The safe trade gap

When producers and traders in developing countries are unable to meet pesticide residue standards, their tropical fruit and vegetable exports are rejected. That happens because few Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) exist for these crops, or because the MRLs may be different from Codex standards or for different trading partners. When this occurs, people along the tropical fresh produce value chain pay the price. There are often big gaps in residue data in developing countries due to the high costs of generating data, registering new pesticides and getting them approved for use by farmers. This in turn is discouraging private sector investment. As a result, farmers are using older, less environmentally-friendly pesticides, which are less effective for managing pests and diseases and more likely to block trade.

Partnership approach

Partnerships and regional cooperation are at the heart of the three projects. Across Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, government authorities, multinational pesticide manufacturers, industry associations, farmers and international partners are carrying out coordinated and complementary pesticide residue studies. This collaborative approach is generating data to support the registration of new, improved low-risk pesticides for farmers in developing countries. With these new crop protection tools farmers will be empowered to control pests and diseases more effectively, while meeting international food safety standards and facilitating safe trade. Plus there are added benefits when it comes to agricultural productivity, promoting environmental health and consumer safety.

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<th>MRL Project in Africa</th>
<th>MRL Project in Latin America</th>
<th>MRL Project in Southeast Asia</th>
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<td><strong>Led by:</strong> AU-IBAR, FAO, Rutgers University and USDA</td>
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<td><strong>Time-frame:</strong> 2013-17</td>
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<td><strong>STDF funding:</strong> US$446,150 (total project value: US$1,064,450)</td>
<td><strong>STDF funding:</strong> US$436,450 (total project value: US$1,167,700)</td>
<td><strong>STDF funding:</strong> US$607,000 (total project value: US$1,212,000)</td>
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Initial results

- Thanks to field and lab-based training, teams of over 160 scientists and government officials in all three regions have developed new skills to generate, review and interpret pesticide residue data.
- Project partners in Asia and Latin America have completed nine new residue studies as part of national pesticide registration processes. A complementary study is underway in Africa.
- Data from the residue studies is supporting new MRLs for minor-use crops such as dragon fruit, mango and papaya. By the end of the projects, the plan is to have data for at least 10 new Codex MRLs.
- Collaboration among national authorities and the private sector, and across different countries in the regions, has plugged data gaps, improved results and used resources more efficiently. Pooling data has led to more robust data sets, reflecting geographic and climatic diversity.
- Government officials are gaining the know-how to design effective regulatory frameworks for pesticides that meet public health and environmental objectives. This in turn is giving producers the tools to manage pests and access export markets, improving rural economic opportunities.

Sustaining impact

- In 2015 project partners set up the Global Minor Use Foundation, supported by the United States Department of Agriculture and private sector. The Foundation aims to build on the projects’ results and partnerships, and to leverage resources for low-risk pesticide options for tropical fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops.

Find out more:
http://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-337
http://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-359
http://www.standardsfacility.org/PG-436