

10 tips to go green in the spices and herbs sector

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Going green is very important in the spices and herbs sector. By becoming greener now, you will be ready for the growing number of green requirements that both European buyers and consumers demand. Improve your processing, switch to more sustainable farming methods, optimise packaging and transport, get certified and make use of green innovations. When you embrace sustainability it not only benefits the planet but also enhances your reputation and gives you a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing market.

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1. Pollute less by reducing the impact of processing and fertilisers

Like any industry, the spices and herbs sector impacts the environment. As a producer of spices and herbs you have the power to make a positive impact on the environment through sustainable practices. Because processing and fertilisers are the biggest polluting factors, the greatest environmental wins can be gained by more sustainable drying methods, optimising your soil quality and/or switching to organic fertilisers.

Spices and herbs supply chain

While you may not be able to influence every aspect of the value chain, you can control your impact in key areas such as inputs, primary production and primary processing.

Figure 1: Sustainability impacts along the spices and herbs supply chain (not exhaustive)



Primary processing and fertiliser use by growers are the biggest polluting factors in the spices and herbs supply chain. Other polluting factors are packaging and transport. Factors that aren't necessarily polluting but are disruptive to the environment, are improper water management, deforestation and soil depletion.

The importance of 'going green'

It is important to become more environmentally friendly in the spices and herbs sector, because the planet needs it and the people need and demand it. Becoming more sustainable will reduce the impact and preserve natural resources for future generations.

'Going green' often goes hand-in-hand with ['going social'](#). Advancements in sustainable farming practices not only benefit nature, but farmers too. When done right, going green will also lead to higher yields, healthier crops and a healthier living environment of the people living on and near the farm.

Going green can also have health and nutritional advantages. Spices and herbs are important components of a healthy and balanced diet. However, many conventional farming practices, like pesticide and fertiliser use and drying processes, can have negative impacts on human health. A more sustainable spices and herbs sector can help ensure that these foods are grown in ways that are safe and nutritious.

Improving your spices processing

As a first step in looking for where to improve your processing, it can be a good idea to examine your drying processes. Traditionally, some spices were dried over open fire. This turned out to be a polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) contamination hazard. PAH exposure can increase the risk of cancer. The EU has set limits to the amount of PAH that is allowed in spices and herbs imports. A healthier and also [more environmentally friendly way to dry spices is sun-drying](#).

Figure 2: Sun-drying facility for spices in Thailand, from the outside



Source: Poul Wiertsema

Figure 3: Sun-drying facility for spices in Thailand, from the inside



Source: Poul Wiertsema

Buyers (and consumers) increasingly require green practices

Supermarket chains are expanding their organic assortment, including spices and herbs, and are requiring importers and exporters to provide certifications that demonstrate sustainability practices. If you can demonstrate your sustainable practices, you will have easier access to supermarket chains in Northern Europe. You will also benefit from more long-term business relationships in the European market.

Consumer awareness of environmental issues is expanding worldwide. In Europe there is a growing concern among consumers about climate change and what actions they can take to mitigate this phenomenon. Consumers are increasingly opting for organic-certified as well as locally produced products. [Climate-conscious consumers](#) prefer sustainable over conventionally grown herbs. The same applies for [sustainable spices](#).

Governments are working on legislation

Governments in Europe are continuously working on legislation for the food industry, which includes spices and herbs. Such legislation increasingly concerns sustainability practices.

2. Use sustainable farming practices

Sustainable farming refers to the utilisation of resources, including land, fertile soil and wildlife, in a way that allows for their natural or artificial renewal without depleting or polluting other resources. Two key sustainable farming methods are organic farming and regenerative agriculture.

Implementing [regenerative agricultural practices](#) like intercropping (growing two or more crops in the same field), reducing or stopping tillage, crop rotation, and precision agriculture (reducing chemical and biological input) improves soil health. This fosters productivity of high-quality food and contributes to mitigating climate change and restoring biodiversity.

Intercropping

Herbs are often used as intercrops, especially economically valuable herbs like forage and flowering ground cover plants. They are known to improve the soil quality for other plants. Read more about how [intercropping with aromatic plants increased the soil organic matter](#) content and changed the microbial community in a pear orchard. Intercropping is also done with [cardamom and cayenne pepper](#).

Organic agricultural practices, including avoidance of synthetic pesticides, crop rotation, composting and natural pest control, can reduce the environmental impact of farming. Additionally, using renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power to power irrigation and farm equipment can help reduce the carbon footprint of farming operations.

