For sustainable fruit and vegetable sector development in ACP countries

COLEACP has been defending the collective interests of ACP growers and exporters and European importers for the past 40 years

COLEACP (the Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Union Committee) is an interprofessional network that aims to defend the interests of producers/exporters in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and EU importers of horticultural products. Its 356 members account for 85% of ACP fruit and vegetable exports to Europe. Growers, exporters and importers are joined by associate members (advisers, service providers, etc.) who contribute their analysis of the situation in the horticultural value chain. "COLEACP was a forerunner of today’s cooperation policies," emphasized Guy Stignghamber, the COLEACP Brussels office director. "Increasingly, these are the asking people to take part in the development of southern countries. That is what COLEACP does, as our objective is to facilitate trade in order to support social and economic development in the emerging countries of the south."

Technical assistance and training

COLEACP has been managing European Development Fund-endoed programmes since 2001 (PFP since 2003 and EDES since 2009). These programmes have provided the ACP horticultural sectors with 300 million euros in worth of technical assistance and training. Initially, the aim was to help ACP growers and exporters to meet the demands of EU regulations and supermarket standards regarding vegetable safety, MRLs, traceability, hygiene, etc., explained Guy Stignghamber. As a result, COLEACP developed an array of technical itineraries for different fruits and vegetables. COLEACP is also involved in training, whether provided directly on the company premises or through seminars and, also, recently, on the Internet. "We have had training courses on CD for the past 6 years," the COLEACP director pointed out. "Since 2011 the training modules have been available on line, multiplying the number of trainers who can access them." Food safety and hygiene have been joined by topics concerning the environment, corporate social responsibility and ethical trade. "Increasingly, access to markets entails sustainable conditions," noted Guy Stignghamber, and COLEACP’s latest initiatives are consistent that the progress made by the farming for export sector should also benefit the local market and make it possible to modernise subsistence farming. In March 2013 PFP’s 10th milestone was celebrated. A framework of understanding was signed with AREXIPA, the Gulf States’ regional association of mango growers and exporters, which has a membership of 14 companies and 1000 small-scale producers. The aim is to strengthen the sector through training courses, technical training for producers, market information and actions to assist the organization of the association.

In Senegal

Buursine International produces and exports organic mangos

Buursine International has been producing and exporting organic fruit and vegetables for the past seven years.

After studying in Germany and setting up a textile company there, in 2005 Amacodo Doufou decided to return to Senegal and set up a business near Dakar to produce and export organic mangos. His company, Buursine International, works with 75 small-scale growers with 230 ha of mango trees. "In Senegal we can grow mangos from May to September," he explained. "The country harvests 100 thousand tonnes a year and exports to Europe and the US. Apart from anchorage, organic growing poses few problems. The mangos are exported fresh, and the company to keep up its export volumes. The programme made it possible to carry out experimental programmes such as the current testing of biopesticides to combat anthracnose.

Processing development

In 2013 Buursine international exported 480 tonnes of mangos. In 2014, it exported 300 tonnes to Europe and 100 tonnes to Morocco and Ghana. "The difficulty is that there are many losses because we do not export enough," Amacodo Doufou reckons. The COLEACP-PIP programme has allowed us to get the certification we need in order to export. But now we need to get moving on setting up processing units so that we can limit the losses. To diversify his production, Amacodo Doufou has brought in a plant growing organic onions, papayas and pumpkins, which will begin to export in 2015, as well as red chillies, sweet peppers and spices for the local market. He wants his village to serve as a model for other farmers to develop the growing and export of other fruits and vegetables. In the framework of his partnership with BioTropic, Amacodo Doufou also implements social initiatives in the neighbourhood, such as making oil pressing available, setting up a training centre for women and contributing hospital supplies.