONTEXTS

The support covered a wide range of contexts. For example:

CÔTE D'IVOIRE: IFS FOOD TRAINING FOR IVOIRE ORGANICS

In February 2025 (prepared in 2024), teams from the Ivorian company IVOIRE ORGANICS in Bonoua underwent intensive training on the IFS Food version 8 standard.

Specializing in pineapple, mango, and coconut, this SME, which is already GLOBALG.A.P. and BIO certified, is strengthening its ability to meet the requirements of European mass retail markets.

SIERRA LEONE: ISO 50002 ENERGY AUDIT FOR WANGU PTY LTD

In November 2024, fruit and vegetable processing company WANGU PTY LTD, based in Masiaka, underwent an ISO 50002 Type 1 energy audit. The assessment identified energy savings of 20%, representing an annual cost reduction of USD 85,000 and 180 tons of CO₂ avoided.

ZIMBABWE: SMETA SUPPORT FOR CHISEL FARM

The horticultural farm CHISEL FARM (peas and beans, EU export) received support through a SMETA 4-Pillar assessment and five days of intensive training. A corrective action plan was defined to strengthen social compliance, HR governance, and ethical management of operations.

MADAGASCAR: OPTIMIZATION OF THE MALAKASS SUPPLY SYSTEM

The Malakass company (cassava processing, Atsimo Andrefana region) benefited from a coaching mission to optimize its supplies, establish a staggered crop calendar, sign contracts with producers, and initiate the creation of a local cooperative, thereby securing its purchase volumes.

MAPPING OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LOCAL EXPERTS

In 2024, COLEAD updated its mapping of locally available service providers and technical experts in the countries where it operates, enabling it to better target capacity-building actions for service providers within sector ecosystems.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS (TOT) ON SKILLS ASSESSMENT

A training cycle for trainers in educational skills assessment was organized for 28 experts from 14 African countries. This action contributes to standardizing and professionalizing the teaching practices of local trainers working with the companies and producers they support.



INTERACTIVE DIGITAL TRAINING ON GOOD AVOCADO FARMING PRACTICES (BRANCHING SCENARIO)

As part of the digital training on good avocado farming practices, an interactive *branching scenario* was designed. This module enabled companies and producers to practice decision-making in realistic conditions in order to improve the technical quality of production practices.

TOWARDS ACTIVE CAPITALIZATION AND SCALING UP OF SUPPORT DYNAMICS FOR MSMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS

Analysis of SAS data, particularly within NExT Kenya, confirms the effectiveness of the extended support model (> 6 months) combining diagnostics, training, and personalized follow-up. At the same time, COLEAD is continuing its active capitalization efforts: partner beneficiary profiles, support trajectories, development of asynchronous modules, and strengthening of links with national agri-food system transformation strategies.

YVONNE OTIENO, CEO OF MIYONGA FRESH GREENS, BENEFICIARY PARTNER OF THE NExT KENYA PROGRAMME

Yvonne Otieno, the dynamic CEO of Miyonga Fresh Greens ENT, has dedicated her career to reducing food waste and empowering smallholder farmers through sustainable agricultural practices. A journalist by training, Yvonne has put her communication skills to work for social change, accumulating over 16 years of experience in international development and community empowerment.

Miyonga Fresh Greens ENT, founded in 2015, was born out of Yvonne's vision to tackle two pressing issues: the significant waste of agricultural produce and the growing demand for fresh, quality produce. Starting as a small 10-acre farm in Machakos County, Kenya, Miyonga has grown to become a leading exporter of fresh fruit, dried products, and powders in international markets. The company now works with a network of over 5,000 smallholder farmers across East Africa, providing training on sustainable agricultural practices, crop variety selection, and obtaining certifications such as GlobalGAP. Taking an innovative approach to food waste, Miyonga transforms surplus fruit into dried products and powders, adding value and enabling farmers to get more out of their production. Yvonne's "Wheeling Fruits" program, a mobile fruit processor, enables Miyonga to reduce seasonal waste and boost productivity by processing fruit directly from farms in various regions.

Under Yvonne's leadership, Miyonga has not only become a profitable business, but also a force for positive social impact, creating more than 7,500 jobs, supporting 30,000 farmers, and improving countless lives. Recognized for its commitment to sustainability, gender equality, and innovation, Miyonga Fresh Greens ENT has received numerous awards, including the Gender in Innovation in Agriculture Award and the Social Impact Award at Nairobi Innovation Week.

Yvonne Otieno's journey with Miyonga is a testament to how a strong vision, a commitment to community empowerment, and innovative thinking can create lasting change in Africa's agricultural landscape. Miyonga Fresh Greens ENT is a beneficiary partner of the NExT Kenya program. More information about the company and Yvonne Otieno can be found on the COLEAD Agrinnovators platform.

OBSERVED IMPACTS AND PROSPECTS

All of the actions carried out in 2024 validate the effectiveness of COLEAD's systemic positioning, which is capable of combining interventions at the macro, meso and micro levels to respond to the complex challenges of agri-food transitions.

Consolidated analysis of monitoring data, particularly from the SAS and field feedback, highlights significant progress in the structures supported: improved internal governance, increased skills in SPS management, gradual adoption of sustainable production practices, and better preparation for access to finance and markets.

