



Improving SPS capacity in the Penja pepper value chain

The project aimed to improve the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) quality of Penja pepper to facilitate market access and reduce poverty. Accordingly, the project intended to align Penja pepper production with international SPS market requirements without affecting its traditional quality. These requirements entailed introducing good agricultural practices, good phytosanitary practices, good hygiene practices and good manufacturing practices based on the hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) system.

The project was developed through an STDF PPG (STDF/PPG/593) based on research and in-depth consultations with the public and private sectors in Cameroon. More information on the project and the specific outputs (brochures, videos, etc.) can be viewed on the dedicated [COLEAD webpage](#).

STDF/PG/593

Status

Completed

Start Date

15/10/2019

Project Value (US\$)

\$814,238

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$562,321

Beneficiaries

Cameroon

Implementing Entities

Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP)

Partners

Penja Pepper Geographical Indication Group (IGPP)

Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Crafts of Cameroon (CCIMA)

Background

Penja pepper is ranked among the best pepper in the world. It was the first product in Sub Saharan Africa to obtain a protected geographical indication label. The characteristics of the soil, the microclimate of the geographical production area, and its organoleptic qualities, make Penja pepper an exceptional product.

The sector has about 450 listed stakeholders, approximately 20% of which are women, located in five production areas: Mbanga; Njombe; Penja; Loum; and Bouba I, II and III. The identified producers cultivate approximately 420 hectares of pepper.

Europe is the leading market for exports of plants and products from Cameroon. Between 2015 and 2017, 159 interceptions were recorded due to the presence of pests. Changes to European regulations on plant health accentuated the need to improve measures to manage phytosanitary risks and comply with requirements for phytosanitary certification.

The project aimed to boost exports of Penja pepper by identifying SPS risks at all stages of production, harvesting and packaging; training farmers and producers to implement good agricultural and hygiene practices; and adopting good phytosanitary and manufacturing practices based on the HACCP system. By producing high-quality products continuously, Cameroon hopes to increase its exports of Penja pepper and diversify its agricultural exports to niche markets at regional and international levels.

While this project focuses on Penja pepper, the same skills and practices will be transferable to other crops with similar risks.

Results

Improved understanding of SPS risks, good practices and market access requirements

- A comprehensive SPS risk analysis was carried out at each stage of the value chain from February to June 2022. Following the identification of SPS risks, a guide to good SPS was developed in English and French. This document provides a detailed overview of the SPS risks, and good practices to apply to produce high quality pepper that meets market requirements. The sectoral guide served as a reference for the development of the following training tools:
 - A guide to good SPS practices (French and English)
 - Five didactic brochures (French and English):
 - Good harvesting practice
 - Good drying practices and sorting
 - Good practices for treating white pepper (retting)
 - Good practices for treating black pepper (bleaching)
 - Good packaging and storage practices
 - Eight pepper diseases/pests sheets (French and English):

Strengthened capacity of Penja pepper stakeholders in Cameroon

- Before providing capacity building and to ensure the application of good practices, it is essential to have a map and list of all stakeholders in the sector. The project developed a database of 374 stakeholders comprising 26 nursery growers, 186 producers and 162 distributors.
- Various stakeholders were trained through cascade training sessions. The facilitators, who are agricultural officers in the different production areas, were provided with the technical and pedagogical skills needed to train:
 - Nursery workers on hygiene measures in the selection and collection of healthy cuttings, the selection of a suitable substrate, and biosecurity measures in nurseries.
 - Agricultural input producers and traders on methods to combat and control diseases and pests, as well as good agricultural and storage practices.
 - Producers on the selection of seedlings, soil assessment, plant supports, staking, the maintenance/running of fields, and harvesting in sanitary conditions.
 - Workers in processing, sorting and packing units; and distributors on good processing and storage practices.
- Government inspectors and extension staff on the concept of risk based control and on inspection procedures and methods.
- Number of stakeholders trained through the project:
 - 15 local consultants trained as trainers
 - 32 training and/or awareness-raising sessions were held for actors in the sector, bringing together 722 participants (31% of whom were women).
- In September 2022, a training impact survey was conducted that measured the impact of training. The survey revealed that the training had a positive impact on the practices of actors in the sector.

Improved capacity of installations to provide a suitable environment for the development and implementation of good practices

- To enhance capacity building activities, it is important to have infrastructure and minimum equipment available to ensure that noncompliant pepper is removed from the processing center as soon as possible. Based on the risk analysis conducted, control points will be identified.
- The project funded a new drying area close to the current grading center. This area will allow produces to be dried out on site when a batch arrives with a humidity level higher than the standard.

Raised awareness and promotion of public private dialogue

- An awareness-raising film on good SPS practices in the Penja pepper sector was developed in [French](#) and [English](#)
- A three-minute promotional video was edited by COLEAD team for local television is raising consumer awareness on the efforts made by the sector to provide them with high-quality pepper.
- A round table was organized at the end of the project bringing together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as technical and financial partners. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss and prioritize recommendations from the external evaluation and develop an action plan to continue the development of the sector sustainably.

Recommendations

Training courses

The sustainability of training courses demands a multifaceted approach that encompasses collaborative partnerships, prudent financial planning, cost-effective strategies, ongoing evaluation, and a culture of continuous learning. To enhance the quality of training partnerships and to facilitate knowledge sharing, partnerships should be established with local trainers and consultants. A budget line or training fund will help to finance ongoing training.

Improving market access

Identifying and participating in specialized trade shows to promote Penja pepper will enhance market access. Collaborating with organizations such as COLEAD and Cameroon's Chamber of Commerce will provide essential support and resources to showcase products to potential buyers and investors.

Understanding of logistics, regulatory frameworks, and commercial requirements is crucial for overcoming barriers hindering market access. Working in collaboration with the United Kingdom Trade Partnerships and COLEAD will equip project stakeholders with the expertise to navigate complex trade regulations, compliance standards and supply chain challenges.

Monitoring and evaluation

Reinforcing the monitoring of good practices and compliance with specifications, along with setting up regular evaluation mechanisms, is critical for the success and sustainability of agriculture projects. By anticipating shortcomings and continuously evaluating the project's impact on the sector, stakeholders can foster the long-term integration of SPS best practices among sector players.