

COLEAD

SPS ACTIVITIES

The mission of COLEAD (Committee Linking Entrepreneurship-Agriculture-Development) is to facilitate and implement all actions allowing, directly and/or indirectly, to increase the contribution of the agricultural sector, and horticulture in particular, to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In practice, COLEAD designs, manages and implements development programmes, by providing online and on-the-ground technical assistance, vocational training and support services that cover regulatory monitoring, market intelligence, networks and alliances, research and innovation brokerage and access to finance.

In a world where disruptions, increased polarisation, change and volatility define the new normal, COLEAD with its partners continues to adapt and grow, focusing on effective programme implementation to support sustainable agrifood systems in EU partner countries and financial resource mobilisation. COLEAD's current strength lies in its human resources, which can be summarised as a team of 80 staff, an association of 500 members and a network of more than 1,000 experts. The team remains mobilized across COLEAD's three main centers of operations (Europe, East Africa – Kenya and West Africa – Togo). The ongoing consolidation of technical partnerships, at global and local levels, means that more technical resources are available to meet the holistic aims of COLEAD's work.

COLEAD operates as both a network and an operational toolbox for stakeholders committed to advancing more sustainable agriculture, particularly in developing countries. Its programmes are primarily funded by international and bilateral donors, including the European Union, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the Inter-American Development Bank, the French Development Agency (AFD), ENABEL, and the World Trade Organisation through the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). A strong emphasis on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity building runs across the majority of COLEAD's interventions.

COLEAD currently manages 15 active programmes, spanning global, regional, and national levels. Recent independent evaluations and partner feedback (notably from AGRINFO, SIA Dominican Republic, and STDF Senegal) confirm the high relevance, quality, and effectiveness of COLEAD's interventions.

Several programmes were launched in 2025 and are now fully operational, including PRCC (AFD), PASA (EU Delegation Côte d'Ivoire), MAHEBER (EU Delegation Ethiopia), SPS Uganda (EU Delegation Uganda), and Agriéco Guinea (ENABEL). PASA was in an advanced preparatory phase, while a new large-scale programme, SPRING, in Gambia, has been contracted and is scheduled for launch in the first quarter of 2026.

Taken together, this operational portfolio demonstrates COLEAD's capacity to manage a diverse and expanding multipolar portfolio across Africa, the Caribbean, and global technical assistance assignments, while maintaining consistency in quality, governance, and delivery. More information on COLEAD's programmes are available [here](#).

CORE ACTIVITIES

Over the past two decades, COLEAD has significantly broadened its scope and is now active not only in ACP countries but also across a wide range of low and middle-income nations worldwide. We have developed and trained a network of over 1000 local experts, mainly from ACP, specializing primarily in SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures).

COLEAD is a trusted partner, regularly engaged by stakeholders from ACP, low and middle-income countries, as well as the EU, to tackle critical food safety and plant health issues. This is particularly important where SPS non-compliances threaten to disrupt trade; COLEAD can play an important role in addressing challenges, mitigating risks, and promoting smoother trade relations across a broader spectrum of countries. Our ISO 21001-certified vocational training system ensures that we provide services and support of a high standard.

In 2025, our primary focus at COLEAD has been on intensifying our outreach and enhancing support through our array of innovative tools and programmes. Since the operational launch in July 2022, 1 200+ applications for support were received through the FFM+ programme. More than 800 development projects have been designed, and the consolidation of methodologies and tools to be deployed through FFM+ has been performed. Each request undergoes an initial evaluation before proceeding through our technical committee's approval process, ensuring high standards of assistance and relevancy.

Another highlight of the year concerns the AGRINFO programme which was launched in 2022. The targets for 2025 were fully achieved. AGRINFO has produced consistent and quality content during this period, and more than 700 records were prepared and uploaded into the database on all relevant EU policy and regulatory changes published. These records describe the changes and provide a summary of potential implications and recommended actions for partner beneficiaries. A total of 63 newsletters highlighting important changes to EU legislation have been sent out since the start of the programme, until the end of December 2025.