Beyond these immediate results, COLEAD stepped up its efforts to capitalize on experiences in 2024. Partner beneficiary profiles, thematic support pathways (access to finance, climate adaptation, strengthening equitable links between MSMEs and producers) and new asynchronous training modules were developed to enrich the shared knowledge base. This dynamic promotes the multiplication of knowledge, including within training centres and partner networks, which are gradually integrating COLEAD resources into their own systems.

In 2025, COLEAD will continue along this path, ensuring that the lessons learned from field support are better aligned with national and regional transformation agendas. Particular emphasis will be placed on the interconnection between technical assistance, entrepreneurial innovation and access to finance, with a view to sustainably consolidating agri-food systems and strengthening local capacities to cope with environmental, economic and regulatory shocks.







5

**Lessons
learned,
challenges,
and
developments
for 2025
and beyond**

5. LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES, AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR 2025 AND BEYOND

The year 2024 was a significant milestone for consolidating COLEAD's support mechanisms, as there was a notable increase in activities under the Fit For Market Plus (FFM+) and AGRINFO programmes. Several key lessons also emerged, enabling us to better understand the structural challenges encountered in the field. This has allowed us to lay solid foundations for our strategic trajectory in the coming years.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM 2024

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE FFM AND FFM SPS PROGRAMMES

Our lessons learned in 2024 are based, in particular, on the final external evaluation of the FFM and FFM SPS¹ programmes conducted by the CAPA EEIG – Expertise Advisors consortium at the request of the European Commission. Launched in 2016 and 2019, respectively, the FFM and FFM SPS programmes built on lessons learned from previous COLEAD initiatives, including the Pesticide Initiative Programme (PIP & PIP2) and the Development of Food Safety Systems (EDES). These programmes were funded by the European Union (EU) and the ACP States Organizations (ACP). The FFM and FFM SPS programmes received funding of €25 million from the EU and €15 million from the OACPS and the French Development Agency (AFD) for FFM, as well as a contribution of €15 million from the EU and OACPS for FFM SPS. These

programmes demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in OACPS member countries, particularly in the horticulture sector.

From September 2023 to February 2024, a final technical evaluation was carried out, consisting of a launch phase, a desk study phase, and an intensive field mission phase in the following 11 countries, where both programmes were active: Suriname, the Dominican Republic, Senegal, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. According to the evaluation team, the positive results of the FFM and FFM SPS programmes are largely due to COLEAD's ability to adapt to different national contexts and address challenges, such as the effects of the pandemic and changes in market access conditions.

COLEAD's ability to tailor its approach to each country's specific SPS policies and the particular needs of partner beneficiaries was particularly notable. The evaluation team highlighted COLEAD's expertise and the quality of the capacity-building support it provided to all partners, which led to recognized and measurable improvements in sustainability and SPS practices among partner beneficiaries. Additionally, COLEAD's strategic cooperation with other initiatives has been crucial in providing complementary support. This demonstrates commendable coordination efforts that leverage the strengths of different actors to achieve common objectives.

1 “Final evaluation of the “Fit for Market: Strengthening competitiveness and sustainability of the ACP horticultural sector” (FFM Programme) and “Fit for Market - Strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary systems of the ACP horticultural sector” (FFM-SPS Programme)” - Project implemented by CAPA EEIG - Expertise Advisors Ref. Ares(2024)3667551 - 22/05/2024

The substantial contribution of the FFM and FFM SPS programmes to market access, management skills, strengthened sectoral linkages, SPS compliance support, technical innovation encouragement, and sustainable practice promotion has led to tangible economic benefits, including improved livelihoods, education, food security, household investments, and greater sustainable production practice adoption among MSMEs and producer groups.

The final evaluation made several recommendations for COLEAD. First, it recommended that COLEAD continue its decentralization process. Second, it recommended that COLEAD strengthen field missions to improve information sharing. Third, it recommended that COLEAD encourage more partnerships. Finally, it recommended that COLEAD focuses increasingly on the economic and commercial performance of operators to help facilitate access to finance for MSMEs and producer groups. The main recommendations that emerged from this evaluation are as follows:

A relevant intervention model that needs strengthening to scale up

The flexible, customized, demand-driven approach remains highly relevant and is strongly supported by partners in African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries. However, its implementation requires stronger support, more systematic monitoring mechanisms, and stronger local anchoring to enable wider dissemination.

There are tangible effects on practices, but they are still limited in scope

The observed results in terms of management practices, SPS compliance, traceability, and sustainability are encouraging. However, the dissemination of these good practices remains incomplete, particularly in rural areas, due to the limited capacity to provide cascade training and structure post-training monitoring mechanisms.

The complementarity between programs and institutions must be consolidated

Coordination between FFM+, AGRINFO, STDF, NExT Kenya, and other local initiatives (e.g., SIA in the Dominican Republic) shows great potential. Nevertheless, coordination with EU delegations, regional institutions, and partner agencies (AFD, ENABEL, IDB, etc.) must improve to ensure sustainable synergies and maximize the leverage effect of technical support.



Access to financing remains a critical bottleneck

Many promising agricultural enterprises struggle to access financing tailored to their needs. This limits their ability to invest in equipment, move up the value chain, or transition to more sustainable practices. Therefore, strengthening support for access to financing must become a strategic priority.

