



CocoaSafe: SPS capacity building and knowledge sharing on cocoa in South East Asia

The overall development goal of this project was to produce and trade cocoa that meets food safety and phytosanitary standards. To do this, the project had the objectives of: (i) improving food safety and SPS practices along the cocoa supply chain in Indonesia, Malaysia and PNG; and (ii) increasing awareness of SPS issues among supply chain stakeholders through innovative knowledge dissemination.

The overall goal of this project was to ensure the continued production and trade of cocoa that meets food safety and international SPS standards. Promotion of best practice at all stages of the cocoa value chain from production to export will result in production of good quality cocoa that complies with international regulations and legislation on pesticide residues and other harmful substances. As with other foodstuffs, consumers of cocoa and cocoa products all over the world are becoming increasingly concerned about the use of potentially harmful chemicals in cocoa production and processing. Many countries have enacted legislative and regulatory measures and established sanitary and phytosanitary standards; compliance of imported cocoa and cocoa products to these standards is required for continued access to their high value markets.

A result story on the project is available [here](#).

STDF/PG/381

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/11/2013

End Date

30/04/2016

Project Value (US\$)

\$945,279

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$652,851

Beneficiaries

Indonesia

Malaysia

Papua New Guinea

Implementing Entities

Partners

Indonesian Coffee and Cocoa Research Institute (ICCRI)
International Cocoa Organization (ICCO)
Malaysian Cocoa Board (MCB)
Mars
Papua New Guinea Cocoa and Coconut Research Institute (PNG-CCIL)
CropLife Asia

Background

Most of the cocoa in the Southeast Asia region is produced by smallholder farmers (most of which usually belong to farmer groups) but productivity is typically low, with quality of cocoa beans average or good. Yields are threatened by constraints including pests and diseases such as cocoa pod borer, vascular streak dieback and Phytophthora pod rot. In smallholder systems, best practice is rarely applied in cocoa production; produce can be contaminated during the production stage (e.g. by pesticides), during drying and storage (postharvest storage, collection by local traders, exporters and processors), and during the processing steps.

Measures are needed to minimise the levels of harmful substances in cocoa products, particularly as cocoa-producing countries face potential trade barriers as a result of increasing numbers of legislative and regulatory measures on food safety. High value markets such as the EU, Japan and the US enforce legislation on imported foodstuffs, including raw and processed materials such as cocoa, so developing capacity in conforming to SPS regulations (such as maximum contaminant levels) is now a priority in many developing countries. Across Southeast Asia, cocoa exports are an important source of income for the livelihoods of thousands of smallholder farmers. Continued compliance with these standards ensures producing countries can retain market access, secure producer livelihoods and strengthen consumer confidence in cocoa products from the region.

Results

Encouraging regional collaboration and promoting ownership

The project maintained a robust regional management structure, led by CABI through its Malaysian office. In addition, ICCO assumed the role of project advisory body which added an additional level of assurance to the management structure. Both CABI and the project benefitted significantly from their guidance, especially from the lessons learned through the management of a similar project, 'Cocoa SPS Africa' (STDF/PG/298), recently implemented in West Africa. The formation of a project steering committee as well as national steering committees for activities in Malaysia and Indonesia promoted excellent communication and collaboration between the project partners and kept the project's objectives on track throughout its lifetime. The in-country partners showed considerable ownership of the project activities and were able to implement activities in a timely fashion and committed the agreed upon resources to complete all activities and others in addition. Reciprocal visits by the participating country teams during selected workshops and meetings greatly improved exchange of ideas and information.

Development and production of locally tailored training material

Development, production and dissemination of training materials: A 'principal' manual was prepared in English containing regulatory information on cocoa SPS/food safety issues, best practices relating to GAP and GWP, discovery learning training exercises and a series of pest and disease sheets. The principal manual was adapted to include specific standards and information for each of the three countries and translated into local language if required. These adapted country manuals were then used in the training of Master Facilitators and Facilitators. Additional information beyond the immediate scope of the project was included so a comprehensive cocoa manual could be produced and used for other activities. A series of training presentations were also produced by CABI in addition to local experts for training the Master Facilitators. In addition, supplementary extension materials were produced and disseminated during the project such as numerous posters and videos to compliment the training sessions.

Capacity building through Training of Trainers programme

Training of two groups of Master Facilitators took place in both Indonesia and Malaysia. The training events were organised by the in-country partners with assistance from CABI and CropLife in Malaysia. Inclusion of local experts was encouraged whenever possible to promote ownership of the training events. A total of 40 Master Facilitators then went on to train nearly 500 others as Facilitators including agricultural extension staff, lead farmers, processors and agro-dealers. After the training Facilitators were then able to pass on this training to their peers and provide better quality advice to farmers. The training activities were often modified from the original format to be a better fit for different local situations, again adding to the ownership of the materials. More specifically, the project has benefited many cocoa stakeholders included cocoa farmers, agro-dealers, traders/exporters, processors, and extension and research officers.

