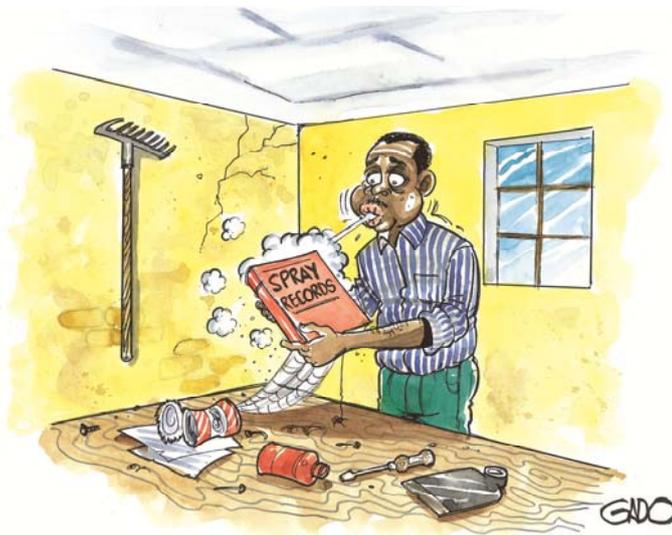


NRI work to help growers in Africa to cope with private standards imposed by fresh produce retailers in Europe

Access to international trade can be an effective way for developing countries to generate wealth, reduce poverty levels and help with foreign exchange. Thousands of farmers and growers in Africa now supply the supermarkets in Europe with fresh food all year round. Unfortunately, this trade is under threat because suppliers are being pressured to comply with private voluntary standards (PVS) such as the generic GLOBALGAP or very demanding standards imposed by individual retail chains.

These standards are 'voluntary' in that they go beyond legal trade requirements (often called public standards) set by the World Trade organisation, Codex, the EU and other trading countries, but are often a prerequisite for suppliers of European supermarkets. PVS have their roots in food safety, and rightly impose conditions that ensure that consumers only buy safe, wholesome produce when they shop for food. PVS make sure farm records are kept for things such as spray applications, which is sensible, but they go far beyond these issues and can be a real challenge for exporters and would-be exporting farmers.



Typically, until they adopt PVS, farmers do not always keep records of their pest management operations

By reducing market access, PVS are considered by some to contravene international trade laws. Others believe that the private sector is entitled to impose these conditions on their suppliers. In practice, it is usually necessary to comply with one or more PVS for anyone who wishes to supply European retailers.

PVS can be very expensive to meet. One reason is that many standards were created with large scale European farmers in mind, and contain references that are inappropriate, and which become an expensive hurdle for small scale growers in Kenya or Uganda, or the many other countries that would like to trade with Europe. New infrastructure is usually needed, such as pesticide stores and produce handling areas. Produce source must be identifiable by the retailer, so a traceability system is needed. This and other requirements within the standard increase the amount of record-keeping. The annual audit alone can cost hundreds of dollars, and very rarely is a price premium given to farmers who supply compliant produce. An increasing number of criteria relating to issues such as worker conditions, environmental stewardship and general farm management, seem to appear with each PVS update.

Work by NRI to help farmers and exporters to cope with PVS

NRI has been funded by DFID to work with farmers and others in the fresh produce export industry and specifically to support smallholder farmers who wish to participate in the most important and influential PVS, i.e., GLOBALGAP. We have been:

- Helping developing countries to have a voice and to influence the standard setting process. We have set up mechanisms to have representation and participation in the new GLOBALGAP management system and NRI and our partners in the EU PIP programme (see <http://pip.coleacp.org/en>) now participate in the major committees.
- Encouraging representation of growers and exporters at the country level, via National Technical Working Groups. NTWGs from six countries have been brought together in two workshops organised by NRI and partners and have proved to be useful in developing a collective approach to deal with the many issues in meeting the GLOBALGAP standard.
- Assisting countries to develop their own version of GLOBALGAP. The generic nature of the GLOBALGAP standard, and its origins with large farms in mind, means that there is scope for making it more appropriate for individual countries, as has happened with many European countries. Farmers in Belgium, France etc. have their own version of GLOBALGAP known as National Interpretation Guidelines. NRI has been helping countries in Africa to develop their own adaptation of the standard to both help clarity and add appropriate adaptations. With help from NRI, **GhanaGAP** is almost ready to gain full acceptance, and others will follow.
- Bringing together different groups in a range of developing countries to work together to understand, adopt and indeed influence GLOBALGAP. Our experts are offering objective advice and support in dealing with problems that arise which can threaten the ability of suppliers to obtain and maintain their PVS certification.

We would be happy to discuss ways to work with other interested parties in taking forward these issues. Please contact Andy Graffham a.j.graffham@gre.ac.uk Rory Hillocks r.j.hillocks@gre.ac.uk or Jerry Cooper j.f.cooper@gre.ac.uk