The 2025 COLEAD Consultative Committee confirmed the central role of the COLEAD as a leading actor in the transformation of agri-food systems, while identifying clear conditions for success for the 2030 strategy. Discussions confirmed the relevance and timeliness of the ambition underpinning the COLEAD 2030 strategy. Participants welcomed the quality of the 2025 participatory process undertaken and the clarity of the vision presented, recognising the level of maturity reached by COLEAD after several decades of action. A central message emerged clearly and consistently: COLEAD is expected to evolve. This evolution concerns its modes of action, its organisation, the mobilisation of partnerships and its capacity to increase impact. Positioning COLEAD as a “movement” was seen as both relevant and mobilising, as it reflects the organisation’s historical DNA—an association of economic operators united by shared interests—while responding to the need to generate collective momentum adapted to current challenges.

In 2025, the COLEAD team focused on launching new programmes such as [MAHEBER](#) in Ethiopia, PASA in Cote d'Ivoire, AgriEco in Guinea, EUD/CABI SPS programme in Uganda, SPRING in The Gambia and the [PRCC-AFD](#) in 7 African countries. At the same time, the team continued to drive two major programmes, FFM+ and AGRINFO as well as national projects such as SIA in Dominican republic, while maintaining punctual service contracts with FAO related to project definition and the development of an e-learning toolkit on plant health legislation. The year also included the closure of national programmes, notably NExT Kenya and DeSIRA-LIFT.

At the core of all COLEAD programmes lies sustainable intensification – increasing production while minimizing negative impacts on climate, ecosystems and the productive environment. Activities also address the social and economic dimensions of sustainability, including livelihoods, economic viability, social justice and inclusiveness, for women and youth in particular.

SUPPORTING SPS COMPLIANCE

COLEAD monitors the evolution of SPS regulations and their implementation guidelines in order to identify decisions and trends that could have an impact on horticultural value chains in ACP countries and other partner countries. In particular, the changes brought about by the EU Plant Health Law (EU 2016/2031), which came into force in December 2019, and the establishment of uniform conditions for its deployment under Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 of 28 November 2019.

Some new EU rules have required urgent action by competent authorities in order to maintain trade in the commodities concerned. It has also been important to address underlying structural reform to meet additional demands on authorities in terms of skills, policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as operational resources. COLEAD has provided information and raised awareness among public sector authorities, and has signed Development Projects, with detailed action plans and budgets, tailored to the particular needs in each country. Specific activities include:

- Rapid assessment of the national system to comply with the EU requirements (using the COLEAD RSAT tool).
- Support to reinforce national stakeholder platforms for the development and implementation of national action plans, and submission of dossiers to the EU, in the context of EU high-risk commodities, priority pests, and emergency measures
- Capacity building to support the implementation of national action plans outlined in the dossiers, including training and coaching of support services, technical agents, and inspection services
- Capacity building of other target groups including extension services and laboratories

Based on regular contact with public and private sectors, COLEAD designs tools, documents, technologies and training they need to enhance their capacity to manage and enforce SPS standards. Communication with NPPOs is

strengthened by the organization of regular E-meetings on themes related to plant health. Examples of tools developed are interactive dashboards compiling all SPS notifications from countries, Sector Good Practice Guides, an SPS rapid assessment tool, and new educational content on plant health.

CURRENT COLEAD PROGRAMMES AND INTERVENTIONS

Programmes financed by the EU at the request of the OACPS, with funding from the 11th European Development Fund

Fit For Market Plus (FFM+)

Mitigating the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic by strengthening the sustainability of the ACP horticultural sector. This Programme incorporates the lessons–learned from COLEAD’s COVID–19 action plan (implemented from March 2020) and leverages the outputs and support provided through the FFM and FFM SPS programmes. In summary, the intervention provides 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. More than 1200 applications for support have been received since the operational launch in July 2022. More than 800 development projects have been designed, and the consolidation of methodologies and tools to be deployed through FFM Plus has been performed. The rate of implementation of activities is gradually increasing.