A REVIEW OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME THAT ENDED IN 2024 IS NECESSARY: NEXT KENYA

Despite the challenging context, the programme achieved positive outcomes

Launched in 2020, the NExT Kenya programme was implemented by COLEAD and received €5 million in funding from the European Union. Despite an unstable environment marked by Brexit, the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, regulatory changes, and climate issues, the program has been able to adapt. In five years, it has contributed to:

- an increase in the market share of Kenyan fruits and vegetables in Europe;
- an increase in export volumes, including to regional markets;
- progress in social inclusion, environmental sustainability, plant health, and local skills development.



A strong public-private partnership

The programme has mobilized:

- Public institutions (KEPHIS, KALRO, MINAGRI, etc.);
- Interprofessional organizations (KFC, FPEAK, FPC Kenya, etc.).
- MSMEs, cooperatives, service providers, buyers, NGOs, and donors.
- A public-private exchange platform.

Concrete results in Kenya

Implemented twice as part of NExT Kenya, the sustainability self-assessment (SAS) revealed **significant progress** among supported MSMEs and cooperatives in several key areas:

DOMAIN	INITIAL SCORE (%)	FINAL SCORE (%)
Food safety	73.7	91.6
Health and safety at the workplace	74.8	90.3
Financial management	66.4	81.2
Sustainable agricultural practices	58.2	73.2
Energy efficiency	39.8	55.6
Water management	44.1	61.3
Waste management	47.0	59.4
Biodiversity	59.5	68.1
Soil management	57.0	66.4
Responsible business practices	81.5	86.2
Labour rights	83.4	85.9

Despite persistent challenges in SPS compliance, these results demonstrate improved overall performance and increased skills among MSMEs, as well as their enhanced ability to integrate into international markets.

Towards sustainable horticultural growth

The programme is contributing to the creation of a Horticulture Master Plan by analyzing 122 bottlenecks. The plan aims to double exports in 10 years through better governance, simplified rules, and increased compliance.

What comes after NExT Kenya?

The programme's assets (networks, tools, and skills) will be used to continue:

- The adaptation and compliance with standards and regulations (particularly SPS);
- The integration of innovation in the face of climate change;
- The development of fair and sustainable horticulture.

The NExT Kenya programme and the SAS have demonstrated the positive impact of an integrated, inclusive, and structured approach. In light of increased sanitary interceptions on the European market (RASFF), particularly for green beans, COLEAD will continue its efforts to establish Kenyan horticulture as a regional model of competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability.

A 2024 SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED AMONG COLEAD PROGRAM PARTNERS

The probability of recommending
COLEAD to other
professionals is **8,21/10**

At COLEAD, we value the perspectives and feedback of our partner beneficiaries – partners who have benefited from a programme implemented by our organization – in order to refine our practices and improve the impact of our support. Our annual “Pulse” survey, conducted each summer, continues to be the cornerstone of our performance evaluation and helps us align our efforts with the changing needs of our stakeholders.

Below are the main findings of the 2024 survey:

- **Stronger commitment:** This year, the survey was sent to all organizations with a signed development project at the time of launch (all programmes/projects). The survey was sent to 557 organizations in 32 countries and achieved a notable response rate of 33.2% (a significant increase from 23% in 2023). Among the respondents, 59% represented “new” organizations (those supported for less than three years), providing a fresh perspective to our assessment.

Asante sana



A 2024 SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED AMONG COLEAD PROGRAM PARTNERS (continued)

- **The trend in support quality is positive:** The overall quality of COLEAD's support was rated an average of 7.32 out of 10, rising to 7.93 for organizations supported for more than three years. Respondents highlighted the professionalism, responsiveness, and reliability of the COLEAD team.
- **Key challenges:** Access to financing remains the main challenge, followed by infrastructure needs. These results reaffirm the importance of our efforts to facilitate market access and provide financial and technical resources to partner beneficiaries.
- **Significant impacts:** Partner beneficiaries cited improved market access, capacity building, networking opportunities, and improved product quality as the main benefits of COLEAD's support. COLEAD's contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had a significant impact on SDG 12, which aims to promote responsible consumption and production.
- **Strong advocacy:** The likelihood that respondents would recommend COLEAD to other professionals is 8.21 out of 10, highlighting the tangible improvements in skills and results facilitated by the support programmes.

CHALLENGES, CURRENT RESPONSES, AND 2025+ PRIORITIES FOR COLEAD AND ITS PARTNERS

In light of our multi-programme activities in 2024, we have identified the following challenges that require responses: Some are already underway and need to be strengthened. Others need to be developed.

The identified challenges therefore call for strengthening and expanding the ongoing responses. COLEAD will build on its achievements to **scale up** the sustainable transformation of agricultural and food systems in the countries within its scope of action. To this end, COLEAD and its partners launched a participatory process at the end of 2024 to develop the COLEAD 2030 strategy as part of the now annual consultative committee.



