



Strengthening Togo's SPS system

The project's key objective was to strengthen the phytosanitary control and certification system for the fruit and vegetable sector in Togo. In this sense, the project sought to improve market access for fruit and vegetables grown in Togo by guaranteeing, as far as possible, the absence of quarantine pests, most notably in shipments to the European Union. The project also sought to further export diversification, while fostering sustained economic growth and the reduction of poverty in agricultural and peri-urban areas in Togo.

The project entailed strengthening the framework and capacities of the inspection and control services and of private operators active in the production and export of fruit and vegetables. It involved the development of a "pilot" supply chain that could serve as a benchmark for other plant and animal or food product subsectors in Togo and provide them with a model for development.

STDF/PG/375

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/11/2018

End Date

31/10/2022

Project Value (US\$)

\$827,294

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$603,955

Beneficiaries

Togo

Implementing Entities

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

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Hydraulics, Togo

Background

In terms of fruit and vegetables, the main items that Togo produces and exports to Europe are pineapples (fresh and processed), leafy vegetables and other ethnic products. Although still at low levels, exports of fruit and vegetables from Togo to the European Union (EU) have more than doubled over the past 10 years, while exports to the WAEMU region have increased by almost 30% over the same period¹. Horticulture provides one of the few income-generating opportunities for women in rural and urban areas and therefore has a considerable impact on development.

In the years leading up to 2016, Togo experienced numerous interceptions owing to the detection of quarantine pests in consignments of fresh fruit and vegetables arriving in Europe. These interceptions concerned mainly whitefly (*Bemisia tabaci*), but also fruit flies (non-European Tephritidae) and, to a lesser extent, the false codling moth (*Thaumatotibia leucotetra*) and other lepidoptera.

In light of the high number of interceptions, the EU introduced measures to address the recurrent phytosanitary non-compliance of plants and plant products imported from Togo and asked the Plant Protection Directorate (DPV) to send it a plan of action detailing the measures taken to remedy the shortcomings relating to the notified interceptions. It was therefore necessary to take appropriate steps to find solutions to this problem. Failing this, Europe may have introduced more stringent controls for products originating in Togo or even prohibited the entry of certain Togolese plants and plant products into European territory.

Furthermore, a new European Union plant health regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/2031) was adopted in 2016 and entered into force in December 2019. The text constitutes a major revision of the European Union's phytosanitary legislation (in force since 1977). Under this new regulation, imports of most plants and plant products from third countries are subject to stricter conditions.

The project was developed against this backdrop to implement some of the activities proposed in the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) strategy for Togo that was drawn up in 2016 thanks to the project preparation grant from the STDF ([STDF/PPG/375](#)).

¹ Source: COLEAD, on the basis of data from Eurostat, CEPII BACI, IFPRI and UK Trade Info.

Results

The project focused on three main themes:

Strengthening the institutional framework and inspection and control services through the application of risk-based good inspection practices:

This aspect involved building the capacities of the plant inspection and protection services, in terms of both tools (databases, notification tracking system, etc.) and skills (risk analysis, inspection planning), so that they are able to perform their duties more efficiently. The following key achievements may be highlighted:

The texts governing official controls, inspection and phytosanitary certification in Togo were revised and updated in the light of regional and international sanitary and phytosanitary standards and regulations, in particular Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000, EU Regulation 2016/2031 and EU Implementing Directive 2019/523.

In direct connection with the evolution of the European phytosanitary regulatory framework (Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072, which clarifies certain elements for the implementation of phytosanitary Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, and Implementing Directive (EU) 2019/523 on specific emergency measures), support was provided to the DPV for the preparation of the mango, pepper and aubergine dossiers (and a national monitoring and control plan).