Increasing awareness of SPS issues

As part of raising awareness about food safety issues, a project website was created to share information and related materials of the CocoaSafe project (www.cocoasafe.org). The website includes news and information on cocoa SPS standards and regulations, updates on the activities of the project, training materials and a gallery of images and videos. The website also contains links to other related websites and organisations. The project website facilitated stakeholder linkages with both private enterprises and public organizations, to make the whole approach to food safety in cocoa more cohesive. Both MCB and ICCRI developed and host CocoaSafe pages on their institute websites containing content in local language (<http://www.koko.gov.my/cocoasafe/home.html> and <http://www.cocoasafeindonesia.id/>). The CocoaSafe website will remain operational with current content until March 2019.

Strengthening stakeholder relationships and future collaboration

One of the recommendations from the End Project Meeting was to conduct a situation analysis workshop in Indonesia which would include major cocoa stakeholders to identify current programme and project activities in-country, identify the main constraints and how these can be addressed working more closely together. As a result of this recommendation, the Cocoa Partnership Workshop was held on 26-27 June 2016. It was organised and hosted by ICCRI with assistance from CABI and was attended by 16 participants including representatives from the Cocoa Sustainability Partnership (CSP), IDH-The Sustainable Trade Initiative, World Cocoa Foundation, MARS Cocoa Sustainability Research, and Swiss Contact. This meeting was able to bring together key stakeholders working in the cocoa sector who, together with ICCRI, willingly shared information on their current activities, identification of knowledge gaps, areas of synergy and future focus of their initiatives. This proved to be a very useful exercise for all partners and the momentum generated will hopefully lead to greater collaboration in the future.

Recommendations

Increasing sustainability

Sustained adoption and ownership of SPS best practices and curriculum developed during the project. Explore alternative sources of funding and new partnerships with other organisations to extend the scope of the capacity building component carried out during the project to reach greater numbers of farmers and post-harvest processors in other cocoa producing regions of the countries.

Enhanced capacity for dissemination

Continually review and update training materials, best practices and information for dissemination in line with new SPS legislation to ensure continued compliance with relevant standards. As well as updating the CocoaSafe website created by CABI, explore alternative methods of information dissemination for different groups of stakeholders who are not reached through a website, such as social media or messaging platforms for farmers and post-harvest processors.

Extending the scope to reach more farmers

The project should extend its scope to implement farmer field schools (FFS) in Indonesia and other regions of Malaysia as this would enhance impact by ensuring the farmers really implement the activities taught to them in TOF training. It is recommended that the examples of FFS should be repeated in Indonesia and the remaining cocoa growing areas of Malaysia.

Modifying the message to reach all stakeholders

Consider developing an alternative format of the training for input suppliers. They are an important stakeholder in the cocoa supply chain and it was difficult to secure participation from this group during the project. This was due to the length of time they were required to attend the workshops. It may be possible to shorten the course to make it more attractive or integrate the training with other courses they are required to attend.

Extending the reach

For country partners to continue with the collaboration built up during the project and share information on standards and best practices. Extend the country reach of the project through the development of a forum on cocoa SPS issues through a regional organisation like the ASEAN Cocoa Club.

Ensure compliance to international standards

Work towards implementing a national monitoring system in each country to routinely analyse contaminant levels (pesticides residues, heavy metals, PAH, etc.) in cocoa beans at regular intervals using certified laboratories to ensure compliance to international standards and provide a reference for exporters.

Monitoring to assess effectiveness and adoption of best practice

Annual chemical analysis (pesticides, heavy metals, PAH, etc.) of beans produced by the participating farmers to monitor the effectiveness and adoption of SPS best practices provided through the TOF training.

Engaging with the right partners

Regional multi-stakeholder initiatives such as this one would undoubtedly benefit from a stakeholder analysis during the proposal development stage to ensure all appropriate partners at regional and country level are involved in the project. It is also imperative at the conception stage to ensure country buy in and adequate contribution during proposal preparation so that incorrect assumptions are not made about partner's needs, institutional capacity and reach in the countries concerned.

Ensuring improved sustainability

SPS projects commonly include a capacity building component and to improve sustainability of knowledge transfer and related training materials beyond the life of the project, adequate discussion and assurances need to be sought from partners at the planning stage of the project. A commitment to embedding training curricular into country plans would go some way to achieving this. Understanding that information provided to cocoa stakeholders needs to be constantly reviewed beyond the life of the project is essential, as SPS legislation is constantly updated.

Increasing regional impact

When developing projects with member country based organisations, it should be taken into consideration that county participation may be restricted to the organisations' membership and other countries that would benefit from the initiative in the region might be excluded. A mechanism needs to be discussed in these circumstances whereby non-member countries can benefit from participation. A broader engagement would also have the benefit of increasing the impact and reach of a regional project.