CHALLENGES	CURRENT RESPONSES	PRIORITIES FOR 2025 AND BEYOND
Fragmentation of value chains and weak governance	Support for competent authorities and intermediary organizations (PBMOs, interprofessional organizations), integration of governance issues into action plans	Creation of multi-stakeholder platforms at country or sector level; support for the structuring of locally anchored economic ecosystems (coalitions, sector agreements)
Limited scope of distance learning	Development of e-coaching, post-training follow-up in person, mobilization of national experts, modular online content combined with in-person support	Deployment of hybrid approaches including decentralized training centres, multilingual digital platforms, and mobilization of alumni communities as relays (peer learning)
Access to finance for MSMEs and agripreneurs (individual needs, small tickets)	Support for financial management and business plans, guidance on existing credit mechanisms	Establishment of MSME support desks, promotion of tailored financial products, partnerships with MFIs and agricultural fintechs, creation of pipelines of “ready-to-finance” projects, standardization of tools (business model, scoring, guides), strengthening of the investment ecosystem tailored to agri-food MSMEs.
Stricter regulatory requirements	Deployment of AGRINFO, targeted training on SPS standards and sustainability	Strategic positioning of AGRINFO; support for compliance both directly through COLEAD and indirectly through others thanks to partnerships
Insufficient climate resilience in value chains	Awareness raising and introduction of tools, SAS, training in sustainable agriculture and agroecological practices	Targeted support for vulnerable sectors through climate-smart strategies; joint development of technical, economic, and social adaptation plans; piloting of agroecological practices; dissemination and adoption of innovations.
Lack of structured and shared data for decision-making	Project reports, ad hoc capitalization, ongoing awareness-raising at the micro, meso, and macro levels	Support for governance through data (national dashboards, visualization, open data), training in data management.
Difficulty in economic integration of young people and women	Inclusion in training and support, cross-cutting approaches to gender/youth	Creation of dedicated pathways for young people and women (incubation, mentoring, access to land and financing), mobilization of local authorities and NGOs for social change
Scattered visibility and limited readability of support mechanisms	Institutional and B2B communication in development, country/sector presentation tools	Interactive mapping of support services, setting up physical or digital guidance centres, promoting COLEAD and its resources in key forums

2024 CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE: LAUNCH OF THE COLEAD 2030 STRATEGY

On December 4, 2024, the COLEAD Consultative Committee convened in Brussels and virtually to launch a participatory process to develop the COLEAD 2030 strategy, marking a significant strategic milestone. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, including board members, technical and financial partners, and COLEAD management. In an international context marked by geopolitical and climate challenges, the committee confirmed priorities for strengthening COLEAD's impact on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A review of COLEAD's 2024 activities highlighted its progress, particularly in terms of concrete programme implementation results and improvements in technical resources available to partner beneficiaries.

Particular attention was paid to the organization's projected development in the coming years to improve the efficiency and impact of its actions on the SDGs. COLEAD's holistic approach was presented according to the theory of change, which facilitated an understanding of its actions in favor of the SDGs at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

The committee confirmed the alignment of COLEAD's actions with global EU initiatives, such as the Global Gateway and the Green Deal. The committee issued a call to action to all stakeholders, encouraging them to actively participate in developing the COLEAD 2030 strategy, which is scheduled for early 2025.

CALL TO ACTION FROM COLEAD TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION²

In an increasingly unstable global environment marked by climate disruption, geopolitical tensions, economic fragility, forced migration, and rising inequality, food systems are under pressure. Rural communities in developing countries are among those most affected by these interconnected crises. Meanwhile, global food insecurity is worsening and the resilience of supply chains is weakening.

Transforming agri-food systems using a human-centered, inclusive, and climate-resilient approach is one of the few strategies capable of addressing multiple challenges simultaneously, such as poverty, access to decent work, food insecurity, malnutrition, climate change, gender inequality, migration, and instability.



2 Formulated in 2025 as part of a public consultation by the European Commission.



This transformation is essential to achieving development goals and strengthening the European Union's strategic interests, including sustainable trade partnerships, food security, innovation, and opportunities in global markets.

Looking ahead to the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), we urge the European Commission to enhance policy coherence for development and boost investment in transforming agri-food systems. This investment should align with the three pillars of sustainable development.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Stimulating inclusive and resilient growth, for example, by:

- Placing people-centered agri-food development at the heart of the EU's external actions to promote rural employment, market access, and investment;
- Ensuring ambitious, long-term financing to support the systemic transformation of value chains.
- Investing in capacity building for local actors (producers, SMEs, and institutions) so they can drive economic development, improve quality standards, and foster local innovation.
- Ensuring equitable value distribution and fair trade practices among actors in the value chain.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

Support sustainable practices that are resilient to climate change. For example, support practices that:

- Strengthening support for sustainable natural resource management and climate-resilient agricultural practices.



- Promoting sustainable, market-oriented, and locally appropriate production systems in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy.
- Facilitating partnerships between the EU and partner countries for applied research on climate and food systems.

agenda for food security. It is essential for fulfilling the EU's global commitments, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships with partner countries, and promoting innovation and investment in Europe's and partner countries' agri-food sectors.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

Promoting social inclusion and cohesion by:

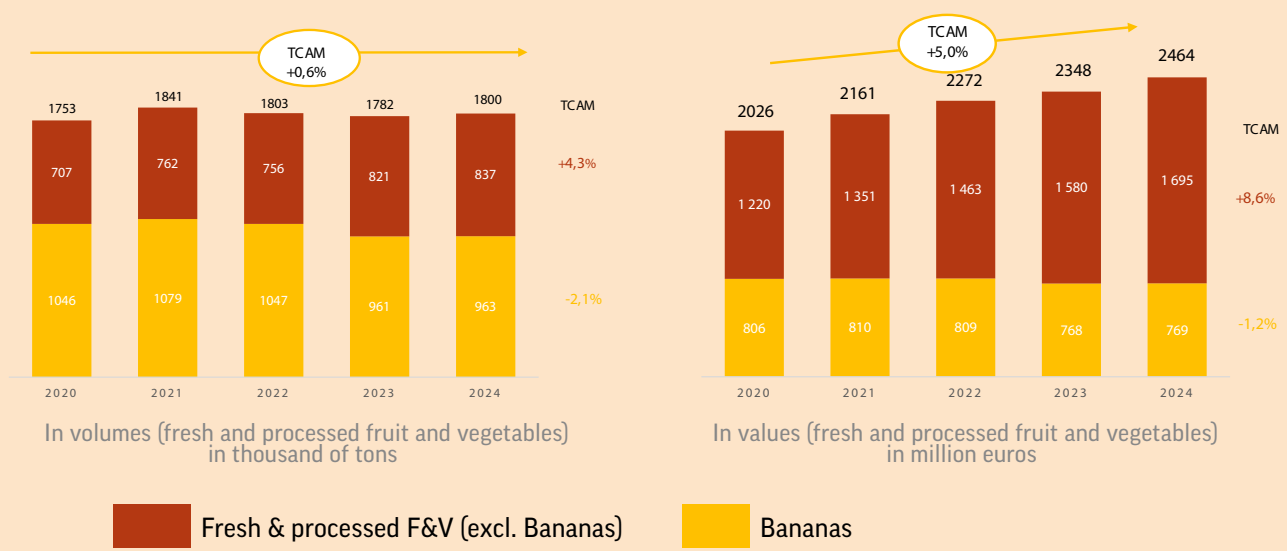
- Systematically integrating gender equality, youth empowerment, and equity into all food system development initiatives;
- Supporting local governance, producer organizations, and public policies that empower value chains working with smallholders and family farmers.
- Contributing to social stability by investing in rural areas as places of opportunity reduces forced migration pressures.

This integrated approach aligns fully with the Global Gateway strategy and the international

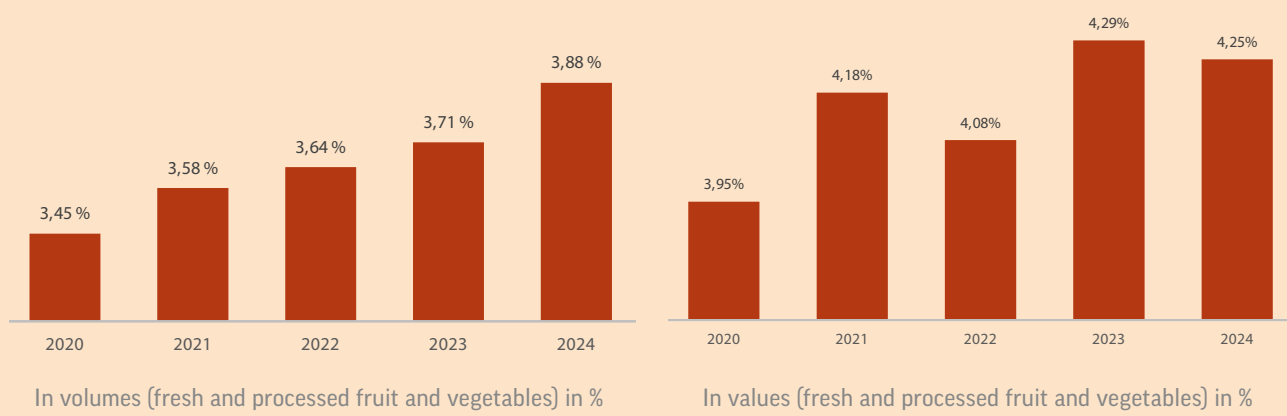


MACRO IMPACT (MARKETS, JOBS, SMALL PRODUCERS, ETC.) OF COLEAD THROUGH THE FFM+ PROGRAMME - EXCERPT FROM THE FFM+ YEAR 3 REPORT. KEY FIGURES

EVOLUTION OF ACP (EXCL. CUBA & SOUTH AFRICA)
TADE FLOWS TO THE EU27+UK (2020-2024)



EVOLUTION OF ACP (EXCL. CUBA & SOUTH AFRICA)
MARKET SHARE TO EU27+UK (2020-2024)



Trade in fresh and processed fruit and vegetables to the EU (and UK) has remained stable and even grown in value over the past 5 years. FFM programmes have contributed to this trend.

The two graphs above illustrate the positive trend in the market share of ACP countries for fresh and processed fruit and vegetables exported to the EU27+UK between 2020 and 2024:

In volume terms (excluding bananas), the market share of ACP countries increased by +0.43 percentage points (pp) for the EU27+UK. In value terms (excluding bananas), the increase is more modest, with growth of +0.30 pp.

These figures indicate a stronger relative performance of ACP countries in the EU27 market compared to the UK, whether considered separately or together with the EU.

