



FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE ACP HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

# FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN-PACIFIC HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

PIP is a European cooperation programme managed by COLEACP. It is financed by the European Development Fund and implemented at the request of the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States. A second phase of PIP was launched in October 2009 for a period of five years. In accordance with the Millennium Development Goals, the global objective is to: “Maintain and, if possible, increase the contribution made by export horticulture to the reduction of poverty in ACP countries”. The horticultural trade is an important driver for economic growth in many countries, and PIP helps ACP exports reach their full potential by enabling producers and exporters to meet the demands of the EU market. While export horticulture is the main focus, outputs are adapted to local and regional markets wherever possible to also benefit ACP consumers.



# COLEACP: an international resource for the horticultural trade

COLEACP (Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee) was established in 1973 as a not-for-profit inter-professional association that represents and defends the collective interests of ACP producers/exporters and EU importers of fruit, vegetables, flowers and plants. **Its goal is to facilitate the flow of trade between ACP countries and the EU by, for example, promoting good practice, strengthening competitiveness, and lobbying and advocating on behalf of the industry.** Since 2001 COLEACP has been entrusted by the European Commission (EC) to manage the PIP Programme as well as, from March 2010, the 4 year EDES Programme (EU-ACP Development of SPS Systems). EDES supports the establishment of risk-based food and feed safety systems for export products in ACP countries in line with regional, international and EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regulations.

## The evolution of PIP

During the late 1990's, COLEACP foresaw that the new EU food safety regulations could create barriers for ACP suppliers. The Association worked with the major stakeholders to develop a proposal for a programme that would provide technical assistance to ACP suppliers and ensure that they were able to comply with the new requirements. **The ACP Secretariat and EC awarded management of this programme to COLEACP, and PIP was launched in 2001.** It was funded by the European Development Fund to the tune of 38,2 million Euros, and operated for the next 8 years in 28 ACP countries.

**The driver behind PIP was the change to EU legislation**, but the early years of the programme coincided with a dramatic growth in the use of industry codes of practice or "private standards". These were often more complex and stringent than the regulations, and though not a legal requirement, were becoming mandatory for supplier wishing to access high-value EU retail markets. If PIP was to help ACP suppliers maintain their position, it was no longer sufficient just to target compliance with official legislation; **it became necessary also to help them meet the emerging industry standards.**

The scope of PIP activities therefore evolved to respond to the changing pressures faced by ACP suppliers. Over the next 8 years, the approach used, the long duration, and the fact that it was a programme run by **the private sector for the private sector**, all contributed to its positive impact. The first phase of PIP was recognised to be a real technical assistance success story.

Support was provided to export companies to install and implement food safety risk management systems. Together these companies supplied over 80% of fresh fruit and vegetables coming into the EU from ACP countries and sourced from over 100,000 smallholders. To provide the necessary technical background, PIP developed 30 crop protocols and good practice guides for the main ACP horticultural crops (90% of exports) to facilitate compliance with EU regulations and pesticide maximum residue limits (MRLs). Assistance was also given to local service providers to create a competent and recognised ACP expertise in food safety. By 2009, locally trained specialists had largely (>80%) replaced EU expertise in the delivery of PIP technical assistance to producers and exporters.





The trade in horticultural produce from the ACP Group of States to Europe has grown over the past 20 years. In many countries it is now an important contributor to national income, poverty alleviation, and agricultural innovation. Future development of the sector could play an important role in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. However, in this increasingly global economy, ACP producers and exporters have to continually adapt to new challenges and pressures to maintain their foothold in the marketplace.

## New market requirements

At close of PIP Phase 1, ACP suppliers faced additional challenges. On the one hand there are new EU food safety regulations that may influence the future availability of plant protection products. More importantly, the market itself has begun to make new and different demands on suppliers. Growing concern with **climate change** has focused attention on **food miles**, and this has brought the ACP-EU fresh produce trade into the spotlight. A number of EU supermarkets are labelling air freighted produce and promoting “buy local” campaigns. At the same time, EU consumers have become more interested in the **social impact of the goods they buy** and some retailer brands are going **beyond quality and food safety**

**messages on their labels to include also information about fair/ethical/sustainable trade.**

ACP producers and exporters need to be able to meet and adapt to these new challenges. They also need a capacity to defend their position and contribute to the debate. For example, messages to consumers about food miles can be offset by positive messages about the ACP horticultural industry and the important role that it plays in alleviating poverty and contributing to the Millennium Development Goals. **This new trading environment may also create opportunities**; for example, in niche markets that promote environmentally and socially responsible production.