Figure 4: Mixed field with pepper vines and coffee beans in Vietnam



Source: Poul Wiertsema

According to industry experts from the spices and herbs sector, good examples of sustainable farming for the spices and herbs sector are [food forests](#), wild picking and [strip cropping](#).

Many agricultural experts agree that working with a food forest is one of the best paths towards sustainable (agricultural) farming. In a food forest, spices and herbs are often the crop that grows on the first layer of the forest (ground level). Growing crop in layers allows more plants to grow in a denser area. This allows for a better harvest, despite the unavailability of a large crop field.

Avoid deforestation

The spices and herbs sector is not widely known for large-scale deforestation, but nevertheless it is important to understand that [deforestation is a major driver of biodiversity loss, soil erosion, reduction of carbon sequestration and ultimately climate change](#). Therefore, spices and herbs growers should avoid clearing forest land for farming purposes.

Practical tips to enhance your farming practices

Track inputs and outputs: Keep a meticulous record of essential details such as amount of seeds sown, yield obtained, and quantity of fertiliser used. By maintaining these records you can gain insight into the effectiveness of different approaches and make informed decisions.

Monitor water usage: Install a water meter to accurately measure the rainfall received on your farm. This data will allow you to determine the amount of extra water you need to provide and the frequency at which it should be supplied. Understanding your water usage patterns helps you optimise irrigation

practices and conserve resources.

Analyse results: Regularly review and analyse the information collected. Look for patterns and trends to identify areas where improvements can be made. For example, if you notice low yields despite high fertiliser usage, it might be a sign to reassess your fertilisation strategy.

Continual improvement: Strive to understand your farming practices better with each season. Experiment with different techniques and approaches, implementing changes based on your findings. This iterative process will enable you to refine your methods over time and achieve more efficient and sustainable outcomes.

Reduce water use

Agriculture is a major water user, and even though the spices and herbs sector is not known for its large use of water, farmers are seeing smaller yields due to unprecedented rains and droughts. Good water management can help increase crop yields and profitability while also protecting natural resources. Some good practices are drip irrigation, which delivers water directly to the roots of plants, rainwater collection, and [diverting surplus water from fields](#) utilising natural stream beds to control water flow.

An example of [good water management for the spices and herbs sector](#) is the [Smart Vanilla Farm](#) in Malaysia. They use big data technology to optimise their automated irrigation system and rainwater harvesting.

Tips:

Adopt circular economy principles. This can help reduce waste and maximise resource utilisation. It includes implementing practices such as composting food waste, using recycled materials in packaging, and creating closed-loop supply chains.

Try to use green and organic inputs from your own or neighbouring farms. Also try sourcing your agricultural inputs from local companies, to reduce transportation-related emissions.

Optimise the use of machinery moving across the farm to reduce the use of energy. Lower your carbon footprint with renewable energy sources and low-emission/energy efficient machinery.

If you are considering implementing sustainable farming practices, you will benefit from having an agricultural advisor with experience in the transition to sustainable practice. Their previous experience will help you implement the new farming methods faster, accelerating the learning process of the people working at the farm and generating trust in the process. You can find such advisors online, but also through BSOs or NGOs that are active in your country and/or in your product niche/crop. Check out the tip [Find funding, investors and/or partners at the end of this document](#).

If you are interested in further educating yourself, we recommend you visit [Organic Africa](#). It has some interesting sources, like [this poster on how to prepare organic compost](#). They are also working on a poster on how to prepare liquid fertiliser. Keep an eye on their website to find out when it will be published. Also, read this document by the International Fertilizer Association on [reducing emissions from fertiliser use](#).

3. Optimise your soil quality

Soil optimisation is important in spices and herbs growing because healthy soil is essential to grow healthy

plants. When soil is optimised, it is rich in organic matter, has a healthy balance of nutrients, and is able to retain moisture.

Some buyers, like [Euroma](#), have set very high sustainability goals. One way they achieve them is by helping their suppliers become more sustainable. [Euroma has a project with a high focus on soil quality](#). In Central Anatolia, Turkey, they provide a training programme for local farmers to grow cumin seeds sustainably. The focus is on responsible irrigation, ensuring food safety, improving organic soil, and using plant protection products correctly.

Optimising soil in organic farming typically involves practices such as crop rotation, cover cropping, and the use of organic fertilisers and soil amendments. These practices help maintain soil health, improve soil structure, and promote the growth of beneficial microorganisms in the soil.