VOLUME OF FRESH AND PROCESSED HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTS EXPORTED FROM OACPS MEMBER COUNTRIES TO NON-EU MARKETS

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF REPORTING PERIOD
Fresh: 4.69 million de tons (2020) Fresh and processed: 4.94 millions de tons (2020)	2020 figures or higher	Fresh: 5.10 million de tons (2023) Fresh and processed: 5.43 million de tons (2023)

NUMBER OF JOBS IN SMES AND PRODUCER GROUPS SUPPORTED/ASSISTED BY THE PROGRAMME (DISAGGREGATED BY SEX)

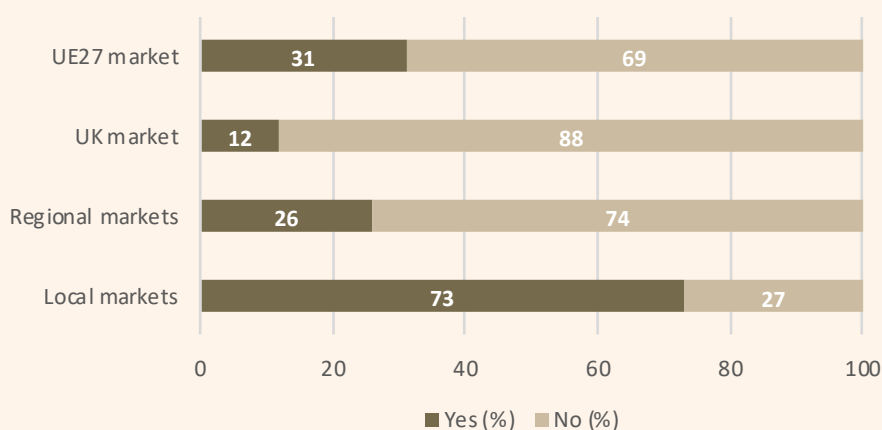
BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF REPORTING PERIOD
0	115,000	116,729, including 57,394 women (49%)

NUMBER OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS (DISAGGREGATED BY SEX) LINKED TO PROGRAMME PARTNER BENEFICIARIES, SUPPORTED TO INCREASE THEIR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION, ACCESS TO MARKETS, AND/OR SECURE THEIR LAND TENURE (GERF 2.1)

BASELINE	TARGET	VALUE AT THE END OF REPORTING PERIOD
0	5 million	39,500 to 141,850 producers via SMEs and producer groups 335,000 directly via support structures for small producers 4.5 million indirectly via support structures with member cooperatives/federations

FOCUS ON THE EVOLUTION OF EXPORTS BETWEEN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS (ACCORDING TO THE FFM+ REPORT FOR YEAR 3)

COLEAD's work is having an increasing impact on local markets, particularly through the FFM+ programme, given the profil of partner beneficiaries.

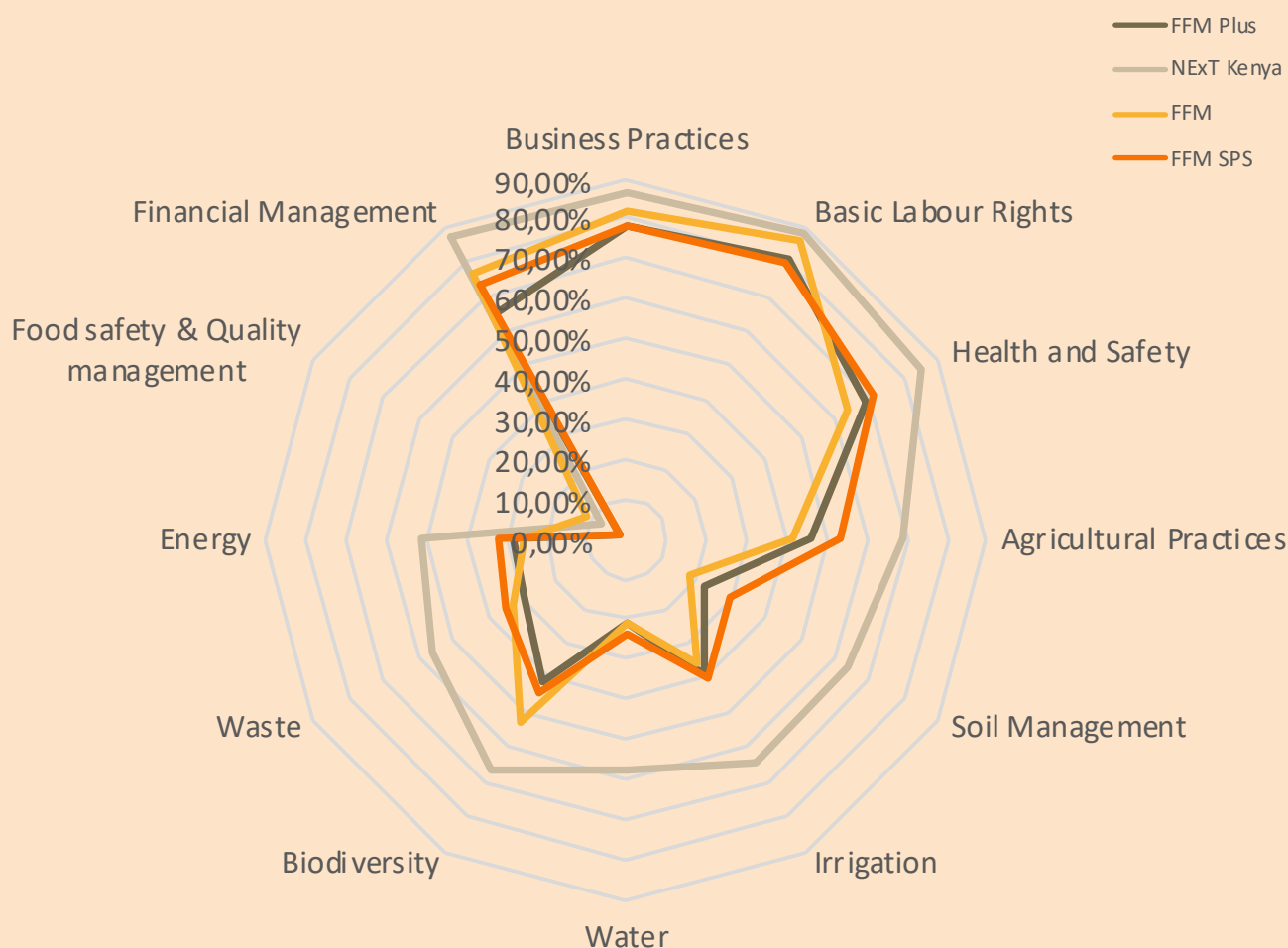


Data from AFS received from MSMEs and producer groups – Activity in different destination markets (%)