This FFM+ programme supports both the private sector and ACP competent authorities, in particular National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs) and inspection services, to enhance their capacity to manage and enforce SPS standards. FFM+ targets, in particular, NPPOs, SPS official controls, and plant

protection product regulatory authorities. Activities include support to NPPOs to adapt to the new EU plant health rules, covering training in Pest Risk Analysis, dossier preparation, and new requirements concerning export documentation and phytosanitary certificates.

Programmes and interventions financed by the EU

AGRINFO

Towards a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system: addressing compliance with EU regulatory and non-regulatory measures. The first year of AGRINFO was an inception phase to put in place the necessary expertise, information systems, procedures, partnerships, and methodologies. Delivery of concrete outputs against the programme indicators only began at scale in 2023.

The [AGRINFO information system](#) covers EU policies and regulatory and non-regulatory measures that have a potential impact on the competitiveness, market access and trade dynamics of agri-food and fisheries value chains linked to the EU market. Meeting EU regulations and standards is a major factor in achieving market access and encouraging domestic and foreign investment in trade. However, evolving regulatory and market requirements can pose a challenge for developing and emerging economies exporting goods to the EU. This programme provides access to clear and timely information with the overall aim of helping to minimise any negative impacts while optimising opportunities that result from new measures and regulations that affect production, business, and trade. AGRINFO also aims to encourage greater participation by partner countries and stakeholders in consultation opportunities.

500+ records were published, and 63 bi-monthly newsletters were issued since the start of the program. First impact studies and market analysis have been launched. Proactive dissemination of targeted relevant information has been

initiated. A specific effort to deploy and mobilise new contacts in the 143 countries covered by the programme is currently underway.

CEA-FIRST

CEA-FIRST is a pioneering platform uniting Africa and Europe to tackle food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. Over three years, this EU-funded initiative, launched in Accra in February 2024, brings together 22 partners from public and private sectors, research institutions, and civil society to strengthen collaboration and innovation. As part of the International Research Consortium (IRC), CEA-FIRST addresses challenges like climate change and demographic shifts, aiming to position agriculture as a driver of economic development. Funded by the European Union as part of the Green Deal's "From Farm to Fork" strategy, CEA-FIRST focuses on several key objectives including creating a shared knowledge platform, prioritizing research and innovation, updating the AU-EU R&I roadmap, establishing thematic working groups, and enhancing policy dialogue between Africa and Europe. COLEAD leads efforts to foster multi-stakeholder engagement, bridge research and practical applications, and support the EU's "Global Gateway" vision, promoting sustainable, reliable connections for global challenges like climate change and food supply chain resilience.

PASA-RCI : Food Safety Support Programme for the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The overall objective of the Programme d'Appui à la Sécurité des Aliments pour la République de Côte d'Ivoire (PASA-Côte d'Ivoire) entrusted to COLEAD by the EUD in Côte d'Ivoire is to strengthen the contribution of the Ivorian agri-food sector to the economic growth, food security and sustainable development of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire by improving the competitiveness, resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability of agri-food value chains. The specific objective of PASA-Côte d'Ivoire is, in close collaboration with the relevant Ivorian authorities, to strengthen the capacity of private players in the agri-food sector – with particular emphasis on two targeted value chains – to manage and control the sanitary and phytosanitary quality of

food and to adapt to changing market requirements (regulatory, including SPS, commercial, social and environmental).

Improving sanitary and phytosanitary standards in horticulture in Uganda (SPS Uganda - EU funded 0.3 million euros under COLEAD management)

The 'Improving sanitary and phytosanitary standards in horticulture in Uganda (SPS Uganda)' programme entrusted to CABI for its implementation has the general objective of strengthening the capacity of public and private sector organisations in Uganda to comply with phytosanitary and food safety measures for fresh fruit and vegetable value chains on export markets, in particular the regulatory and commercial requirements of EU phytosanitary and food safety regulations, in order to safeguard consumer health and increase exports to the EU. COLEAD is a co-applicant of the programme and will be involved in activities relating mainly to the following specific objective: To improve production and product handling processes among private sector actors in order to improve the compliance of Uganda's fruit and vegetable value chains with phytosanitary and food safety regulations and market standards.

