



**BUILDING RESPONSIBLE
GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS
FOR SUSTAINABLE
TROPICAL FRUITS**

Technical webinar series on avocado and pineapple value chains

Webinar #13: How can the European Green Deal drive sustainability in the tropical fruit sector?

Summary report

Wednesday, 24 May 2023, 16.30-18.00 Rome (UTC+2), on Zoom

Background

This webinar is part of a series of technical webinars organized by FAO's [Responsible Fruits project](#) in response to the priorities and interests of participants from the private sector. The webinars provide an opportunity for peer learning on precompetitive issues and the identification and sharing of good practices. To facilitate open discussion, there is no webinar recording and the event's report follows the Chatham House Rule of not identifying individual speakers, except for the speakers identified in the agenda who have consented to share information in advance.

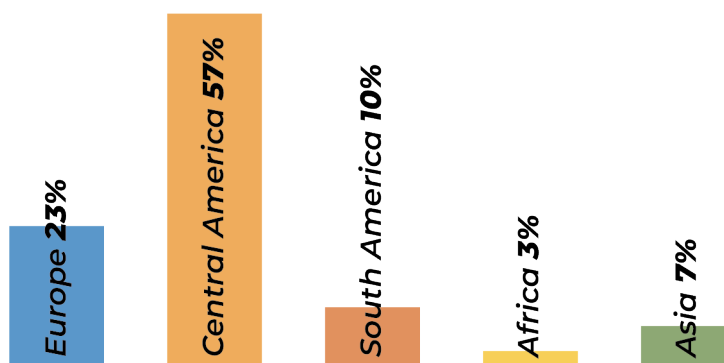
Participation

30 participants based in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean joined the webinar, representing producers and their organizations, packers, processors, exporters/importers, and distributors.

Gender



Geographic origins



Industry groupings

Producer associations 37%

Production and midstream* 10%

Midstream* and importers 7%

Vertically integrated 13%

Other 33%

**Companies active in the "middle" part of the value chain, including packers, processors, exporters, and transporters.*

Organizing this event online avoided the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that would normally be associated with travel for a face-to-face event. A preliminary estimate using the ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator¹ indicates that this event saved over 27 044 kg of CO₂ emissions.

Session objectives

The purpose of the webinar was:

1. To present an overview of the European Green Deal and share information on associated policies and regulations.
2. Share information on implications of new EU sustainability requirements for tropical fruit producers and exporters that target the EU market and discuss challenges in meeting these requirements.
3. Discuss possible capacity development and investment needs of tropical fruit industry actors, particularly smallholders and small and medium enterprises, in meeting new EU requirements.

Summary

The event was opened by Raschad Al-Khafaji, the Director of FAO's Liaison Office with the European Union and the Kingdom of Belgium. The Director pointed out that the webinar was jointly organized by FAO colleagues in the Liaison Office and in the headquarters in Rome in cooperation with the European Commission and the Committee Linking Entrepreneurship Agriculture Development (COLEAD).

The event agenda is presented in Annex 1. All presentation slides are available by sending a request to Responsible-Fruits@fao.org. The event and its context in the framework of the Responsible Fruits project were introduced by the project team.

As a single market, the European Union (EU) is the second largest importer of avocados and pineapples after the United States of America. Industry actors that target the EU market must comply with common EU regulations related to trade, food safety, sustainability and more. Major regulatory reforms related to sustainability are underway in the EU. Companies active in and goods placed on the EU market will be required to comply with stricter requirements on environmental sustainability, climate change, respect for human rights and labour rights, etc.

¹ See <https://applications.icao.int/icec/Home/Index>

Experts from the [European Commission](#) and [COLEAD](#) introduced new sustainability requirements of the EU that can influence tropical fruit value chains, including reduction of pesticide use and due diligence requirements. The presentations provided information on how producers and exporters of tropical fruits can ensure that they comply with new policies and regulations of the EU to maintain access to the EU market. Project participants discussed difficulties in meeting new EU requirements, and shared capacity development and investment needs.

The webinar wrapped up with a summary of the presentations and discussion. Participants were encouraged to reach out to the Responsible Fruits project team with any further questions. Finally, an update was provided on the Responsible Fruits project's upcoming work and publications.

