



Sustainable Spices Initiative

Voluntary multi-stakeholder platforms providing a comprehensive and ambitious framework to overcome challenges of sustainable sourcing in the spice industry



Sustainable Spices Initiative (SSI)

A flavor of what we do

The SSI is a sector-wide consortium founded in 2012 bringing together international spice and herb companies, and NGOs. IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, established the platform to include organizations such as McCormick, Unilever, Intersnack, Kerry, Olam, Kutas, Intersnack, ITC, Jayanti, Griffith Foods, Sabater, Euroma, Nedspice, Verstegen and many more valuable partners.

These companies have committed to the following objectives:

- To strive for the fully sustainable production and trade of spices
- To reach at least 25% sustainable sourcing in at least top 3 product categories by 2025
- To achieve or exceed 10% absolute growth for the top 3 product categories by 2021

Through direct contact with farmers, SSI members increase their understanding of challenges and necessary interventions in the field which are facilitated by the initiative. SSI creates engagement, develops and benchmarks sustainability standards recognized by the market, implements pilot projects leading to certified volumes, and shares good practices and learnings. The result: lower use of pesticides, improved environmental outcomes, and food-safe spices, as well as better living and working conditions for smallholders and their families.

SSI members share the belief that sustainability needs to be considered in today's environment to secure future supply and to respond to an increasingly connected society by ensuring inclusive and responsible growth.



Why the spices sector needs a shake-up

In many developing countries, spices and herbs are an important cash crop for millions of smallholders facing poverty and food insecurity. But poor agricultural practices — especially excessive agrochemical use — result in crops that are unfit for export and consumption. Add to this issue surrounding wages, working conditions, and gender inequality, and the outlook for the spices sector becomes even less flavorful. Looking at the big picture, the need for a shake-up is clear. But viewed as just a pinch or two in an end product, sustainable spices are difficult to promote to end consumers. The industry has to take the lead in this transformation.

Sustainability issues across the spices sector

- Lack of traceability and control
- Poverty
- Child labor & working conditions
- Lack of Sustainable Agricultural Practice knowledge
- Lack of access to finance
- Low farmer organization
- Non-responsible agrochemical use
- Soil degradation
- Deforestation

Source: NewForesight.



The 2025 Covenant on Sustainably Sourced Spices and Herbs

In 2017, SSI members established the 2025 Covenant on Sustainably Sourced Spices and Herbs to accelerate progress towards sustainability in the sector. Currently, 24 companies are participating in this set of voluntary commitments, which aim to stimulate joint sector action towards 100% sustainable sourcing. The intention is to work towards the medium-term goal of 25% sustainably sourced spices in 2025, all the while driving growth in the 3 top spice commodities to create long-term demand of sustainable spices. The following topics are key for the implementation of the covenant commitments:

1. SSI lead in the sector

SSI and covenant participants commit to actively promote sustainability in spices and herbs, creating visibility in the sector, with manufacturers, retail and consumers. Meanwhile, SSI members invest in field projects, exchanging lessons.

2. Accelerating sustainable supply

Participants in the covenant commit to driving sustainable sourcing by accelerating sustainable transformation in their own value chains. Companies commit percentages of transformation based on their current production volumes.

3. Facilitating the local uptake of sustainable practices

Members contribute to knowledge sharing and promote Good Agricultural Practices, which include the reduction of agrochemical use, professionalization and productivity in the sector, livelihood enhancements, and Climate Smart Agriculture.

4. Monitoring, evaluation & learning

Covenant members follow a monitoring protocol to track adherence to the commitments and further improve interventions.

A taste of tomorrow

Reaching scale and developing cost efficient solutions is critical in a sector dominated by smallholders operating in developing and emerging economies. Collaboration is key — and SSI partners testing upscaling methods that have worked well in other sectors, for example the Farmer Life Schools in the production of ‘Better Cotton’ (sustainably produced cotton) in India. These projects trained around 24’000 farmers on good agricultural practices, including IPM and decent work, creating large volumes at low costs.

