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The Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP)**

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Prepared by the COLEACP

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1. The Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP) is a civil society organisation established in 1973 by stakeholders in the international fruit and vegetable trade. It is a not-for-profit association that supports the development of sustainable and competitive agriculture and agribusiness. Its main objective is to facilitate the flow of trade within the ACP (Africa Caribbean and Pacific) region, and between ACP countries and the European Union.
2. COLEACP is a multi-programme management and implementation organisation.
3. Since 2001 COLEACP has been entrusted by the European Commission (EC) to implement five EDF-funded programmes where support for SPS compliance was the central element. These include PIP (2001-2015), EDES (2010-2015), and Fit for Market (2016-2020). It is also a partner in several regional research and development programmes such as PAEPARD and the West African Regional Fruit Fly Programme.
4. Over the past 15 years COLEACP has delivered technical assistance in over 50 ACP countries. It has developed and trained a network of some 1000 local ACP (mainly SPS) experts, and has an established and proven system for training, technical support, and institutional strengthening for both public and private sectors. In addition to core programme activities, COLEACP is regularly approached by both public and private ACP and EU stakeholders for assistance to address food safety and plant

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health crises in ACP countries, in particular where SPS non-compliances have resulted in special measures and the risk of disrupted trade.

5. As a private sector player, with experience of creating market linkages and delivering trade and production-related capacity building for public and private sectors, COLEACP is well placed to act as agent in supporting development of the ACP horticultural industry, as well as in partnering with local and global companies to help deliver on development goals and stimulate investment.

6. In summary, core programme activities have included:

- 1) Support for ACP producers and exporters to meet SPS regulations and standards through a comprehensive programme of technical assistance. SMEs and smallholder farmers have received support to establish and implement internal food safety management systems, among others.
- 2) Support for ACP competent authorities in the establishment and implementation of national food safety and plant health systems, with particular emphasis on: NPPOs, risk assessment, management, and communication; inspection services; pesticide registration; national monitoring systems; analytical services; and regional harmonisation.
- 3) Innovation brokerage to ensure that the EU pesticide MRL Harmonisation Programme and the Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 review process do not leave ACP producers without essential Plant Protection Products. This includes defending or extrapolating existing EU MRLs, and establishing EU Import Tolerances, with some parallel work to obtain CODEX MRLs for local and regional trade.

7. Today “Fit For Market (FFM)” is the main all ACP programme managed by COLEACP. Its specific objective is to enable smallholders, farmer groups and organisations, and MSMEs to access international and domestic horticultural markets by complying with SPS issues and market requirements, in a sustainable framework.

8. Fit for Market facilitates growth while increasing the resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability of ACP horticultural value chains. The programme also focuses on the transfer of advances made in the export sector in terms of production, food safety, plant health, and sustainability, to also benefit local and regional markets and consumers.

9. There is specific support also for ACP competent authorities (via a new FFM-SMS programme financed by the EU at the request of the ACP group of states), in particular NPPOs and inspection services, to enhance their capacity to manage and enforce SPS standards. This includes a programme of activities to help ACP authorities adapt to the new EU plant health rules, including training in Pest Risk Analysis, and new requirements concerning export documentation and phytosanitary certificates. “Fit for Markets” builds on 14 years of experience and success with the COLEACP model, working with private and public sectors in the delivery of technical assistance.

10. At the same time, these challenges must be addressed in the context of poverty reduction and food security, which in turn are dependent on the sustainability of food supply. Sustainable intensification forms the core of the proposed programme, to increase production while minimising negative impacts on climate, ecosystems, and the productive environment. It also addresses the social and economic dimensions of sustainability including livelihoods, economic viability, social justice and inclusiveness. There is particular emphasis on smallholder participation, young people, and women, who are frequently the most disadvantaged by the changes taking place in local and global supply chains, and who often have most to gain from improved conditions of production, employment and trade.

11. In this context, the main priority areas for support under COLEACP action is to strengthen the capacities and skills of smallholders, farmers’ organisations, and MSMEs in the field of SPS issues and market requirements, as well as of ACP private and public services supporting the horticultural sector, which will contribute to have an ACP horticultural sector adapted to the international market conditions.