Ethiopia: MAHEBER1 (Mobilizing Actors in Horticulture for Entrepreneurship and Boosting Ethiopian Resilience), a new programme entrusted to COLEAD by the European Union)

COLEAD has been entrusted by the European Union Delegation to Ethiopia to lead a major five-year programme titled *"Enhancing the Competitiveness of Ethiopia's Horticulture Sector."* Fully aligned with the EU's Global Gateway priorities and the Action Plan for Sustainable Agri-Food Systems (2024–2027), this initiative aims to bolster the Ethiopian horticulture sector's contribution to economic growth, food security, nutrition, and sustainable development.

¹ MAHEBER in Amharic means association, union, group gathered for a common purpose

With a focus on improving compliance with sanitary, commercial, and environmental standards, the programme seeks to empower MSMEs, cooperatives, smallholders, and support services across the entire value chain. It builds on COLEAD's decades of experience in technical assistance, public-private dialogue, and market development. The programme targets systemic impact through three key outcomes: strengthening MSMEs and producer groups for better market access, improving the enabling environment to boost sector competitiveness, and addressing export barriers via enhanced policy and cooperation.

It supports agro-ecological production, local processing, and improved logistics while stimulating private investment and capacity building. Launched in complementarity with COLEAD's broader Fit For Market Plus programme, this national initiative reflects a strong vote of confidence in COLEAD's role in driving inclusive, sustainable transformation of African agriculture.

Programmes/projects financed by other donors

FAO e-learning training toolkit on plant health legislation

In alignment with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031, the objective of this project was to develop a comprehensive training toolkit on plant health legislation. This toolkit is designed to enhance knowledge and awareness of plant health legislation's key components, and its vital role in ensuring sustainable agri-food systems, and to bolster outreach efforts in this area. The toolkit aims to serve not only as a resource for legislative reform but also to build institutional capacity and raise awareness and political interest in plant health. It is available via this link: [The FAO phytosanitary legislation e-learning toolkit](#)

STDF Senegal

The aim of the project - Strengthening phytosanitary capacity to contribute to food security and the development of horticultural exports from Senegal - is to strengthen national phytosanitary capacity in order to contribute to food security and the development of fruit and vegetable exports in Senegal. Based on the results of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) conducted in 2023 and the COLEAD R-SAT (Rapid SPS Assessment Tool) methodology, the project proposes a series of updates and improvements to current plant health management frameworks to bring Senegal up to international phytosanitary standards. It has four main areas of activity: revising the legal framework, strengthening operational capacity, improving the skills of the staff involved, and stimulating communication and cooperation between the various stakeholders.

The project is funded by the WTO's Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) at the request of the Senegalese Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Sovereignty's (MAERSA) Directorate of Plant Protection.

SIA (Sanidad e Innovación Agropecuaria) - Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic has launched the SIA Project (Sanidad e Innovación Agropecuaria) to support the Ministry of Agriculture in enhancing food safety, aligning with international standards, and boosting competitiveness, while integrating the "One Health" approach. Funded by the Inter-American Development Bank over 29 months, the project focuses on innovation, sustainability, and addressing key challenges in the agricultural sector. COLEAD works specifically on some part of Component 1 - Animal health, plant health and agri-food safety services in the DR. It is structured around four main modules, each targeting specific aspects of the Dominican agriculture and livestock sector:

- Module 1: health reform, including updating regulations and developing national SPS policy.

- Module 2: improving SPS systems for better decision-making based on scientific and factual data.
- Module 3: strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary surveillance programmes
- Module 4: improve health management within the food safety department, focusing on good agricultural practices.

