

FOOD SAFETY AND MARKET ACCESS FOR PEPPERCORN IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Locations	Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vietnam
Dates	01/10/2020 - 31/03/2024

Summary

Peppercorn is a key agricultural crop contributing significantly to Vietnam’s gross domestic product. The peppercorn industry is also growing in Laos and Cambodia. However, non-compliance with Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) on smallholder farms is threatening exports to high-value international markets due to food safety concerns. To address these issues, this project is aiming to improve quality and traceability in the production, post-harvest and processing of peppercorn by identifying, developing and disseminating good agricultural and hygiene practices that focus on peppercorn production in villages. By improving standards, the project aims to improve market access and enhance the peppercorn value chain in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The problem

Vietnam is one of the world’s main exporters of peppercorn – selling its produce to 109 countries including the USA and Europe. However, for smallholder farmers, selling their peppercorn produce is difficult because they cannot meet

expected food safety and hygiene standards set by international markets.

Analysis of SPS issues in exported peppercorn suggests that the main food safety and hygiene-related non-compliances, such as high maximum residue levels and bacterial and physical contamination, result from either poor decisions or inadequate handling practices in farms.

Village-level production, including harvesting, drying and initial storage were identified as areas of non-compliance in SPS control. These can be corrected with improved practical capacity development of farmers and by creating a conducive environment to encourage them to adopt better practices.

Improving food safety for exports is also expected to have a positive effect on domestic public health because exports will be free from pesticide residues, mycotoxins and other hygiene issues.

What we are doing

The 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 in three countries in South East Asia: Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos.

The project seeks to restore the confidence of the food manufacturing industry in peppercorn sourced from the South East Asia region and support the consistent supply of high-quality, safe peppercorn from small-scale value chains.

A Code of Practice (CoP) has been produced around Codex and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards to help address the SPS issues identified around peppercorn. This was followed by an Interpretation Guide to further explain the code and its implementation in the field. A group of national and international experts are involved to prepare and tailor these documents for the three project countries.

An implementation model for the CoP has been piloted based on the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for the production of safe produce. The adapted approach is expected to support safe produce through social cohesion, peer-to-peer learning and an awareness of community responsibility.

Results so far

The project has carried out a number of activities:

- A regionally harmonized CoP has been developed based on Codex standards and existing national GAP and Good Hygiene Practices for adoption by pepper producers, collectors and input providers in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.
- An electronic web resource about the project and its activities has been created. It includes a ‘Knowledge hub’ which contains a range of resources such as the CoP document, interpretation guides and factsheets.
- The adapted-PGS model has been piloted in all three countries in collaboration with local partners, farmer groups and buyer companies.
- The project partner in Vietnam collaborated with the partners in Cambodia and Laos by providing technical training and advice to support the adoption of the CoP.

Strategies for a wider roll-out of the CoP including seminars and regional workshops to raise awareness and increase uptake will be developed.

Donors

The Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Cambodia), General Directorate of Agriculture (Cambodia), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Laos),

Department of Agriculture (Vietnam), Western Highlands Agriculture and Forestry Science Institute (Vietnam)

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