- **Part 1 – Farm to Fork Strategy: for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system**
Stéphane Andre, Directorate-General for Health, and Food Safety of the European Commission (DG SANTE)

The Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F) of the European Green Deal aims to comprehensively address the challenges of sustainable food systems by recognizing the inextricable links between healthy people, healthy societies, and a healthy planet. The strategy's goal is to create a food system which meets all three dimensions of sustainability: the economic, environmental and social dimensions. It is essential to the Commission's agenda to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The speaker presented factors that are necessary to achieve a sustainable food system and the European Union's 2030 targets under the Green Deal for sustainable food production:

- Reduce by 50 percent the overall use and risk of **chemical pesticides** and reduce by 50 percent the use of more hazardous **pesticides**.
- Reduce **nutrient losses** by at least 50 percent while ensuring no deterioration in soil fertility; this will reduce use of **fertilisers** by at least 20 percent.
- Reduce sales of **antimicrobials** for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 50 percent.
- Achieve at least 25 percent of the EU's agricultural land under **organic farming** and a significant increase in **organic aquaculture**.

Although different pieces of current legislation address some components of food sustainability (e.g., Pesticides, GMOs, food waste, the Common Agricultural Policy [CAP] and Common Fisheries Policy [CFP], Plant Reproductive Material, etc.), none of these do so holistically. A legislative framework is therefore being prepared, whereby minimum requirements in sustainability labelling etc. will be covered. The main objectives of the framework are to 1) ensure that all foods placed on the EU market become increasingly sustainable through a socially responsible value chain; 2) create an enabling environment for future policy and legislation, ensuring coherence with all EU food related policies in terms of sustainability objectives; and 3) build a favourable and transparent food environment making it easier to choose healthy and sustainable diets.

Questions and discussion:

- Participants raised questions on the EU's Legislative proposal and were informed that it is expected to be finalized in November or December 2023.
- The objectives of the F2F will have an impact on producers regarding new legislations related to residue limits and the use of pesticides. While applicable to the European Union (EU), some of these objectives will also require compliance

from producers in non-EU countries, who will increasingly have to consider environmental conditions in their activities. To ensure effective monitoring of these obligations and compliance, COLEAD will present tools that are developed to monitor this at the EU level.

- **Part 2: How can the European Green Deal drive sustainability in the tropical fruit sector?**
Chris Downes, Committee Linking Entrepreneurship Agriculture Development (COLEAD)

The speaker indicated that the EU produces approximately 50 new rules on food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures per year covering the whole food sector. New rules will be driven by the F2F strategy targets. He observed that of the many targets of the F2F strategy, one of the most significant for tropical fruit producers is achieving a 50 percent decrease in the use of pesticides. He also emphasized that the overarching objective of the European Green Deal is for European food to become the global standard for sustainability.

With the implementation of new legislations, tropical fruit producers and exporters should expect a reduction in the number of pesticides approved for use in the EU and maximum residue levels (MRLs) reduced to exceptionally low levels. This could pose a significant challenge to tropical fruit producers and exporters as they will need to identify new tools to address different climate and pest-related challenges.

Furthermore, the combination of strict sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures combined with requirements to reduce pesticide usage creates a dilemma for producers and exporters. SPS measures require stringent pest control to ensure the safety of agricultural products. Traditionally, producers and exporters have relied on synthetic pesticides to maintain pest levels within acceptable limits for export. However, with the expected restriction or prohibition of many of these pesticides, complying with regulations on low pest levels will become increasingly difficult.

Compliance with MRLs also require extensive data. Exporters must conduct testing and monitoring to ensure their products contain pesticide residues within permissible levels. This process can be time-consuming, costly, and may involve collaboration with many stakeholders including agrochemical companies.

Exporters targeting the EU market can apply for exceptions on MRLs, but these are increasingly difficult to get approved. Safety and environmental concerns, such as potential impacts on bees or other non-target organisms, can lead to the total rejection of pesticides. This emphasizes the need for exporters to adopt environmentally friendly practices and alternative pest control methods. Importantly, there is also growing political resistance within the EU to import tolerances for substances that are not used within the EU. This means that exporting countries may face challenges in gaining approval for MRLs for certain substances, even if they are widely used in their own regions.

The speaker commented on the global resonance of the EU vision while pointing out some of the weaknesses of the F2F strategy. The most significant of these is that the F2F seems to be focused on the environment, whereas environmental, economic, and social sustainability are all linked, and solutions must meet the needs of all three dimensions. Additionally, to make this EU standard a global standard, divergent contexts must be considered, and include comprehensive accompanying measures, because taking away tools without alternatives creates social and economic costs.

The speaker recommended two resources for tropical fruit producers and exporters to keep track of legislation changes in the tropical fruit industry:

- Closely monitor pesticide approval and **MRL** changes (the EU usually provides a 12–18-month warning of MRL changes).
- Keep track of changing rules using tools like **AGRINFO**: Information tool newsletter that highlights changes to rules in Europe (including pesticides and plant health).

On request, **COLEAD** can also provide direct support to tropical fruit producers in Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) countries.

