



Safer spices: food safety and market access for peppercorn

This regional peppercorn project aims to increase financial returns, improve productivity, safety and market access for smallholder pepper growers & processors and grower/processor groups by improving compliance with international food safety requirements in high-value markets such as EU, USA and Japan to restore the food manufacturing industry confidence in peppercorn sourced from the region. It will also increase the competitiveness & sustainability of the regional peppercorn industry in terms of a consistent supply of high-quality, safe peppercorn from small-scale value-chains driven by farmers. This will be achieved by developing and adopting a harmonized Code of Practices (CoP) coupled with a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) to increase production, food safety and market.

Check CABI's [news item](#) and learn more about the inauguration of a project office within WASI's campus in Vietnam.

STDF/PG/619

Status

On-going

Start Date

01/10/2020

End Date

30/09/2023

Project Value (US\$)

\$906,836

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$700,086

Beneficiaries

Cambodia

Lao PDR

Viet Nam

Implementing Entities

CAB International (CABI)

Partners

Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (WASI) Vietnam

Department of Agriculture (DoA) Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR

General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA) Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries of Cambodia

Background

Spices, including peppercorn, are associated with complex and diverse supply chains which starts from large to small-scale farmers (producers) and reach to processors/shipper through many intermediaries, i.e. collector, middleman etc. The aggregation and redistribution of these products at various stages along the supply chain contributes to a high food safety risk profile such as excessive pesticide residue levels; pathogen contamination (i.e. Salmonella); adulteration and substitute. These spices are also exposed to dust, dirt, insects, and animal waste before and after harvest due to poor sanitation and food handling practices. Further, peppercorn farmers also face phytosanitary issues like pests and diseases, i.e. Phytophthora foot rot and slow decline diseases.

Analysis of SPS issues in exported peppercorn suggests that all the main food safety and hygiene-related non-compliances (i.e. high MRL, bacterial and physical contamination), result from either poor farm-level decisions or handling practices. Most of the village level activities at production, harvesting, drying and initial storage were identified as the point of breakdown in SPS control. These non-compliances can be corrected with improved practical capacity development of farmers and creating a conducive environment to encourage them to adopt improved practices.

The proposed project aims to combat SPS issues related to food safety and improve the quality and traceability in the production, post-harvest, processing, and peppercorn trade. This will be achieved by identifying, developing and disseminating good practices that focus on village-level peppercorn production. A code of practice (CoP) will be designed around codex standards to address the identified SPS issues with peppercorn. An implementation model for the CoP will be developed based on the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) to the production of safe produce by building social cohesion, peer-to-peer learning and awareness of responsibility towards the community.

Expected Results

Develop Farm-Village Level Pepper Code of Practice based on CODEX Standards and National Good Practices

A first expected result will be to provide a regionally harmonized code of practice (CoP) based on CODEX standards, and existing national good agricultural and hygiene practice (GAP, GHP) for adoption by farm-level pepper producers, collectors and input providers in peppercorn supply chains in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The CoP will be pilot tested with two farmer groups in Vietnam and one group each in Cambodia and Laos and tailored to meet the local conditions, requirements and cultural norms.

Develop Knowledge Resources on CoP

To support the COP, a range of practical communication tools and knowledge resources will be developed such as information factsheets, practical implementation guides (i.e. farmer manual, etc.), posters etc. An electronic resource "Knowledge Hub" will also be developed to share all information /materials generated by the project with global access and the knowledge amongst peppercorn value chain participants in the project countries and with stakeholders involved in peppercorn international trade.

Stakeholder workshops with farmers, collectors, local government officials and lead firms will be organized in order to solicit stakeholder input on the updated code of practice, supporting material and management framework.

Establish PGS Models to implement the CoP

To facilitate the implementation of the CoP, the Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS) model will be piloted in all three countries, with a number of pepper producing farmers. A team of advisory expert will be trained in each country, who will train and provide ongoing support to the farmers in implementing PGS and the CoP, including developing market-orientated farm business management skills.

Develop Strategies for Wider roll-out of the Code of Practice

An assessment will be conducted to suit the piloted CoP, PGS model and supporting documents to identify approaches/strategies for a wider roll-out of the code of practice and management system. Progress stories will be periodically communicated to industry partners, particularly buyers and processors, who will be the approach's potential adopters.

The seminar and regional workshop will be planned to raise awareness and wider uptake of the STDF peppercorn project's successful outcomes among pepper processing and exporting companies, the network of international pepper buyers, International Pepper Community (IPC) and major donor organisations etc.