By optimising soil, farmers are able to produce high-quality spices and herbs that are healthy and nutritious, while also maintaining the long-term health of the soil and the environment. In contrast, conventional farming often relies heavily on chemical fertilisers and pesticides that can degrade soil quality over time.

Adopting regenerative agriculture practices is one way to optimise your soil quality. Regenerative agriculture is an outcome-based food production system that nurtures and restores soil health, protects the climate and water resources and biodiversity, and enhances farms' productivity and profitability.

[Regenerative agriculture for spices and herbs](#) requires a holistic view, with in-depth analysis of different variables like the [complementarity of nutrients in crop rotation](#) from one crop to another or the type of soil cover for the type of cash crop grown.

Tips:

Pay attention to measuring inputs and storing them properly to reduce waste and overapplication. Use technology that helps you optimise the use of inputs, reducing emissions and costs. For example, you can make use of [satellite data to make fertiliser application decisions](#).

Reduce soil disturbance like tillage. This might [work differently depending on the type of crop](#) and weed pressure, so you might want to start experimenting with the low-tillage variants. Read about this [no-tillage practice for spices crop in Indonesia](#).

FarmKenya has some insightful videos on how to [optimise soil quality for spices and herbs farming](#).

4. Improve your transport and logistics

Food system emissions globally account for [5.8 GtCO₂e](#), equating to [30% of the world's GHG emissions](#).

Products of animal origin like meat and dairy, as well as animal feeds, contribute highly to these emissions, but spices and herbs also play a role.

Table 1: Selected spices and herbs with a relatively higher CO₂ emitted per kg produced

Product	In distribution centre	Kg Co ₂ e / kg
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Ground white pepper	Europe	7.7
Turmeric powder	Europe	4.2
Ground black pepper	Europe	4
Vanilla extract	Europe	3.2
Cumin ground	Europe	3

Source: [Carbon Cloud](#)

Table 2: Selected spices and herbs with a relatively lower CO2 emitted per kg produced

Product	In distribution centre	Kg Co2 e / kg
Coriander	Europe	0.38
Cinnamon	Europe	1.2
Cardamom powder	Europe	1.3
Dried garlic	Europe	1.3
Dried ginger	Europe	1.9

Source: [Carbon Cloud](#)

The emissions of these products happen during the agricultural phase, the processing and the transportation. Reducing transportation emissions is critical for reducing the environmental impact of the food industry. For spices and herbs, packaging plays a big role here.

You can reduce the environmental impact of your product by improving the packaging. For example:

- Use biodegradable or compostable packaging. Replace traditional plastic packaging with materials that break down naturally, such as biodegradable plastics, compostable bags or paper-based wrappers.
- Minimise packaging materials. Choose minimal and lightweight packaging to reduce the overall material usage and waste generated.
- Choose recyclable materials. Use packaging that is easily recyclable, such as glass jars, aluminium containers or cardboard boxes.
- Implement refillable or reusable options. Offer refillable containers or encourage customers to return packaging for reuse to reduce single-use waste.

Optimise packaging to reduce carbon footprint

McCormick is a food company that manufactures, markets and distributes spices, seasoning mixes, condiments and other flavouring products to retail outlets, food manufacturers and foodservice

businesses. One of their sustainability goals is to reduce their carbon footprint by 25% by 2025. [Improved packaging reduced their carbon footprint by 7%](#).

You can also reduce your carbon footprint by making changes in your transport and logistics, for example by:

- Using more fuel-efficient vehicles;
- Consolidating shipments;
- Optimising routes;
- Opting for varieties that allow international shipping by sea, as this transportation method has much lower emissions than shipping by air.

Tips:

Investing in new forms of packaging can be expensive. Always talk to your buyer about your options and their preferences.

Offering a more sustainable packaging than your competitor can give you a competitive advantage.

It can be wise to avoid plastic packaging, but if the alternative is glass you must realise that it generally weighs more and can therefore lead to a higher carbon footprint.

5. Become a certified spices and herbs producer

One step in becoming a greener spices and herbs producer is getting green certification.

Becoming a green-certified spices and herbs producer is a good idea because:

- It shows your commitment to environmentally responsible farming practices. This gives you a competitive advantage over growers that do not have such certification.
- Certification bodies take you through a step-by-step process. It is very likely that they will address issues that you hadn't thought of yourself.
- Certification can also improve access to markets that prioritise sustainability requirements, including retailers, food processors and exporters.

