

Strengthening the spice value chain and improving market access

The project aims to boost exports of safe and high-quality Indian spices, by addressing key food safety challenges along selected spice value chains. The project 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 rural population is highly affected by poverty, relying mainly on agriculture for living. Over 60% of Indian population is 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 is an important producer and exporter of spices, with over 3 million metric tons annual production and opportunities to expand exports. Food safety challenges have been causing alerts and border rejections by importing countries including Australia, Japan, USA and the EU. Capacity gaps remain on food safety and hygiene practices and many exporters are unable to meet the requirements of destination markets, especially in terms of aflatoxin and pesticide residues. As a result, exports have been oriented towards the Middle East where the spice prices are significantly lower, leading to losses of potential revenues.

The project aims to improve food safety and quality in cumin, fennel, coriander and black pepper, to increase export competitiveness. The focus will be on supporting poor producers, especially those from marginalized communities, who are excluded from formal value chains. Around 1,200 farmers and 50 other value chain actors will be helped to produce safe spices, which will lead to higher prices and, as a result, boost wages and incomes. The project is

promoting women's equal participation, 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](#)).

Expected Results

Building capacity and improving awareness on good practices along the spices value chains

The project will target food safety issues in the production, post-harvesting, processing and trading of select spices. It will build the capacities of stakeholders and small-holder farmers to implement Good Hygienic Practices (GHP) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) - and improve safety managements systems to meet international SPS requirements. The implementation of food safety and hygienic practices throughout the production and manufacturing phases are expected to reduce microbiological contamination as well as pathogens, aflatoxin levels and improve cleanness of products.

Key capacity building resources will be developed, including 4 Packages of Practices (POPs) for each spice, linked with certification requirements and specific import market requirements (EU, USA and Japan); standardized training modules based on POPs; and communication material. It is expected that upto 60 persons will be trained through the Trainings of Trainers (ToT) programme and around 1,200 farmers and 50 other value chain stakeholders will be trained on internal control systems (ICS), GHP, GMP, GAP, HACCP, organic certification, documentation and record management.

The capacity of farmers and other value chain actors will be further enhanced through the establishment of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO) and the improvement of the already existing ones. The FPOs will be strengthened at the community level to improve the production and the use of value added technologies. With the support of ITDA, nurseries will be developed and seedlings will be provided to farmers (only for black pepper).

Results and lessons learned will be disseminated further through study visits of farmers to different farms as well as through communication and awareness raising materials such as street plays, posters and TV programmes.

Connecting the spices' value chains with international buyers

The project will upgrade linkages along the value chains and with buyers through an electronic portal, "E-spice Bazaar". The four spices will be included in the online portal, facilitating the matchmaking of farmers with national, regional and global buyers. SPS requirements of key buyers will be available on the portal.

With the support of Spices Board, an international trade fair will be organised for black pepper. Various branding, advertising and marketing activities will be carried out for organic/GAP certified seed spices.

Strengthening the laboratory network

Based on the results of a laboratory capacity mapping exercise in different districts and states, laboratories will be approved by Spices Board for testing spices and parameters. A National Contaminant and Residue Monitoring Programme (NCRCP) for spices will be developed and implemented. The testing to be carried out will serve to validate the developed POPs and focus on implementation of a preventive approach in terms of good practices.