Structure: a team, a network

Around 40 staff in Brussels, 500 field experts, and over 300 member businesses representing 85% of ACP–EU horticultural trade. Behind these figures is an organisation structured to provide the best possible assistance to the businesses and public services that express a need for it.
At a time when its field projects are scattered around the globe, when importers are no longer dependent on large centralised markets, it is logical for COLEACP to centre its activities in Brussels, where the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat are based, and where many public and private stakeholders in the field of development meet regularly.

COLEACP’s offices overlook the rue du Trône, at the highly symbolic intersection of Brussels’ African quarter (Matonge) and its European quarter.

The 40 staff are divided into teams, each focusing on a particular area of support (see box): it is here that the needs observed in the field are analysed in order to provide pooled solutions in areas such as technical assistance, staff training and business development to beneficiary businesses.

**Local consultants**

COLEACP is also a network of 500 field experts, 80% of whom are from ACP countries. Since the launch of the Pesticides Initiative Programme (PIP), the goal has been to replace European consultants with ACP consultants as soon as possible, for obvious reasons of durability. This network includes agronomists, trainers, and marketing, certification and inspection specialists. It is largely these experts who make COLEACP’s work possible.

Coordinated by the teams in Brussels, these experts are sent out to businesses to assess their needs, train their staff, implement good agricultural practices and enforce a particular quality standard. They do all this using COLEACP-approved methodology and tools.

Managing this network of consultants scattered around the globe is one reason why COLEACP has set up its Planet social network (planet.coleacp.org).

Shaped by 40 years’ development cooperation and 12 years’ public–private partnership (PPP), this facility exists to help agricultural businesses from ACP countries seize the available opportunities for sustainable growth.

**Needs observed in the field are analysed in Brussels to provide pooled solutions for technical assistance or staff training to beneficiaries.**
The COLEACP teams

**Market access**

Coordinates monitoring of the evolution of voluntary quality and social standards and regulations to identify the changes a business or organisation must undertake to meet market requirements. This analysis work guides the actions of the other COLEACP teams.

**Technical assistance**

Focuses on strengthening the technical capacities of beneficiaries. This team identifies and coordinates the assistance beneficiaries need to achieve their goals – setting up a quality control system, obtaining certification, using new inputs – all of which relies on the network of local experts.

**Training**

Develops training tools and coordinates training activities. These are geared towards business managers and beneficiary organisations, and towards independent consultants, who also learn to pass on the materials to their staff and small-scale producers. This team relies on the network of local consultants.

**Research and development**

Develops agronomic solutions to help members and beneficiaries overcome crop problems: combating pests, introducing new varieties, adapting to standards. Research may be specific, at the request of a beneficiary, but this service generally works on the basis of agronomic monitoring and develops pooled solutions.

**Information and communication**

Oversees the production and dissemination of materials developed by the other teams (training tools and crop guides) and publicises COLEACP’s initiatives and observations to its members, beneficiaries, donors and anyone interested in its work.

**Networking**

Manages and strengthens the network of COLEACP’s 300 members. This involves, among other things, promoting international horticultural trade, establishing partnerships (with input suppliers and financial institutions), and facilitating business development (trade missions, trade fairs and exhibitions).

**Public relations**

Promotes the interests of the agri-food sectors on the national and international stage, developing relationships with business and government leaders, policymakers and donors.