## PIP PHASE 2

To ensure that the horticultural trade continues to be a driver for economic growth, ACP producers and exporters must have the necessary information, skills and human resources to maintain market access and to capitalise on new opportunities. There is potential to increase the contribution made by the trade to poverty alleviation in ACP countries, especially among groups such as rural women who have few alternative income generating opportunities. There are also important opportunities to build on advances made in the ACP export sector by disseminating knowledge and skills on aspects such as Good Agricultural Practice and food safety, so that they also benefit production for local and regional markets.

In recognition of these aspects, and to take advantage of the operational framework already in place, the ACP Secretariat requested a second phase of the PIP programme, which was launched in October 2009.



## PIP in practice

The second phase of PIP addresses food safety and sustainability (the environment, fair and ethical trade) of the ACP fruit and vegetable sector. While export horticulture is the main focus, outputs will be adapted to local and regional markets wherever possible to also benefit ACP consumers. PIP functions through four operational components:

- **Addressing Regulations and Standards.**

By engaging with EU retailers, regulatory authorities, and standard-setting bodies, PIP works to improve conditions for market access and ensure that EU Regulations and commercial standards do not create barriers for ACP exports. In addition, PIP continues to develop MRLs and crop protocols, collaborating with research organisations and industry, so that growers have access to the necessary crop production and crop protection technologies.

- **Capacity Building of Supply Chain Operators.**

Direct assistance is provided to ACP producers and export companies to enable them to meet local and EU regulations as well as commercial standards. This is supported by the PIP Training Unit which develops teaching modules on a broad range of topics, and implements a cascade approach to training from senior management to packhouse staff, field workers, and small-scale growers.

- **Capacity Building of Service Providers.**

The capacity of local service providers is targeted in order to support the horticultural sector over the long-term. This includes direct support to (for example) ACP consultants, trainers, producer organisations, public sector service providers, training institutes, and public-private stakeholder platforms.

- **Information/Communication.**

Outputs generated by PIP (e.g. crop protocols, publications, training tools) are disseminated to programme beneficiaries. ACP players are kept up-to-date with accessible information on regulatory and market requirements, and fully informed on how to access PIP support.

## PIP TARGET GROUPS AND BENEFICIARIES

PIP works directly with stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The principal targets are horticultural producers, producer organisations, exporters and other supply chain operators (e.g. field and packhouse workers) as well as ACP providers who offer a service to the industry in horticulture, food safety, fair and ethical trade, and environmental protection. National and regional public sector bodies with responsibilities for SPS policy and controls, can also access support.

The programme will benefit ACP horticultural producers in general, particularly small and medium enterprises, as well as ACP consumers of fruit and vegetables, and European consumers of produce imported from ACP countries.





# PIP Mission Statement



The following principles underlie the second phase of PIP:

- 1. Towards zero pesticide residues:** Mindful of market demands concerning the environment and human health, PIP will promote measures that are both technically and economically viable and enable the supply of fruit and vegetables with minimal pesticide residues.
- 2. Meeting the demands of European consumers.** Besides food safety, environmental protection as well as fair and ethical trade are becoming the most pressing consumer concerns. In the same way that it tackles food safety, PIP will address these new issues to help ACP suppliers take the necessary action.
- 3. Raising awareness and influencing policy.** PIP will lobby policy makers to ensure that the impact of their decisions on ACP players, and on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, can be taken into account. This includes public sector (e.g. EC legislators) and private sector players (e.g. retailers), as well as NGOs.
- 4. Facilitating trade to support smallholder farmers.** European supermarkets are increasingly aware of their roles and responsibilities in promoting sustainable trade and poverty alleviation. PIP will strive to keep small-scale growers at the heart of ACP horticultural supply chains. This means reducing technical and economic barriers, as well as helping producers and exporters to overcome them.
- 5. Contributing to sustainable and safe food for local markets.** The considerable progress made in improving production for export should also benefit and be a factor in the modernisation of local ACP horticulture. PIP will adapt production guides for use by support programmes to improve production and distribution for the local market.
- 6. Developing fair trade:** a means of saving socially important but threatened supply chains. Faced with increasing production costs due to the combined demands of supermarkets and new legislation, PIP will develop Fair Trade supply chains in the fruit and vegetable sector in collaboration with key players in the industry.
- 7. Contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).** Through the activities of PIP, COLEACP will encourage and support its members and other private sector players (e.g. retailers), to ensure that the horticultural trade contributes to the achievement of the MDGs: poverty alleviation, food security, and environmental protection.





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PIP provides assistance on the basis of demand and according to cost-sharing principles. To access support, beneficiaries must complete an application form which is evaluated against a series of eligibility criteria as well as national/regional priorities. For more information on PIP, including details on how to access support from the programme, please refer to the website:

[www.coleacp.org/pip](http://www.coleacp.org/pip)

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