Organic

The market for organic spices and herbs is still small but growing. [Some of the most popular organic spices](#) are turmeric, ginger and black pepper.

If you want to sell your spices and herbs as organic in Europe, they must be grown using organic production methods that comply with [European legislation](#). Growing and processing facilities must be audited by an accredited certifier. Only after certification can you put the European Union's organic logo on your products, as well as the logo of the organic private standards, such as [Soil Association](#) in the UK or [Naturland](#) in Germany. These private standards build on the EU organic standard and add other requirements.

Importing organic products to Europe is only possible with an [electronic certificate](#) of inspection (e-COI). Each batch of organic products imported to the EU has to be accompanied by an electronic certificate of inspection as defined in Annex V of Regulation EC No 1235/2008 [defining the imports of organic products from third countries](#).

Rainforest Alliance

[Rainforest Alliance](#) is the largest and most well-known certification scheme for the spices and herbs industry that focuses on the green side of sustainability. They have a [programme dedicated to spices and herbs](#). On their website you can find a [field checklist](#), system checklists ([checklist for organisations in their sourcing areas](#) and [checklists for organisations outside their sourcing areas](#)), the [Sustainable Agriculture Standard's Supply Chain Requirements](#), and a document about [which standards apply to you](#).

Global GAP

[GlobalG.A.P.](#) is a third-party certification for good agricultural practices. It has become a non-negotiable requirement for the import of many spices and herbs sold in supermarket chains in Europe.

Retailers can also impose their individual standards, such as [Tesco Nurture](#). Especially larger retail chains in Northern Europe will be more prepared to buy your product if your compliance with social and sustainability standards is in order.

6. Meet European green legislation standards

The European Union (EU) has implemented the European Due Diligence Act to enforce ethical and sustainable practices throughout supply chains, emphasising respect for human rights and the environment. Additionally, the EU's ambitious European Green Deal aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, with the Farm to Fork Strategy promoting fair, healthy and eco-friendly food systems.

European Due Diligence Act

Responsible and sustainable business and fair treatment of all people in the supply chain are becoming very important topics. To encourage companies to take action to ensure human rights and reduce environmental impacts in their supply chains, the EU made [legislation on due diligence](#) mandatory. This legislation ensures respect for human rights and the environment throughout the entire supply chain.

The European Green Deal

In the coming years, the [European Green Deal](#) will influence how resources are used and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. The new EU policies on sustainability will prepare Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

The [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) is at the heart of the European Green Deal, aiming to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly. It will ensure a sustainable food production and address issues like packaging and food waste. EU trade agreements, for example with Costa Rica ([Central America](#)), already include rules on trade and sustainable development; other countries are expected to follow. For suppliers of spices and herbs, it is important to look ahead of the increasing standards and try to be in the frontline of developments.

Tips:

On the CBI website you can find more information on the [European Due Diligence Act](#), [The EU Green Deal - how will it impact my business?](#), and an overview of sustainability developments in the European spices and herbs market in [Trends on the European Spices and Herbs Market](#).

Realise that most certifications are not free to obtain. The costs to get certified must be covered by the producer (you). Work together with European buyers, non-governmental organisations, and national or international governmental organisations to make it economically feasible for you to receive certification. Further information is available on websites like the [Sustainable Spice Initiative](#), the [Netherlands Enterprise Agency](#), and the [German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development](#).

For more information on certification and other buyer requirements for the spices and herbs sector, please also refer to specific documents (about e.g. cinnamon, curcuma and thyme) on the [market information page of CBI](#) and the [buyer requirements study](#).

Check the [guidelines for imports of organic products into the European Union](#) to familiarise yourself with the requirements for European traders.

7. Be aware of the challenges

As a producer and exporter of spices and herbs you can face a combination of challenges when trying to become more sustainable. The biggest challenges are:

- Growing demand (with yields falling back)
- Higher farming costs
- Changing requirements, of which the certifications costs are borne by the supplier
- The need for new knowledge and skills

These challenges lead to increased costs of many spices and herbs products. For some primary producers this means they are making insignificant profits or even losses. When the margins are low, it is even harder to invest in sustainable farming practices.

However, if you do it right, going green will be more profitable in the long run. Most farmers are already seeing a fallback in yields, even without applying sustainability practices. And even if sustainable farming might lead to a small decrease in yield, it should be only temporary. The costs of green farming can be higher, however with eventual higher yields and a higher price (buyers generally pay more for sustainably produced spices and herbs) it should be beneficial in the long term.