Questions and discussion:

- Looking at the use of pesticides in different countries, the speaker noted that European countries use more pesticides than developing countries. It was pointed out that the reason for this could be economic, as not all producers can afford to use pesticides in the same quantities as producers in European countries.
- The biggest producers in the industry are making significant efforts to respond to changing rules and standards, but some participants raised concern about slow advances and the lack of appropriate material to quickly adapt to new regulations in the EU and the rest of the world.
- Regarding non-chemical solutions, participants inquired about information collection efforts on different strategies employed by producers to replace specific chemicals that are no longer approved in the EU (e.g. databases that producers can consult for alternatives).

- **Part 3 – Corporate sustainability Due Diligence: Context, content and accompanying measures.**

Mariana Beekmann, Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission (DG INTPA)

The speaker explained that the aim of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D) is to foster **sustainable and responsible corporate behaviours** and to anchor **human rights** and **environmental** considerations in companies' operations and corporate governance. New rules will ensure that businesses address **adverse impacts** of their actions, including in their value chains inside and outside Europe. The three normative foundations of the CS3D are 1) the UN Guiding principles on business and human rights; 2) the ILO Tripartite declaration of principles concerning MNEs and social policy; and 3) the OECD Guidelines for multinational enterprises (OECD due diligence process).

Due diligence is understood as the process through which companies identify, prevent, and mitigate actual and potential adverse human rights and environmental impacts, as well as monitor and report on how these impacts are addressed. The due diligence process covers both the impacts a company causes through its own operations and those in its global supply chain. [The Responsible Fruits project organized an earlier peer learning event on due diligence in avocado and pineapple value chains. More information can be found in the [summary report](#).]

To be effective and commensurate with a company's circumstances, context and associated risks, the due diligence process must be an integral part of companies' policies, business strategy and risk management systems. The European Commission's proposal for the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive includes Article 14 that calls for accompanying support measures to be provided by member states and the Commission to companies within the scope of the Directive, as well as to actors along global value chains who may be indirectly impacted by its obligations.

The Commission is carrying out a number of activities to support stakeholders in partner countries to comply with the CS3D, including:

- Mapping due diligence measures (currently updating the 2020 version).
- Guidance document on designing effective accompanying support.
- Typology of company support measures (eight areas identified where support is needed, including information and guidance, access to finance, etc).
- CS3D pilots: Case studies are being conducted to analyse the accompanying measures being implemented in three value chains, namely coffee, cocoa, and textile, with relevant countries identified for each value chain. The aim is to identify opportunities, gaps and challenges of the CS3D in practice, as well as build awareness on CS3D and provide a space for dialogue and stakeholder engagement. The case studies will be finalized in December 2023.
- New accompanying measures under multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 to support the implementation of the CS3D in partner countries.

Additionally, the Team Europe initiative is promoting EU Member State cooperation and has set up the EU Helpdesk which will refer partner country stakeholders to relevant accompanying measures from EC or Member States and will act as a vehicle for synergy and to avoid overlap. The speaker noted the importance of facilitating a continuous dialogue between these three levels (to evaluate what works and what does not).

- **Closing remarks and information about ongoing project activities**

Valentina Pérez-Mardones, Responsible Tropical Fruits Project, FAO

The webinar wrapped up with a summary of the main points of the presentations and feedback shared in the discussion session. Participants were encouraged to reach out separately to the Responsible Fruits project team for any further questions.

Participants were updated on the Responsible Fruits project's upcoming work and publications. The project team noted that the project will continue the peer learning webinar series and welcomed any additional suggestions on topics that are of interest to participants for future technical work and webinars.

As always, the project team welcomes suggestions or questions on the project's activities at any time. Please contact us at: Responsible-Fruits@fao.org

Annex 1Working languages

The online session was in English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation.

Agenda

Section title	Speaker/Facilitator
Welcome and Introduction	Valentina Pérez-Mardones, Responsible Tropical Fruits Project, FAO
Opening	Raschad Al-Khafaji, Director, Liaison Office with the European Union and Belgium, FAO
Part 1: Farm to Fork Strategy: For a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system	Stéphane André, Directorate-General for Health, and Food Safety of the European Commission (DG SANTE)
Part 2: How can the European Green Deal drive sustainability in the tropical fruit sector?	Chris Downes, Committee Linking Entrepreneurship Agriculture Development (COLEAD)
Part 3: Corporate sustainability Due Diligence: Context, content and accompanying measures.	Mariana Beekmann, Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission (DG INTPA)
Closing remarks and information about ongoing project activities	Valentina Pérez-Mardones, Responsible Tropical Fruits Project, FAO

For more information about the project or the webinar series, please contact: Responsible-Fruits@fao.org