

# STDF CAMEROON

IMPROVING THE SANITARY AND  
PHYTOSANITARY QUALITY OF PENJA  
PEPPER IN CAMEROON TO FACILITATE  
ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

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STDF | CAMEROON



The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) provides grants to projects that promote compliance with international SPS requirements.

The STDF Cameroon programme is financed by STDF and co-financed by the Penja Pepper Geographical Indication Group (IGPP), the Cameroon Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Handicrafts (CCIMA), the Ministry of Commerce of the Republic of Cameroon, and COLEACP's Fit For Market SPS programme.

COLEACP's mission is to "Develop trade in agricultural and food products (especially fruit and vegetables) that is inclusive and sustainable, as a priority in the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and between these countries and the European Union". Given its specific experience in Cameroon, COLEACP is in charge of leading the implementation of this project.



# What is the STDF Cameroon programme and how can you benefit from it?

## KEY POINTS

- The project aims to contribute to improving the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) quality of Penja pepper in order to facilitate its access to markets and reduce the poverty level of actors in the sector. In particular, it aims to bring Penja pepper into line with international SPS market requirements without altering its intrinsic quality based on a traditional operating system.
- Penja pepper is a major source of rural employment as it is almost all produced by smallholders with land of less than three hectares. Improving the economic situation of Penja pepper growers is essential to accelerate progress towards eradicating poverty and precarious living conditions.
- The promotion of best practices at all stages of the Penja pepper value chain, from production to export, will result in the production of good quality peppers in accordance with international regulations.
- The project will focus on several areas, in particular the identification of SPS risks at all stages of production, harvesting and packaging, and the definition of good practices in relation to the risks identified. Capacity building of various actors in the sector to enable them to apply good practices at all stages of production, and improvement of facilities, will make it possible to produce peppers that comply with SPS requirements and meet customer demand.

## CONTEXT AND RATIONALITY OF THE PROGRAMME

The great chefs rank Penja pepper among the best peppers in the world. Penja pepper is the first protected geographical indication (PGI) in sub-Saharan Africa, as the soil characteristics and microclimate of the geographical production area, as well as its organoleptic qualities, make this pepper an exceptional product of which 100 tonnes are marketed on the French market.

To date, the sector has about 450 listed actors, including about 20% women, who are concentrated in five production areas: Mbanga–Njombe; Penja; Loum; Bouba I; Bouba II and III. The producers identified together cultivate about 420 hectares of pepper in total.

As Europe is the main destination market for Cameroon's exports of plants and products, the review and analysis of interception notifications by European authorities provides information on the extent of the main export SPS problems: 70, 69 and 20 notifications in 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively, due to the presence of harmful organisms. In addition, recent changes in European plant health regulations highlight the challenges to be considered in improving pest risk control measures upstream of the supply chain and the plant health inspection and certification system.

Cameroon aims to increase its exports of Penja pepper and diversify its agricultural exports to niche markets at regional and international levels, and to achieve this must be able to ensure continuous, irreproachable product quality.

Despite the structuring of the sector, the specialisation of actors and the coordination of activities, the organisation faces problems that prevent its development potential from being fully expressed. These obstacles could in the future constitute a major obstacle to its marketing in high value-added markets. For example:

#### **AT THE HEALTH LEVEL:**

- Systematic non-compliance with the specifications of good practices for small producers who are members of the IGPP with regard to the use of registered pesticides and fertilisers.
- Non-compliance with European maximum residue limits (MRLs). No pest control products are currently registered in Cameroon to control diseases and insects on pepper.
- The risk of mycotoxin contamination during processing and storage.
- Fewer than 10% of actors in the IGPP systematically use personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The quality of water used to wash pepper is poorly controlled.
- Protection of pepper-drying areas, for example against small pests, birds, rain or debris, is not systematic.

#### **AT THE PHYTOSANITARY LEVEL:**

- The presence of pests that eat leaves and damage pepper.
- The new EU Plant Health Regulation, EU Regulation 2016/2031, comes into force on 14 December 2019 and could have an impact on the sector.

#### **IN TERMS OF PEPPER QUALITY :**

- The existence of plant debris in finished products;
- Failure to comply with the acceptable moisture content in certain finished products;
- Difficulties in choosing specific packaging for each type of pepper (white, black, red);
- The existence on the market of Penja peppers mixed with other peppers that do not comply with the specifications imposed by the PGI.

