



Strengthening the spice value chain in India to improve market access

The project is aimed at boosting exports of safe and high-quality Indian spices by addressing key food safety challenges along selected spice value chains. It is expected to benefit small-scale producers, especially those from marginalized communities, and improve consumer health and livelihoods.

An article on the project was [published](#) in The Economic Times on 18 May 2019.

STDF/PG/517

Status

On-going

Start Date

15/10/2019

Project Value (US\$)

\$892,030

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$508,830

Beneficiaries

India

Implementing Entities

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Partners

Export Inspection Council (EIC), India

Integrated Tribal Development Authority (ITDA), India

Spices Board of India

Background

Poverty remains a major challenge in India, a fast-growing economy where the poor rural population relies mainly on agriculture for a living, with more than 60% of the Indian population directly or indirectly involved in farming. Given India's diverse agro-climatic zones, there is great potential to use agriculture to boost development in rural areas, expand exports and reduce poverty.

India produces more than 3 million metric tonnes of spices each year. Although there is opportunity to further expand exports,

the border authorities of importing countries such as Australia, Japan, the United States and the European Union have rejected imports on the grounds of food safety. Many exporters are unable to meet the requirements of destination markets' food safety and hygiene requirements, especially in terms of aflatoxin and pesticide residues. As a result, exports have been oriented towards the Middle East, where spice prices are significantly lower, limiting potential revenue.

The project is aimed at increasing export competitiveness by improving food safety and quality in cumin, fennel, coriander and black pepper. The focus is on supporting poor producers, especially those from marginalized communities, who are excluded from formal value chains. The project is helping about 1,200 farmers and 50 other actors in the value chain to produce safe spices, which is expected to lead to higher prices and, as a result, boost incomes. The project promotes the equal participation of women, including for women harvesters, by improving food safety practices with training on good agricultural and hygiene practices.

This project results from an STDF Project Preparation Grant ([STDF/PPG/517](#)).

Results

Building capacity and improving awareness on good practices along spice value chains

The project is targeted at food safety issues in the production, post-harvesting, processing and trading of select spices. It builds the capacities of stakeholders and smallholder farmers to implement good hygiene, agricultural and manufacturing practices, and improve safety management systems to meet international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements. The implementation of food safety and hygiene practices throughout the production and manufacturing phases is expected to reduce microbiological contamination, pathogens and aflatoxin levels, and improve the cleanliness of products.

Key capacity-building resources are being developed. These include four packages of practice for each spice, linked with certification requirements and specific import market requirements; standardized training modules based on these packages of practice; and communication material. It is expected that up to 60 people will be trained through the project's "training of trainers" programme, and that about 1,200 farmers and 50 other value chain stakeholders will be trained on internal control systems; good hygiene, agricultural and manufacturing practices; hazard analysis and critical control points; and organic certification, documentation and record management.

The capacity of farmers and other actors in the value chain is being further enhanced through the establishment of farmer producer organizations and improvements to existing ones. These organizations are being strengthened at the community level to improve the production and use of value-added technologies. With the support of the ITDA, nurseries are being developed and seedlings provided to black pepper farmers.

Results and lessons learned will be disseminated further by encouraging farmers to visit different farms, as well as through communication and awareness-raising materials such as street plays, posters and TV programs.

Connecting spice value chains with international buyers

The project is upgrading linkages along value chains and with buyers through an electronic portal, the "E-spice Bazaar". The four spices are included in the portal to pair farmers with national, regional and global buyers. The SPS requirements of key buyers are available on the portal.

With the support of country's Spices Board, an international trade fair is being organised for black pepper. Various branding, advertising and marketing activities are being carried out for organic/good agricultural practice-certified seed spices.

Strengthening the laboratory network

Based on the results of a laboratory capacity-mapping exercise in different districts and states, laboratories are being approved by Spices Board to test spices and parameters. A national contaminant and residue monitoring program for spices is being developed and implemented. The testing serves to validate the developed packages of practice and focuses on the implementation of a preventive approach through good practices.