

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

Helped by COLEACP, an ACP expert network moderates 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 skill-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 programmes' 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 Schiffers, 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. ■



Hilary Barry, Nursel Gumusoglu, Vanessa Sieg, Sefia Jetha, Julien Gilson, Ayele Gabiam, Emmanuelle Prunier.



More information on :
www.coleacp.org/pip
www.coleacp.org/edes
<http://training.coleacp.org>



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Interview with Prof Schiffers, Head of the COLEACP Training Unit

it faces in retaining its market share. All our team, who work day in, day out in contact with companies and experts on the ground, are very much aware that new challenges are arising which will require an evolution in training provided.

E: What challenges ?

BS: Those related to market demands, which go well beyond food safety and hygiene and product compliance. We want people who work in companies to anticipate the changes sparked by these demands. We will carry on helping them to develop new capabilities, particularly in the areas of ethics, fair trade, sustainable production, water, soil and biodiversity management.

E: How ?

BS: By supporting their efforts to implement sustainable practices that respect the environment. For instance, this involves training in analyzing product life cycles, making good use of waste and by-products and measuring carbon and water footprints, which can be terrific business management tools.

E: COLEACP has been making a big effort to train market operators and strengthen the skills of service providers for a number of years now. Does that mean the battle has definitely been won?

Prof. Bruno Schiffers: It would be a big mistake to think the sector has responded to all the challenges

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. Emmanuelle Prunier and Hilary Barry are the respective coordinators. In particular, they are in charge of organizing the collective or individual training courses given to the beneficiaries of the two programmes. With PIP, the beneficiaries are essentially fruit and vegetable grower-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, fish) 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 ?

Reinout Puissant: 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.



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