The first phase of the project will identify all the SPS problems that may arise during the different phases of pepper production. The technical support provided will be assessed and prioritised according to the importance of the various problems identified. According to the first analysis carried out, the main problems affecting the pepper sector relate to plant health.

Stakeholders will receive training, including nursery growers, producers, processors (retting, washing, drying); employees of packing centres (packaging, coding, traceability); distributors and transporters. This will make it possible to transmit the key messages on applying good practices to all stakeholders, using the technical and teaching materials developed.

Stakeholders targeted by the project include nursery growers, small- and large-scale producers, agricultural input distributors, processors and exporters, also involving national and regional authorities responsible for issuing phytosanitary certificates.

The dissemination and sharing of knowledge on good SPS and food safety practices will be the guiding principle for all project activities, using advertising campaigns, training and knowledge-sharing approaches. Links will be facilitated between project stakeholders, including private companies and public organisations.

The project aims to ensure that Penja pepper will be produced and processed under better SPS conditions by harmonising current specifications with international SPS standards, adopting good agricultural practices (GAP), good plant protection practices (GPP), good hygiene practices (GHP) and good manufacturing practices (GMP) based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) standard. Although this project focuses on Penja pepper, the same skills and practices will be transferable not only to the production of pepper, which has long since left its ancestral zone to be found throughout the great south of Cameroon, but also to other crops presenting similar risks.

## THE STDF CAMEROON PROGRAMME

Duration	Country	Budget
3 years	Cameroon	720,846 €

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### BENEFICIARIES AND PARTNERS

The direct beneficiaries are operators involved in the entire value chain of Penja Pepper production and marketing in Cameroon.

The direct partners are:

- Penja Pepper Geographical Indication Group (IGPP)
- Cameroon Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Handicrafts (CCIMA)

### MAIN EXPECTED RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES

#### **Better understand sanitary and phytosanitary risks, good practices and market access requirements**

The first phase of this project will identify all the SPS problems that may arise during the different phases of pepper production. This will serve as a basis for developing a sectoral guide to good practices. This document will exhaustively cover the SPS risks and good practices to be applied in order to produce a quality pepper to meet market requirements, in particular with regard to compliance with SPS measures.

The sector guide will be used as a reference for the development of training tools for the various stakeholders in the Penja pepper sector. Comprehensive training materials will be required for facilitator training and cascading training events organised by facilitators.

Training materials will include manuals, equipment and materials for demonstrations, questionnaires, exercises and presentations. Wherever possible, existing equipment will be used. The technical support provided will be scaled according to the importance of the various problems identified.

#### **Strengthen the capacity of Penja pepper stakeholders in Cameroon to improve the quality and safety of Penja pepper**

The overall objective of this component is to build the capacity of Penja pepper stakeholders throughout the value chain in good SPS practices.

Before starting capacity building, and to ensure the implementation of good practices, it is essential to survey and map the actors in the sector. A database of the main players in the system, from production to distribution, will be developed (with GPS location).

Training of the various actors will be carried out through cascading training courses. The first stage will be training of English-speaking and French-speaking facilitators (training-of-trainers). The facilitators

will be agricultural agents from the different production basins. This training-of-trainers will equip the facilitators with technical and pedagogical skills to train the different actors in the sector, namely:

- nurseries – on hygiene measures in the selection and collection of healthy cuttings, the selection of an appropriate substrate, and biosecurity measures in nurseries;
- producers and traders of agricultural inputs – mainly on methods of disease and pest control, as well as good agricultural and storage practices;
- producers – on seedling selection, soil evaluation, staking, picketing, field maintenance/control and harvesting under adequate sanitary conditions;
- employees of treatment, approval and packaging units as well as distributors – on good treatment and storage practices;
- inspectors and government extension staff – on the concept of risk-based control, inspection procedures and techniques.

To measure the impact of this training, a survey will be carried out at the beginning and end of the project with the various targets.

### **Improve the capacity of facilities to provide an appropriate environment for the development and implementation of good practices**

In order to enhance capacity-building activities, it is important to have available the infrastructure and minimum equipment to ensure that non-compliant pepper is removed from the processing centre as early as possible in the value chain; and to improve the quality of product drying.

On the basis of the risk analysis carried out, control points will be identified. To carry out these controls in an optimal way, the purchase of small equipment is planned.

