



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 the 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%.

PIP GAVE SUPPORT TO FARMERS AND EXPORTERS

Coleacp's PIP and EDES programmes worked closely with public and private sector stakeholders to implement the FVO recommendations. Since 2010, PIP has been providing support to Dominican Asian vegetable growers and exporters in setting up traceability systems and has been giving training in food safety management and safe pesticide use. As well as working directly with the supply chain, PIP has also been working to strengthen the capacities of local support services and projects. Although the Asian vegetable sector has benefited most from PIP's support, the organisation is also working in

other areas, particularly the mango, avocado and organic product sectors.

EDES SUPPORTS THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC PUBLIC SECTOR IN STRENGTHENING THE OFFICIAL RESIDUE CONTROL SYSTEM

In 2011, EDES signed an agreement with the Food Safety Department (DIA: Departamento de Inocuidad Alimentaria) at the Dominican Republic's Agriculture Ministry which aims to strengthen 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.

FRÉDÉRIC PLUMELLE, REGIONAL COORDINATOR OF THE EDES PROGRAMME



Frédéric Plumelle

Eurofresh: PIP has been working with the Dominican Republic for a number of years now. How was collaboration with EDES organised?

FP: EDES works more with the public sector, through a Public-Private committee that has representatives from various Dominican ministries, the local farm advisory service, the food safety and hygiene directorate and the plant health directorate. As PIP has a training unit that has been running for a number of years now, particularly in the Dominican

Republic, we helped them set up training programs for local trainers.

E: Could you tell us more about how it happened?

FP: 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. These 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 exten-

sion 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 educational programmes for small-holders.

E: A cascading training system, then!

FP: Exactly. The approach is very methodological at the trainer training level and more and more technical and specific as it reaches the individual farmers.

ROBERTO MOTA, COLEACP EXPERT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Eurofresh: what exactly is your role in the Dominican Republic?

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: How is this support and collaboration carried out?

RM: we are working towards the official bodies' making sustainability part of their food inspection and control systems and improving the technical skills and com-

petence of the staff of local regulatory bodies. With the private sector, our aim is to train the farmers to improve their production systems, apply good agricultural and packhouse practices, introduce quality assurance programmes and help to conserve natural resources.

E: What are the priorities of your action plan in the Dominican Republic?

The process of applying quality management systems in the production, marketing and inspection of fruit and vegetables is subject to many factors (social, cultural, economic, environmental, production and

commercial, for instance) that need to be considered as a whole in order to introduce changes that will make sustainably and socially-responsible production possible, considering the health of both producers and consumers, growing healthy food and conserving the environment. Therefore, the actions that have been taken are part of an action plan being developed and carried out with each of the organisations and institutions that have cooperation agreements with the COLEACP programmes, and will in future show positive changes in terms of improved production processes

and systems in the Dominican Republic.

The joint activities between government bodies, the private sector and the PIP and EDES programmes include setting up a national traceability system that will introduce unique farm identification codes, allowing the produce grown in the Dominican Republic to be traced with no possibility of error.



Roberto Mota