PERFORMANCE TRENDS OF BUSINESSES (MSMES) SUPPORTED BY COLEAD THROUGH THE FFM+ PROGRAMME

In light of the significant volume of data collected through the different SAS iterations since the development of the tool, COLEAD performed a benchmark of the sustainability performance of MSMEs and producer groups supported by the FFM Plus programme against the one of those supported through other interventions.

The spider chart below showcases the performance on the different sections of the SAS of MSMEs and producer groups supported by four different programmes: FFM, FFM SPS, NEXt Kenya, and FFM Plus.

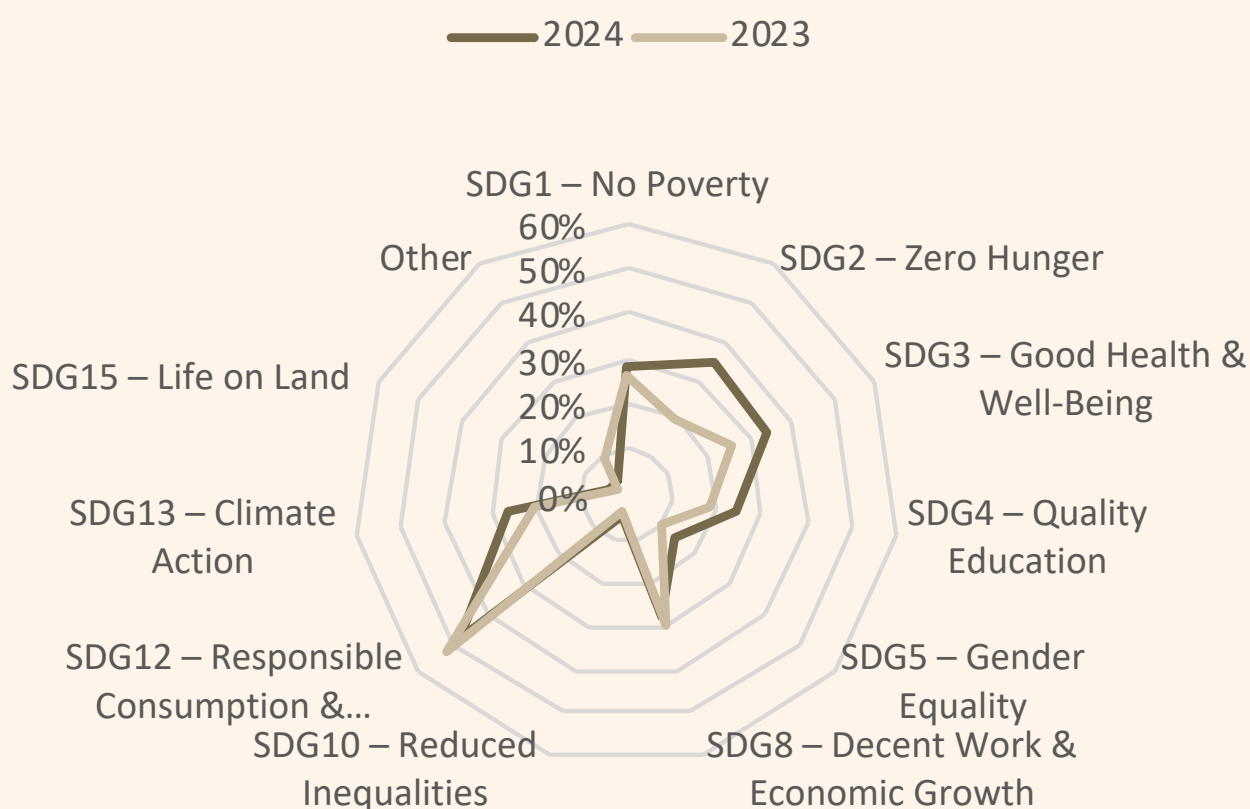


Benchmark: Sustainability performance of MSMEs and producer groups supported by the FFM Plus programme vs. Partner-beneficiaries supported by the FFM, FFM SPS, and NEXt Kenya programmes

4.5 million farmers

IMPACT OF COLEAD PROGRAMMES ON THE MAIN SDGs

The data presented in the graph above provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the impact of COLEAD programs on the main Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Compared to the previous year (2023), perceptions of COLEAD's contribution increased for most SDGs. The strongest impact was perceived in relation to sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12). Forty-eight percent of respondents recognized COLEAD's commitment to sustainability principles.



