COLEACP : a « fair training system », serving fresh fruit and vegetable producers/exporters

Helped by COLEACP, an ACP expert network promotes a "fair training system", composed with an e-learning platform, collective trainings, in company trainings, together with adapted and targeted tools.

For the past 10 years COLEACP has been providing training as an essential component of skills-building for technical staff in African, Caribbean and Pacific horticultural companies, which have to cope with increasing numbers of new conditions to access the European market.

It does this by designing a range of tools to train the programme’s various beneficiaries. This training system is based on two fundamental principles: a cascading approach built through training of trainers and a revolving system which is fuelled by the local trainers.

Eurofresh has interviewed Professor Bruno Schiiffers, head of the COLEACP training unit, and Reinout Puissant, of Brussels Airlines Cargo in Africa, to gain a better understanding of the opportunities that the services represented by the COLEACP training offer to professionals involved in the sustainable production and trade of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Interview with Prof Schiiffers, Head of the COLEACP Training Unit

E: How exactly is your training organized and carried out?
BS: The courses are managed from Brussels and run by local experts, who also help to prepare the training tools. PIP, and now the EDES programme too, each have their own training units. Emmanuel Prunier and Hilary Barry are the respective coordinators. In particular, they are in charge of organizing the collective or individual training events given to the beneficiaries of the two programmes. With PIP, the beneficiaries are essentially fruit and vegetable growers-exporters and suppliers of services to these companies. With EDES, the training provision has been extended to other supply chains (fruit and vegetables, cocoa, coffee, fossils) and caters for the public and private sector through a system approach.

For over a year now, a number of experts wishing to improve their knowledge have also been helped by our e-learning platform.

E: Is it easy to use?
BS: Go to http://training.coleACP.org and see for yourself!

Interview with Reinout Puissant, Regional Sales Manager Africa – Brussels Airlines Cargo

E: For Brussels Airlines Cargo in Africa, what exports are we talking about?
RP: Perishables, essentially. 86% of our cargo loads ex Africa are fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and cut flowers. We serve 17 sub-Saharan countries, all with wide-body aircraft, and are therefore a substantial player in the perishable export economies of those countries. Our passengers wouldn’t realize that while they are travelling to Brussels, many tons of fresh goods are arriving with them on each flight and entering the European retail markets just a few hours later.

E: How does COLEACP interest you, particularly its training system?
RP: It can be very useful to our customers. It provides a service for those who want to develop their export business and, therefore, to introduce the practices that will let them meet market demands.

Many grower-exporters ask us about that and want us to tell them about restrictions on the EU market. Now we refer them to COLEACP and its programmes in order to relaunch the historic trade relations between the two continents. Europe is always the main partner in terms of exports for practically every country in Africa.

E: A form of partnership in a way?
RP: Let’s just say it makes it possible for us to give our customers concrete answers when they ask what they can do to improve their export business, particularly as regards food safety and hygiene, certification, etc. Moreover, it’s part of the innovation process our cargo services are going through. The days when an airline could sit and wait till cargo was offered are over. We actively search the market for possible synergies and have to offer a wide spectrum of services involving logistics solutions and consultancy support.