

# Improving SPS capacity in the Penja pepper value chain

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The project aims to improve the sanitary and phytosanitary quality of Penja pepper, with a view to facilitating its market access and reducing the level of poverty of stakeholders in the sector. It particularly aims to bring Penja pepper into line with the international SPS market requirements without affecting its traditional quality.

The project will focus on several areas, including the identification of sanitary and phytosanitary risks at all stages of production, harvesting and packing, and the definition of good practices in relation to the risks identified. The capacity building of the different stakeholders in the sector to ensure that they apply good practices at all stages of production and the improvement of facilities will allow for the production of pepper which is in conformity with SPS requirements and which meets the demands of customers.

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.

## **STDF/PG/593**

### **Status**

On-going

### **Start Date**

15/10/2019

### **End Date**

30/09/2022

### **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 by top chefs. It was the first product to obtain a protected geographical indication (PGI) label in Sub Saharan Africa, where the characteristics of the soil and the microclimate of the geographical production area, together with its organoleptic qualities, make Penja pepper an exceptional product (100 tonnes sold in 2010 on the French market).

The sector currently has around 450 listed stakeholders, around 20% of which are women, located in five production areas: MBANGA – NJOMBE; PENJA; LOUM; BOUBA I; BOUBA II and III. The identified producers cultivate approximately 420 hectares of pepper.

Europe is the main destination market for exports of plants and products from Cameroon. The review and analysis of notifications of interceptions by the European authorities demonstrate the extent of the main SPS issues concerning exports: 70, 69 and 20 notifications in 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively, due to the presence of pests. In addition, new changes to European regulations on plant health have accentuated the challenges to be addressed to improve measures to manage phytosanitary risks upstream of the supply chain and the inspection system, as well as phytosanitary certification.

Cameroon aims to increase its exports of Penja pepper and diversify its agricultural exports to niche markets at the regional and international level. To this end, it must be able to ensure high quality products on a continuous basis.

Despite the structure of the sector, the specialization of stakeholders and the coordination of activities, it is facing problems which are hindering its normal development and which could become a major barrier to niche market access. These issues include:

Sanitary issues:

- Systematic non compliance with the specifications for good practices aimed at small scale producers in the Penja Pepper Geographical Indication Group, regarding the use of registered pesticides and fertilizers;
- Non compliance with the European maximum residue limits (MRLs). No pest control products are currently registered in Cameroon to combat diseases and insects affecting pepper.
- The risk of contamination by mycotoxins during treatment and storage;
- Fewer than 10% of the stakeholders in the Penja Pepper Geographical Indication Group systematically use personal protective equipment (PPE);
- The quality of the water used for washing the pepper is poorly controlled;
- The protection of pepper drying areas is not systematic.
- The presence of pests that eat the leaves and damage the pepper;

Phytosanitary issues:

- The new EU regulation on plant health Regulation (EU) 2016/2031, applicable on 14 December 2019, which could have an impact on the sector.
- The existence of plant remains in the finished products; non compliance with the accepted moisture levels in certain finished products; difficulties in the choice of specific packaging for each type of pepper (white, black, red); and the existence on the market of Penja pepper mixed with other pepper that does not comply with the requirements for the protected geographical indication.

Pepper quality issues:

- The existence of plant remains in the finished products; non compliance with the accepted moisture levels in certain finished products; difficulties in the choice of specific packaging for each type of pepper (white, black, red); and the existence on the market of Penja pepper mixed with other pepper that does not comply with the requirements for the protected geographical indication.

The project aims to ensure that Penja pepper will be produced and processed in the best SPS conditions, by bringing the current specifications into line with international SPS regulations, adopting good agricultural practices (GAP), good phytosanitary practices (GPP), good hygiene practices (GHP) and good manufacturing practices (GMP) based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system. While this project focuses on Penja pepper, the same skills and practices will be transferable not only to the production of pepper, which left its ancestral home many years ago for the south of Cameroon, but also to other crops with similar risks.

## **Expected Results**

**A better understanding of the sanitary and phytosanitary risks, good practices and market access**

## **requirements**

The first phase of this project will allow for the identification of all sanitary and phytosanitary issues that may arise during the different pepper production stages, which will in turn serve as a basis for the development of a sectoral guide on good practices. This document will provide a comprehensive overview of the sanitary and phytosanitary risks, and the good practices to apply in order to produce high quality pepper that meets market requirements, particularly in terms of compliance with SPS measures.

The sectoral guide will serve as a reference for the development of training tools for the different stakeholders in the Penja pepper sector. Comprehensive training material will be required for the training of the trainers and for the cascade training events organized by the trainers.

The training material will include manuals, equipment and material for demonstrations, questionnaires, exercises and presentations. Where possible, existing material will be used. The planned technical support will be adapted according to the scale of the various issues identified.

### **Capacity building for Penja pepper stakeholders in Cameroon with regard to the improvement of the quality and safety of Penja pepper**

The overall objective of this component is to build the capacity of Penja pepper stakeholders along the value chain with regard to good sanitary and phytosanitary practices.

Prior to the provision of the capacity building and in order to ensure the application of good practices, it is essential to have a map and list of all the stakeholders in the sector. A database of the main stakeholders in the system, from production to distribution, will be developed and implemented (with GPS localization).

The training of the various stakeholders will be carried out through cascade training sessions, starting with the training of English and French speaking facilitators (training of trainers). The facilitators will be agricultural officers in the different production areas. The training sessions will provide the facilitators with the technical and pedagogical skills required to train the various stakeholders in the sector, namely:

- Nursery workers, who will receive training 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, who will receive training mainly on methods to combat and control diseases and pests, good agricultural practices and good storage practices;
- Producers, who will be trained on the selection of seedlings, soil assessment, plant supports, staking, the maintenance/running of fields, and harvesting in adequate sanitary conditions;
- Workers in processing, sorting and packing units, and distributors, who will be given training on good processing and storage practices;
- Government inspectors and extension staff, who will be trained on the concept of risk based control and on inspection procedures and methods.

To measure the impact of this training, an investigation will be conducted at the beginning and the end of the project with the various targets.

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

In order to enhance capacity building activities, it is important to have infrastructure and minimum equipment available to: (i) ensure that non compliant pepper is removed from the processing centre as soon as possible in the value chain; and (ii) improve the quality of the drying of the products.

Based on the risk analysis carried out, control points will be identified. To conduct these controls in an optimal manner, small equipment items are to be purchased.

There is currently a processing station with various soaking, retting and washing basins, and a cement platform divided into four sections, which is protected from domestic animals. However, the site does not have any protection from small pests or birds, and is not protected from the rain, which slows down the drying process.

As part of the implementation of this project, a test greenhouse could be built in the BOUBA I processing station to allow for quick drying and sanitary protection against birds and domestic animals.

**Awareness raising and promotion of public private dialogue through the creation and structuring of an exchange platform for stakeholders**

Currently, there is no formalized system to facilitate communication and the exchange of information and experiences among the various public and private stakeholders in the sector, which does not allow for a strategy of continuous improvement to be implemented.

The exchange and dissemination of information will be boosted by the creation of a public private discussion platform and through the dissemination of advertising and communication material on the sector in general, the problems faced and good practices, and on the actions carried out as part of the project.