The preparation of these dossiers allowed for, amongst other things, the revision of risk profile categorization procedures and evaluation grids for exporters in the mango and market garden produce (peppers and aubergines) subsectors; the updating and finalization of technical regulations concerning phytosanitary inspection and certification for mangoes, aubergines and peppers that are to be exported to the EU; the strengthening of the internal control and monitoring-evaluation system for the inspection and certification system; and the taking stock of methods to control fruit flies, thrips, fall armyworm and false codling moth, etc.

A database of Togo's fruit and vegetable exports, which includes general information on exporters, as well as information on exporters' risk profile category and details of interception notifications, was set up and is now operational.

Capacity building in the fruit and vegetable sector and the establishment of a professional organization of exporters:

This involved strengthening the capacity of private operators, in their own individual activities but, above all, as subsector participants, to exchange information on shared problems and thus take concerted action and speak with a single voice where the horticultural sector is concerned. The following key achievements may be highlighted:

A sectoral guide to good practices for Togo's leafy vegetable subsector was developed with and for the private sector and endorsed by the public services. It will help stakeholders working in vegetable production to grow leafy vegetables in better sanitary and phytosanitary conditions, thus ensuring the optimal commercial quality of their products through good practices. The guide brought existing specifications into line with international SPS regulations and the commercial quality criteria of destination markets, and fostered the adoption of good agricultural practices, good phytosanitary practices and good hygiene

practices based on the HACCP system.

Numerous training sessions were organized for the technical staff of horticultural enterprises on a variety of topics including sanitary quality management, integrated crop protection, recognition and management of the false codling moth, recognition and management of whitefly, principles of organic production, hygiene and traceability, fruit and vegetable processing, sustainable production systems, and environmental management (soil, water, air, waste, energy, biodiversity). Around 50 parties benefited from these sessions, with training provided to around 500 technicians and employees, including 70 women.

Support was provided to the Association of Producers, Processors and Exporters of Vegetables and Fruits of Togo (APROTELF) to enhance its functioning, and the association's statutes and internal regulations were revised in order to establish sound operating rules. This made it possible to review, with all 25 members, the vision, mission and structure of the association, and to raise members' awareness of the management measures required for the association to operate effectively. Issues such as the financing and day-to-day operation of the association were also discussed. A four-year strategic development plan was drawn up to clearly define and prioritize the development of the services offered to association members.

Supporting dialogue between the private sector and the public services concerned:

This aspect involved improving communication and dialogue between private operators and public services, thereby facilitating an understanding of the problems affecting the private sector, in particular those faced by enterprises focused on international exports, and the resolution of such problems.

Six workshops were organized at which public services and private operators came together to discuss the problems facing the fruit and vegetable subsectors. These events helped to improve dialogue between the public and private sectors and established a transparent and efficient line of communication. Stakeholders even set up a WhatsApp group so that information could be exchanged on a regular basis. This momentum has continued since the end of the project (thanks to the shared commitment of the DPV and the enterprises involved).

Recommendations

The various actions taken to strengthen the internal capacities of partner structures should contribute to the sustainability of the project after its closure. However, it is important for the competent authorities and private operators to take ownership of the gains made from the project so as to perpetuate them. The following recommendations should be taken into account:

- Improve the legal and institutional framework (and adopt texts already proposed) so as to adapt to international developments and meet the needs of the various subsectors, in particular those producing leafy vegetables, mangoes, peppers and aubergines for the domestic market and export to the EU;
- Strengthen the official control mechanism for food produced for the local, regional and international markets on the basis of the results of SPS risk assessments and the requirements of target markets (particularly in terms of deployable human resources);
- Strengthen the mechanisms for consultations among horticultural subsector stakeholders and consultations between these stakeholders and the competent official control authorities;
- Strengthen national capacity in phytosanitary risk analysis and establish a framework for the sustainable financing of SPS activities relating to export subsectors;
- Implement programmes for the organization and development of lasting SPS expertise.

A good level of vigilance should be maintained by all operators active in the fruit and vegetable subsectors, as well as by the phytosanitary inspection and control services in Togo.