



## Improving food safety and market access for peppercorn in South East Asia

### Project 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 challenge

Vietnam is one of the world's main exporters of peppercorn – selling its produce to 109 countries including the USA and in 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, bacterial and physical contamination, result from either poor farm-level decisions or inadequate handling practices on farms.

### The project

This project aims 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.

### Project outputs and activities



A Codex and GAP based  
Code of Practice



Advice and training  
for farmers and other  
stakeholders



Adapted-Participatory  
Guarantee System



Strategies for sharing  
and scaling

## Adapted-PGS approach

To facilitate the implementation of the CoP, an approach based on the Participatory Guarantee System is being piloted in all three countries with a number of pepper-producing farmers. The adapted-PGS approach is not a quality standard but a quality control system which directly involves stakeholders, especially producers and consumers. It has the potential to be a viable alternative to third-party certification.

A team of advisory experts were trained in each country to provide ongoing support to the farmers in implementing the adapted-PGS and CoP, including developing market-orientated management skills for farm businesses.

There are five steps to creating an adapted-PGS approach for the project. These steps help farmers and buyers understand and build sustainable relationships.

### Five steps to the adapted-PGS approach



## Results

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.



Testing the user manual and adapted-PGS checklist in Cambodia



Training on the adapted-PGS approach in Laos

## Project partners

The project is funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). To deliver the project, CABI is working in partnership with:



Western Highlands Agriculture  
& Forestry Science Institute  
(WASI), Vietnam



Department of Agriculture,  
Laos



General Directorate of  
Agriculture, Cambodia

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