There is currently a processing station with various soaking, retting and washing basins, as well as a cement platform divided into four sections and protected against domestic animals. However, the site does not include any protection against small pests and birds, or against rain, thus delaying drying.

As part of the project's implementation, a control greenhouse could be built in the Bouba I processing station allowing rapid drying, and health protection against birds and other (domestic) animals.

### **Raise awareness and promote public–private dialogue through the creation and structuring of a stakeholder-exchange platform**

At present there is no formal mechanism for communication and exchange of information and experience between the various private and public stakeholders involved in the sector. This situation does not allow for a dynamic of continuous improvement.

The exchange and dissemination of information will be boosted by the creation of a public–private discussion platform holding frequent information/awareness meetings, and through the dissemination of advertising and communication materials on the sector in general, issues and good practices, as well as on the actions implemented by the project.

## **COMPLEMENTARITIES AND SYNERGIES WITH THE FIT FOR MARKET SPS PROGRAMME (2018-2022)**

COLEACP's Fit For Market SPS programme is part of the intra-ACP indicative programme (2014–2020) for cooperation between the European Union and the ACP Group of States, financed by the 11th European Development Fund, in the field of medium- and long-term policy support to strengthen productive capacities, encourage innovation, and improve the viability and competitiveness of the private sector.

Fit For Market SPS aims to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of ACP fruit and vegetable value chains by enabling smallholders, producer groups and organisations, and SMEs to access international and national fruit and vegetable markets in line with market SPS requirements.

Fit For Market SPS should thus contribute to strengthening SPS systems in the ACP fruit and vegetable sector. It focuses on the challenges facing ACP exporters of fruit and vegetables, in particular in the light of new EU phytosanitary rules that will enter into force in 2019, and the evolution of regulations on the use of plant protection products. The programme includes all actors in the fruit and vegetable value chains, including the competent national authorities and the regional economic communities.

In international trade in plants and plant products, competent authorities and official control systems are key areas in improving food safety and quality control. Capacity building is needed to ensure that they operate effectively, independently, transparently, and in accordance with international and regional standards. Fit For Market SPS addresses this need by targeting food safety, plant health and national capacities for SPS recovery in fruit and vegetable value chains. The aim is to improve SPS capacities and systems to facilitate trade and ensure food safety for local and regional consumers.

As Fit For Market SPS is active in Cameroon, activities implemented under this programme will serve the objectives of the STDF programme, particularly through training aimed at strengthening the capacity of public services in the SPS field (e.g. inspectors who will be in charge of Penja pepper inspections).

## **POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STDF CAMEROON PROGRAMME**

The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi, DSCE) adopted by the Cameroonian Government at the end of 2009 constitutes the reference framework for the country's development strategy. Its long-term vision is to make Cameroon an "emerging, democratic and united country in diversity" by 2035. The private sector appears to be the engine of growth to meet this challenge. The project will thus contribute to the Regional Integration and Trade Diversification Strategy expressed in section 3.4 of the DSCE, and to the following five lines of action: infrastructure development, modernisation of the production system, human development, regional integration, and trade diversification and economic financing.

To this end, the industrial and agricultural sectors are among the main targets of reforms aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of the economy, with SMEs as major players. Specifically in this regard, "the Government undertakes to carry out the reforms required to make the environment in these sectors more attractive, and then to set up an operational system to encourage and support private investment, so that it can effectively play its role as a driving force for economic growth".

Also, according to the 2014 Malabo Declaration of African Heads of State, the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission recommended the development of a strategy and roadmap for the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and an operational support plan (2018–2020). The plans aim to assist African Union entities and Member States to generate strategic results from the implementation of key actions. It was also considered essential to have a continental policy framework on sanitary and phytosanitary

(SPS) standards and structures to ensure that African Union Member States have effective SPS measures in place, with a particular focus on food security to expand trade.

Penja pepper is referenced in the African Union's Continental Strategy for Geographical Indications in Africa (2018–2023), which has been established with FAO support. The strategy underlines the importance of GIs for economic and sustainable development. This project will address SPS issues in the context of a GI, addressing SPS barriers to market access and strengthening coordination dynamics. By facilitating pepper production under better SPS conditions, the project will contribute to the sustainability of the GI, market access and sustainable development





# COLEACP

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