The market keeps changing. It is very important to stay up-to-date on buyer requirements and the knowledge and skills you can develop to become a better spices and herbs producer.

8. Make use of green innovations

Spices and herbs cultivation is a big industry, and new technologies are constantly emerging. These offer solutions and improvements for farmers. As the link between agriculture and climate change has become evident, many new developments are targeting this issue and providing opportunities to be more sustainable. At the moment, precision agriculture with the help of technology offers opportunities to be more efficient with the use of inputs like water and fertilisers. On the other hand, new sustainable methods for plague control are being researched to provide more environmentally friendly alternatives to farmers.

Urban farming

Urban farming is a relatively new way of farming. Urban farming is the practice of growing crops and raising animals in urban areas like cities and towns. It involves using available spaces like rooftops, balconies and vacant lots for agricultural purposes. The aim is to produce food locally, promote sustainability, and enhance food security in densely populated environments.

The market is seeing an increasing number of urban farmers emerge in more heavily populated areas, such as this farmer in Ghana that is growing cucumber and pepper in his urban farm.

Figure 6: Farmers in Ghana adopt alternative methods due to farmland scarcity

Source: CGTN Africa YouTube Channel

There are various reasons why urban farming may be a good alternative to traditional farming, such as:

- **Limited land availability:** In urban areas, available agricultural land is often scarce and expensive. Urban farming allows farmers to use small plots, rooftops and vertical spaces to grow crops, maximising land use efficiency.
- **Food security:** Urban farming enables the production of fresh and nutritious food within cities, reducing dependence on distant rural sources. This can enhance food security for urban populations, especially during times of transportation disruptions or food shortages.
- **Income generation:** For farmers in emerging economies, urban farming provides an opportunity to diversify their income streams. Selling produce locally can lead to better market access and higher prices due to reduced transportation costs.
- **Job creation:** Urban farming can generate employment opportunities, especially in densely populated areas. It not only creates jobs for farmers but also for those involved in related activities such as distribution, processing and marketing.
- **Reduced environmental impact:** With shorter transportation distances, urban farming reduces the carbon footprint associated with food production and distribution. Additionally, it can promote sustainable practices, such as composting, water recycling, and use of organic waste as fertiliser.
- **Climate resilience:** Urban farming can enhance a city's resilience to climate change by providing green spaces that absorb heat, reduce the urban heat island effect, and mitigate stormwater runoff.

Robotic herb harvesting

Denmark's largest producer of herbs and mini plants, Rosborg Food Holding, has embraced intelligent automation by investing in flexible robot grippers from [OnRobot](#) to handle their delicate plants. The company, operating within 120,000 square meters of advanced greenhouses, has implemented state-of-the-art technology to produce and package 28 million herb plants and 12 million mini flowers annually. By streamlining and automating their production line, they not only improved productivity and efficiency but also reduced monotonous and physically demanding tasks for their employees. The integration of robots and automation technology has minimised the need for overtime and temporary workers, while also meeting the rising demand for a diverse range of herbs

One of their recent automation investments is a packaging line featuring a collaborative robot (cobot), equipped with the RG6 gripper. This intelligent gripper mimics human touch, allowing the cobot to handle herbs and flowers delicately without causing damage. The intuitive nature of the automated packaging solution enables staff without prior robotic experience to easily adapt the system for packing different products by adjusting settings on the robotic arm's touchscreen.

Online platforms for farmers

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and CropIn, a supplier of digital solutions for farmers, launched a project for smallholder farmers in Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Tanzania and Mozambique to provide digital solutions aiming to promote climate change mitigation and resilience. In the six countries where it was launched, Cropin's platform facilitated the digitalisation of end-to-end agricultural operations. This involved geotagging agricultural plots and digitising farm and farmer data, making it easily accessible through a centralised cloud platform.

The platform also provided farmers with tailored support through the Package of Practice (PoP), which included tracking of agricultural inputs, providing guidance on optimal sowing periods, and issuing timely pest and disease alerts to prevent crop losses. They have several projects in the spices and herbs sector, such as [ways to enhance your traceability as a sustainable spice business](#). Their website is a valuable source of information for farmers who are interested in incorporating technology and innovation into agricultural projects. For example, their report about [precision agriculture for smallholder farmers](#) gives an overview of technologies and how they can be applied in precision agriculture. They do this by presenting real-life examples and practical scenarios. The report also emphasises important factors that need to be considered, such as the practicality of implementing these technologies, identifying viable business models for widespread adoption, and recognising potential obstacles like limited digital infrastructure, low levels of digital literacy, and insufficient digital skills among farmers.