In Vietnam, SSI participated in the creation of a national platform to discuss the reduction of agrochemical use with the Vietnamese government. A National Sustainability Curriculum is being developed in 2018, including, among others, the Plant Protection Department and the National Extension Service, to incorporate responsible agrochemical management in farmer trainings nationwide.



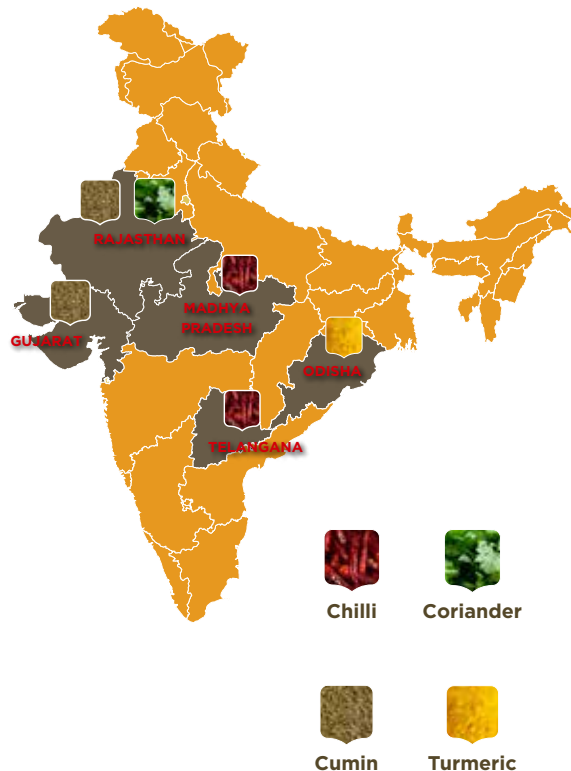
Sustainable Spices Initiative - India

The Sustainable Spices Initiative India (SSI-I), part of the global SSI program, is an industry-led voluntary multi-stakeholder platform established as a section 8, not-for-profit to drive sustainable sourcing in the Indian spice industry, while improving the livelihoods of producers, and giving consumers – both locally and globally – increased access to sustainable, food-safe spices.

By participating in SSI-I, farmers benefit from lower input costs, better managed farms, potential for higher incomes and a more sustainable future. Food manufacturers, buyers and retailers will benefit from a higher quality product, a more sustainable source of supply, greater supply chain transparency and a more cost-effective means of improving farming practices.

Our approaches are designed to drive sustainability from niche to norm in mainstream markets, delivering impact on SDGs. That's what our program vision is all about, creating a long-term roadmap for working together with our members.

- Vision: To make transparent, credible and traceable sustainable spices in India a mainstream commodity, serving both domestic and international markets.
- Mission: To bring sustainable spices to scale by engaging farmers and capturing a 25% share of Indian spices production by 2025.



Spices Industry in India

India is the largest producer and consumer of spices in the world today. Of the total volume of spices produced in India, only 10% is exported; however, this 10% constitutes 40% of the global exports for all spices. As such, the spices industry has a unique position in the Indian economy. However, due to the scope of agrarian production in India, positions sustainability as an immediate and fundamental topic demanding attention including:

Non-discriminated use of agrochemicals risking food safety: A combination of factors has resulted in overuse of chemical pesticides and banned substances leading to high residue levels; lack of protective equipment leading to human health hazards; and improper disposal of chemicals resulting in water contamination.

Living wage and working conditions: With high cost of production (requiring optimization of inputs), low and insecure farmer incomes, difficulties in accessing markets, limited access to health care and education and collective bargaining power has meant that increasing farming is not a sustainable livelihood alternative.

Unstable labour conditions: Some of the challenges faced with a migratory and large labour force in the small holder context has resulted in a number of social and labour challenges such

as child labour, poor working conditions, proper wages and limited protection of workers' rights as a result of the informal nature of the worker agreements.