Percentage of respondents declaring that COLEAD programmes had an impact on the SDGs

SPECIFIC STUDIES ON THE IMPACT OF COLEAD'S WORK IN KENYA AND TOGO

The Pulse 2023/2024 survey results, which were collected as part of the FFM+ programme, are consistent with the findings of the COLEAD pilot study, which analyzed the “spillover effects” of COLEAD's work over the past two decades to improve the export horticulture value chain in Kenya. The final evaluation results of the FFM and FFM SPS programmes are also consistent with these findings. A similar impact study is currently being conducted in Togo.

6

2024

**Financial
Report**

6. 2024 Financial Report

FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

At COLEAD, we adopt rigorous and prudent financial management to guarantee the smooth running of the association and the full realisation of its mission. We maintain a balanced budget, manage our programmes effectively and act with total transparency. Our priority is to maximise the effectiveness and sustainability of our actions while honouring our financial commitments.

The association's accounts are audited annually by the accounting firm Caderas Martin. COLEAD is also subject to expenditure verification requirements imposed by our funding bodies as part of the implementation of programmes for which grants have been received.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE EXERCISE

The 2024 financial year marked a period of renewed growth for COLEAD, with a significant increase in the implementation of the various projects and programmes under management. This dynamic has resulted in (i) a significant increase in income from grants, and (ii) a diversification of the funding mix, illustrated by the substantial increase in income from the provision of services.

For several years now, COLEAD has been pursuing an ambitious prospecting strategy which has increasingly mobilised its teams in project design and contracting activities, in parallel with the effective implementation of support activities. The efforts invested in developing partnerships and structuring proposals were reflected in 2024 by the launch of several major projects during the year, confirming COLEAD's multi-programme/ multi-donor management capacity.

In 2024, these prospecting and project development efforts have continued and intensified, with a significant number of potential projects (in the form of service contracts and subsidies) awaiting confirmation.



BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

ASSETS		
EUR	2024	2023
Non-current assets	41,547	45,034
Current assets	5,735,012	5,364,717
Total assets	5,776,559	5,409,751

LIABILITIES		
EUR	2024	2023
Own funds	931,201	877,000
Provisions for liabilities and charges	22,232	20,495
Short and long-term debt	4,823,126	4,512,257
Total liabilities	5,776,559	5,409,751

The 2024 balance sheet reflects the increase in implementation activities and the expansion of COLEAD's project portfolio. On the assets side, there has been a significant increase in trade and grant receivables, reflecting the increase in services provided at the end of the year, as well as the natural time lag between implementation and payment – particularly for new projects contracted in 2024.

Despite occasional pressure in the third quarter due to the substantial pre-financing of the FFM Plus programme and the provision of services in the first half of the year, the cash position remained stable overall in 2024. To secure its liquidity, COLEAD arranged a €750,000 cash facility between May and December 2024, which ultimately remained unused.

Regarding liabilities, the increase in short- and long-term debt reflects the gradual allocation of operational resources, primarily for multi-year projects. This includes the balance of cash advances paid by financial partners in connection with projects or programmes financed as grants.

Own funds remained stable, with the association fund strengthened by the allocation of the year's net profit, i.e. €54,201, to reserves, which now total €931,201. This contributes to the consolidation of the organisation's financial solidity.



SUMMARY INCOME STATEMENT EUR		
	2024	2023
Operating income (1)	10,819,227	9,571,259
Operating expenses (2)	(10,746,795)	(9,476,257)
Operating profit (3) = (1) + (2)	72,432	95,001
Net financial expense (4)	(8,337)	(3,341)
Earnings before tax (5) = (3) + (4)	64,095	91,759
Exceptional items (6)	(9,894)	(29,744)
Corporation tax (7)	-	-
Profit for the year (8) = (5) + (6) + (7)	54,201	6,015

Operating income increased to EUR 10.8 million in 2024, up from 2023. This was driven by two factors: (i) higher operating subsidies, which reached EUR 10.2 million thanks to the acceleration of the FFM Plus and AGRINFO programmes; and (ii) a significant rise in services, which amounted to KEUR 607 – historically high compared to an average of KEUR 80 over the previous two years – due to the start-up of the SIA contract in the Dominican Republic.

Staff costs remained stable overall in terms of operating expenses, reflecting good control of staffing levels despite the increase in activity. At the same time, other external expenses increased due to the combined effect of accelerating the implementation of projects and programmes (mobilising experts, training activities and providing technical support) and increasing COLEAD's operating budget.

This reflects the prospecting efforts made throughout the year to secure new projects and the associated costs of structuring

operational activities, particularly with regard to legal and tax compliance. These expenses include consultancy fees for legal and tax advice, regulatory analyses, and costs associated with setting up permanent offices in Kenya and Togo and with registration procedures in several countries for national interventions.

Additionally, the 27% withholding tax levied on services provided under the SIA project resulted in a substantial tax liability (€135k), which had no cash impact but affected profit directly.

Net profit came to €54,201, reflecting a controlled financial year in an expansionary context, in which a balanced budget was maintained despite the major investments required to increase the portfolio of projects and programmes and to diversify sources of financing.



The information and views expressed in this annual report are those of COLEAD and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders of its programmes. The use of specific country or territory designations does not imply any judgement on the part of COLEAD concerning the legal status of such countries or territories, their authorities and institutions, or the delimitation of their borders. The mention of specific company or product names (whether or not registered) does not imply any intention to infringe proprietary rights. Please note that some of the content of this report has been produced using artificial intelligence technology. All ideas, content and cases presented are original, and content generated by artificial intelligence has been carefully vetted and validated by COLEAD.



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