PIP and EDES join forces in the Dominican Republic: COLEACP gives local farmers support for sustainability

In 2008 and 2010, pesticide residues in excess of the limits were detected in vegetables imported from the Dominican Republic, particularly Asian vegetables for niche markets in Europe. The inspection rate at the borders for fresh products imported from the Dominican Republic was then set at 50%. That level of inspection pressure could have serious consequences for the export sector. The response in the Dominican Republic was swift in both the public and private sector. As a result of their vigorous response, the EU recognised the improvement in MRL compliance during the 2010-2011 period and cut the inspections for the vegetables in question from 50% to 20%.

The joint activities between PIP and EDES and the official residue control system that applies to Asian vegetables through training, technical assistance and helping organisations such as the Food Safety Department, Plant Health Department, Extension and Training Department, Central Veterinary Laboratory, PROVOFEX and Pro-Consumidor with training, technical assistance for drafting good practice guides and strengthening their administrative and operative resources in order to improve the official food safety services and inspections, among other matters.

The interaction between PIP and the growers/exporters and between EDES and the public farming sector led to much success an integration of efforts by both to improve private growing and marketing conditions and have strengthened the Dominican Republic’s regulatory framework and preventive and official controls.

Roberto Mota, COLEACP expert in the Dominican Republic

Eurofresh: PIP has been working with the Dominican Republic for a number of years now. How was collaboration with EDES organised?
RM: Working for COLEACP, supporting and contributing to the development of the private fruit and vegetable production sector, working for improvement of the food safety and quality assurance systems for the vegetable crops that are exported from the Dominican Republic.

E: Could you tell us more about how it happened?
RM: Together – to be exact – Julien Gilson from the PIP training unit, Tania Polanco, a PIP trainer, and myself – we took trainer trainers to see 15 local experts. Those 15 experts then trained 80 extension staff. EDES was in charge of the training and PIP provided technical assistance. The Dominican Ministry of Agriculture intends to train 720 extension staff in food safety and hygiene in vegetable crops in order to raise awareness among the country’s small-scale producers. It is anticipated that EDES will advise the Ministry on this mission and on setting up educatio nal programmes for small-holders.

E: A cascading training system, then?
RM: Exactly. The approach is very methodological at the trainer training level and more and more technical and specific as it reaches the individual farmers.

Frederic Plumele, regional coordinator of the EDES programme