SSI-I Intervention

Using the momentum and drive of the private sector and governments, SSI-I engages with stakeholders across the spice value chain to scale the impact of smaller sustainable agriculture initiatives in the space. The key immediate priority for sustainable spices production is food safety. Sustainable spices must be compliant with Maximum Residue Level (MRL) requirements in relation to pesticide residues. SSI-I program principles include:

- Responsible agrochemical management
- Water management
- Smallholder inclusion and profitability
- Gender empowerment
- Proper wages and improved working conditions

SSI Sustainable Agricultural Practices (SAP)

There are five core components of SAPs for spices production, which considers not just the food safety and agronomic implications of sustainability but also the economics and developmental aspects of the farming community:



Food Safety:

A key requirement for participating farmers is that spices meet pesticide residue and food safety requirements.



Community Development and well-being:

Community development for community members to come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.



Optimum Available Resources Management:

Optimising resource systems to enable users to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits from limited available resources.



Proactive farming systems:

Developing farmers as businessmen with a focus on improving productivity, increasing profitability, ensuring sustainability and guaranteeing ethical working conditions, and an equitable distribution of the results of production.



Value Addition Activities:

Unlocking innovations that enhance livelihoods and embed sustainability within the farming system.

SSI Theory of Change

INPUT

- IDH funding
- Private Partner funding
- IDH expertise in convening

ACTIVITY

- Scalable supply interventions
- R&D Impact studies
- Convening platform on local issues
- Facilitate platform to drive initiatives for change and sustainability

OUTPUT

- Creation of sustainable supply for the market – tipping point.
- Design effective and cost efficient methodology to run the supply interventions.
- Create innovative approaches to the sustainability challenge
- Measure and quantify impact of the supply interventions
- Bringing together various stakeholders to develop an inclusive approach to sustainability

OUTCOME

- Trained farmer – saves cost, increases productivity and able to mobilize his resources to capitalize on the market demand
- Embed sustainability interventions in the business as usual model
- Narrow in on the most effective way to implement sustainable principles
- Understand and review impact of the interventions to create proof of concept as well as dynamic and fit for purpose supply interventions
- Create ownership of sustainability in the sector/industry

IMPACT

- Positive impact on environment
- Better economic value for the supply chain
- Raising the social standard of living Increasing the percentage of sustainable products in the market Embedding of sustainability principles at a macro level



**Project Outreach 2017-18: 1350 Ha, 2495 farmers, Expected
Production: 6,700 MT of High to medium heat sustainable chili
varieties**

PRDIS is implementing the SSI-I project in Khammam district and worked with 2000 farmers in the region during last season. This year, they are working with 2500 farmers to drive sustainable chili production. The project consists of capacity building on package of practices, farmer support, adoption of practices and verification by IDH and PRDIS. The core components of training include community development, women empowerment and well-being, optimum natural resource management, proactive farming systems, supply chain linkage and value addition. For 2017-18, the programme aims to produce MRL-free chilies with 600 farmers, covering 600 Ha.

**Development Support Centre
(DSC)**



**Project Outreach 2017-18: 1150 Ha, 1200 farmers, Expected
Production: 2900 MT of High to medium heat sustainable
chili varieties**

DSC is implementing a SSI-I project in Manavar, focusing on sustainable chili production. The program is working with 1200 farmers, who are being trained on the sustainable practices in chili farming including agrochemical management and good agricultural practices. The following variety of chili are planted in the DSC projects: Saniya, Sonal, US 720, Krishna, Priti, Yashoda, Pusa-Jwala, 2680, US 711, and HPH 1900.



Project Outreach 2017-18: 1663 Ha, 4000 farmers, Expected Production: 3500 MT dry turmeric with curcumin ranging from 2.9% to 5%.

STAC is implementing a SSI-I project in Odisha, focusing on the sustainable production of turmeric. The project is being implemented with training of 4000 tribal farmers on SAPs, focusing on data management, demo plots and group trainings. This project also focuses on women-only trainings to help women farmers learn about better agricultural practices. The STAC turmeric project is being implemented with a focus on high-curcumin residue-free turmeric production and sustainable agricultural practices.

Azad Agro



Kota, Rajasthan



Project Outreach: 1700 ha, 1060 farmers, Estimated production: 3000 MT of sustainable coriander

Azad Agro is implementing an SSI-I project in Kota area of Rajasthan, focusing on sustainable coriander production. The project is managed and executed by Azad Agro for 2500 coriander farmers. The project also focuses on MRL-based farming, IPM techniques, women empowerment and community development, with the main motive of turning agriculture into a profitable business for the farmers.