Programme de renforcement des capacités commerciales (PRCC) with the French Development Agency (AFD)

This three-year project builds on the efforts of previous phases of the Fit for Market programme and aims to reduce poverty while improving food and nutrition security in the region. The specific objective of the project is to support smallholder farmers, farmer groups and small and medium enterprises to maintain and improve their access to national, regional and international horticultural markets. This will be achieved by equipping them with the skills, practices and safe and sustainable technologies needed to take advantage of new business opportunities. This funding is exclusively dedicated to 7 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, responding to a large number of requests for additional support already received through programmes such as FFM+.

The 'Support for the agro-ecological transition of the pineapple, potato and horticultural value chains in Guinea' (ENABEL funded)

The 'Support for the agro-ecological transition of the pineapple, potato and horticultural value chains in Guinea' programme entrusted to COLEAD and ICRA by ENABEL has the general objective of helping to improve the incomes of stakeholders in the potato, pineapple and horticultural value chains in the Kindia and Mamou regions, particularly young people and women. The specific objective is to enable Guinean pineapple, horticultural and potato value chain operators to make an inclusive commitment to a gradual transition to agro-ecology, while meeting market requirements.

Programmes and projects closed in 2025

NExT Kenya

Financed by EU Delegation in Kenya (2021–24): NExT Kenya (New Export Trade) programme for enhancing horticultural exports. It aimed to increase the sector's contribution to household incomes. The programme was evaluated technically very positively (ROM evaluation) and closed in 2025.

DeSIRA–LIFT (in consortium)

Leveraging the DeSIRA initiative for agri-food systems transformation. DeSIRA–LIFT was a service facility supporting DeSIRA, an initiative funded by the European Commission that aims to contribute to climate-relevant, productive, and sustainable transformation of agri-food systems in the global South.

For more information about our programs, please visit our website (www.colead.link).

Joint activities with the IPPC Secretariat

On 19th November 2021, an MoU was signed between COLEAD and the IPPC. IPPC Secretariat and COLEAD extended their partnership with a new MoU in February 2025 to strengthen collaborative actions in plant health in order to minimize the impacts of plant pests and to facilitate safe trade, development, and economic growth.

In 2025, COLEAD representatives participated in meetings coordinated by the IPPC Secretariat. These include the participation as observer at the Implementation and Capacity Development Committee (IC) meeting in May, the validation of pest emergency simulation tool/game, as well as the Plant Health Officer Curricula Working Group leading to the launch of the IPPC Plant Health Campus.

COLEAD made significant strides in developing and translating e-learning courses to support the implementation of the International Standards for

Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM). These e-learning courses have now been brought together on the IPPC Plant Health Campus. Various other training courses are also available on the COLEAD eLearning platform.

In 2024-2025, through the FFM+ programme funded by the EU under the 11th EDF, and in collaboration with the IPPC Secretariat, COLEAD launched a training initiative and individual support to strengthen national phytosanitary capacity strategies based on Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluations (PCE). The COLEAD R-SAT (Rapid SPS Assessment Tool), which complements the PCE, played a key role in helping participating countries develop project proposals to enhance stakeholder collaboration and coordinate phytosanitary actions. COLEAD has actively supported the drafting of project proposals, ensuring alignment with their respective national objectives and donor expectations.

Since the start of the collaboration, COLEAD has translated 12 IPPC guides into French, making them more accessible globally, particularly in francophone West African countries.

Through its programmes, COLEAD supported in-person participation at the CPM 19 of NPPOs from certain Africa-Caribbean-Pacific countries. This included in 2025: Comoros, Benin, Surinam, Burkina Faso, Uganda and RDC. Additionally, one side event was organized providing a platform for exchanges with competent authorities.

Last but not least, COLEAD has promoted IPPC–COLEAD collaboration news via its newsletters and social media and beyond FAO initiatives like the tool kit highlighting the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 and the critical role of strengthened national and international integrated One Health systems in achieving global food security and environmental protection, with a particular emphasis on the prevention, early warning, and management of plant pests and diseases.



GROWING PEOPLE

COLEAD

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