

# Fit For Market+ Mitigating the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic by strengthening the sustainability of the African Caribbean Pacific horticultural sector

## WHY FFM+

Fit For Market Plus (FFM+) is a 5-year, €25 million programme financed by the European Union and the Organisation of the African Caribbean Pacific States (OACPS) via the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF. In summary, the proposed intervention will be providing the necessary support to the horticultural sector in member countries of the OACPS to mitigate the negative economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time to seize new market opportunities by embracing green, low-carbon and climate resilient strategies through the development and adoption of relevant practices, skills and technologies. FFM+ support will be tailored to facilitate the transition of ACP horticulture towards more sustainable food systems, addressing some of the priority areas identified in the Farm to Fork strategy of the European Green Deal.

## FFM+ OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the FFM+ programme is to contribute to poverty reduction and improved food security and nutrition, by supporting the building of a fairer, safer and sustainable agri-food sector in member countries of the OACPS.

Despite a disruptive landscape, the first specific objective is to **support smallholders, farmer groups and MSMEs to maintain and improve access to national, regional and international horticultural markets while adapting to changes in the operating environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic**. Simultaneously, in a context of accelerated changes and paradigm shift, the second specific objective is to **enable smallholders, farmer groups and MSMEs of the horticultural sector to seize new market opportunities through the development and adoption of safe and sustainable practices, skills and technologies**.

## FFM+ INTERVENTION PRINCIPLES

FFM is based primarily on scaling-up the experience and outputs from past and ongoing intra-ACP and national programmes (PIPI-2, EDES, FFM, FFM SPS and NExT Kenya), as well as from the results of the COLEAD COVID-19 action plan set up from March 2020. In addition, the programme targets new challenges and opportunities linked to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and to evolving domestic, regional and international regulations and market trends. The programme builds on adopting the following modalities and principles that contributed to the success of past and current interventions across member countries of the OACPS:

- Local appropriation of the strategy and activities to be implemented to meet market expectations;
- No substitution of local stakeholders in their respective roles and responsibilities;
- Investment in local expertise and human resources through in-depth and long-term capacity building;



- Demand-driven intervention and participatory approach in the definition and implementation of the individual action plans to allow stakeholders to better balance growth and efficiency of the intervention to their absorption capacity.
- Cost-sharing principle, allowing for full ownership and involvement in actions by the partner beneficiaries.
- South-south cooperation through an existing network of experts and trainers in ACP countries and extensive network of partnerships;
- Transversal focus on youth and gender.
- Adaptation of the technical, digital and pedagogical solutions developed over the past 20 years for the entire ACP horticultural industry to specific national contexts and to other agri-food value chains;

## EXPECTED RESULTS

- R.1. Capacities of smallholders, farmer groups and horticultural MSMEs are strengthened to access domestic, regional, and international markets by complying with regulatory and market requirements in a sustainable framework while adapting to changes in their operating environment due to COVID-19.
- R.2. Smallholders, farmer groups and horticultural MSMEs have the business skills and tools to pursue and improve their operations through enhanced capacity to manage change and facilitated access to finance.
- R.3. Fair and sustainable business linkages between smallholders, farmer groups and agri-food MSMEs are strengthened in particular by leveraging lessons learned from the ACP horticultural export sector
- R.4. Market opportunities resulting from COVID-19 disruptions are leveraged and conditions for market access and competitiveness are monitored in the interest of the ACP horticultural sector.
- R.5. Competent authorities have an enhanced capacity to support the agri-food sector by ensuring that the necessary policies are in place, and that SPS standards and regulations are implemented and enforced, to support the recovery of the horticultural sector in a post-COVID-19 environment.
- R.6. Technical innovation and research brokerage generate the knowledge, skills and technologies needed to facilitate the transition of ACP horticulture towards more sustainable food systems by tackling dependency on pesticides, antimicrobials, excess fertilisation, biodiversity loss; and by facilitating low carbon, climate resilient and organic farming methods.



## WHO IS IT FOR?

Activities cover all relevant stages from production to processing, marketing and sales, and the enabling environment, in order to support operators to supply fresh and processed horticultural produce on a competitive and sustainable basis.

### Direct partner beneficiaries in member countries of the OACPS :

- Horticultural MSMEs (including outgrowers, brokers/intermediaries and transporters linked to the value chain in formal markets), farmer groups/cooperatives, smallholders linked to formal markets
- Consultants and consultancy companies
- Training centres
- Smallholder support structures such as NGOs, public/private extension services, local support programmes
- Horticultural business membership organisations (BMOs)
- National/regional technical working groups and ACP certification and standard-setting bodies
- National/regional public-private stakeholder platforms (e.g. task forces)
- Competent authorities at national level
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and regional SPS Committees
- Research institutions/organisations

## OPTIMISED AND IMPACT-ORIENTED FFM+ RESOURCES

The resources allocated to the FFM+ intra-ACP programme will be used and optimised to:

- manage urgent and important market access crises faced by ACP countries and specific horticultural value chains;
- contribute structurally to the necessary and expected transformation of the agricultural and food system of member countries of the OACPS;
- launch pilot actions whose initial impacts and lessons learned will be analysed to facilitate their replication and upscale.

In line with the recognition of the relevancy of a regional approach throughout member countries of the OACPS in delivering more adapted solutions to foster the development of the agri-food sector and the scale of the proposed programme, partnerships will be systematically sought with any other organisation/institution sharing the same objectives, intervention principles and spirit of partnership to avoid duplication and to increase the impact of FFM+ activities.