Project Outreach: 1887 ha, 1206 farmers, Estimated production: 2100 MT of sustainable cumin

CottonConnect is implementing a SSI-I project in the Surendra Nagar district of Gujarat, focusing on sustainable cumin production. This project is intended to train 1200 cumin farmers (mostly women) in the Dhanghadra region of Surendranagar district in Gujarat. It is being implemented with the help of SEWA, which is the world's largest association for working women, who also have their own local spice brand call "RUDI".

Action for Food Production (AFPRO)



Surendra Nagar, Gujarat



Project Outreach: 8000 ha, 5000 farmers, Estimated production: 7200 MT of sustainable cumin

Action for Food Production (AFPRO) is implementing a SSI-I project in Surendra Nagar district of Gujarat, focusing on sustainable cumin production. The project is managed and executed by AFPRO for 5000 cumin farmers, who are trained on good agricultural practices, agrochemical management and IPM.



**Project Outreach: 5,300 Ha covered, 2500 farmers trained,
Estimated production: 5400 MT of sustainable cumin.**

Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) is implementing a SSI-I project in Nagaur area of Rajasthan, with a focus on sustainable production of cumin. The project is managed and executed by ACF for 2500 farmers from 18 villages, inclusive of 700 IPM farmers from 5 villages.

Stakeholder Meeting

Sustainable Spices Initiative-India is created as a membership based organization to provide a self-sustainable, pre-competitive and voluntary platform for stakeholders interested in the sustainability of spices production in India and also enabling member organizations to combine their strengths and present a common face for sustainable spices in India. It also maintains a close working relationship with the Sustainable Spices Initiative. The SSI-I working group meets and decides on SSI-I strategy discussion and planning. IDH supports and manages the SSI-I secretariat and is also one of the biggest funding partners for the program. IDH also brings its convening expertise to the SSI-I platform, which it has built over time by convening such multi-stakeholder programs in other commodities and geographies.



What we do?

Farmer training: SSI-I works with NGOs as Implementation Partners (IP), which are co-funded by private and public players, to implement scalable projects that drive the adoption of Sustainable Agricultural Practices for spice production by participating farmers.

Verification: Validation and verification are critical parts of the SSI-I process, helping to improve performance, achieve results and strengthen the overall credibility of the program.

- **Validation of Process:** Undertaken by the IP, this involves checks to ensure that the systems and processes in place are efficiently and effectively delivered to meet the expectations of all stakeholders involved. The process includes farmer assessment in level 1 and peer-to-peer assessment in level 2.
- **Verification for Market:** Undertaken by a third-party verifier, this involves checking whether the end-product conforms to sustainability (includes quality) specifications laid out by sourcing partners. The Verification for Market steps cover 2-level Credibility Check and 2-level Due Diligence check by independent third-party agency.

The final level of due diligence and testing is then conducted by the buyers to ensure that the product meets their internal quality requirements.

Monitoring and evaluation: SSI-I engages third party agencies to provide monitoring and evaluation services to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the IP's intervention with farmers and the progress of farmers in relation to the program KPIs, including, number of trainings, number of farmers, data monitoring requirements and development of village level communication materials for example.



SSI-I Impact: How we are making a difference

- **Gender Empowerment:**

1. No pregnant or nursing women allowed to apply pesticides
2. Equal wages for work of equal value (women are often paid lower wages for same work)

- **Health & Safety:**

1. Use of minimum Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in application of pesticides
2. Access to potable water on the field

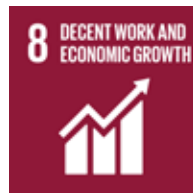
- **Food Safety:**

1. Responsible agrochemical management
2. IPM-based pest and disease control
3. Awareness on banned and hazardous pesticides
4. Awareness on pre-harvest interval

- **Decent Work:**

1. Child labour, fair wages, improved working conditions
2. Natural Resource Management:
 - Soil conservation
 - Water management
 - Eco-system-based approach

- **Relevant SDGs:**





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