Tips:

When attending international trade shows, look for new solutions and ask the manufacturers for options for your type of crop. Very often, new developments are presented in the academic program of the show.

Read more about precision agriculture in the study [10 tips to go digital in the spices and herbs sector](#). Here you can find the example of the [SpiceUP](#) project. This project combines advanced satellite technology, the internet, and information technology to support black pepper producers in Indonesia.

FarmKenya has interesting videos about spices and herbs farming, like this one about [data driven agriculture](#).

9. Embedding green principles in your code of conduct

A code of conduct is a set of guidelines that outlines expected and appropriate behaviours within an organisation. It is important for every company to have a code of conduct. By integrating environmentally friendly principles into your code of conduct, you can show your dedication to sustainability and encourage a more environmentally responsible industry. To achieve this, consider the following steps:

Review: Take the time to revisit and assess your organisation's existing code of conduct.

Introduce green principles: Incorporate concise and straightforward statements that emphasise environmental responsibility and sustainability.

Promote awareness: Share the updated code of conduct widely within your organisation to ensure that all employees are aware of the newly added green principles.

Encourage adherence: Follow the code of conduct and encourage employees to adopt environmentally friendly practices in their daily work routines.

By rewriting your organisation's code of conduct to include green principles, you demonstrate your commitment to sustainability and contribute to a more environmentally conscious industry.

Your code of conduct should include information about:

- The values your company believes in
- Guidelines for behaviour
- Day-to-day business practices
- How your employees should interact with outside parties

Valamis has written a good article about [what to include in your code of conduct](#).

Best practices in the Spices and Herbs Sector

Two major players, Unilever ([Unilever Sustainable Agricultural Code \(SAC\)](#)) and McCormick ([Supplier Code of Conduct](#)), have an extensive code of conduct written towards sustainability. You can use these to learn about the concept of self-verification. This means that you as a supplier assess your own compliance with the sustainability code of the buyer.

The company [Verstegen](#) is a spices and herbs supplier that sources its ingredients from the source. They have unique and sustainable partnerships with local farmers. Because Verstegen keeps the entire chain in its own hands, they can maintain the chain from farmer to consumer fair, transparent and sustainable. Sustainability is very important to Verstegen. They have won several awards, one of them the [Business and Biodiversity Award](#).

Tips:

Encourage sustainable behaviour among your employees and customers by promoting recycling, reducing waste and conserving energy. This can be done through training, education and communication.

As a spices and herbs grower, engage with your suppliers to encourage sustainable practices throughout the supply chain. This includes promoting sustainable farming practices and reducing the use of harmful chemicals.

Regularly monitor and report on your environmental performance, including your greenhouse gas emissions, water usage and waste generation. This can help identify areas for improvement and

demonstrate a commitment to sustainability.

10. Find funding, investors and/or partners

As a grower or exporter of spices and herbs based in a developing country, it can be interesting to find funding, investors or partners to support your sustainability efforts. There are several approaches to explore.

Sustainable Spice Initiative

The sustainable spice initiative (SSI), a sector-wide consortium, was established by [IDH](#) in 2012. It brings together an international group of companies in the spices and herbs sector. The members of SSI share the belief that in today's environment sustainability needs to be part of their long-term strategy. This not only to secure sufficient products for future use, but also to recognise that in a connected global society business can only be successful if it is inclusive and responsible. They have regional platforms for Vietnam and India.

Sustainable Herbs Programme

An initiative by the American Botanical Council. If you join their [Sustainable Herbs Programme](#), you will receive working collaboration and peer-to-peer-learning, access to toolkits and inspiring sustainability stories. They even offer scholarships for newer and emerging brands. You can contact the director directly.

Running programs:

- Look for government programmes or grants that promote sustainable agriculture and offer funding or technical assistance to farmers.
- Look for NGOs or non-profits that work with farmers to promote sustainable agriculture and offer funding or technical assistance. Organisations include the World Bank, the United Nations, the [Sustainable Spice initiative](#), [SIFAV](#), [CBI](#), [GIZ](#), and NGOs like the [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#). They provide funding and technical support to SMEs in developing countries. This usually takes place as part of projects that comprise not only funding but training and technical assistance too, and are limited in time. SMEs would therefore have to research which new projects are being launched in their regions.
- Participate in certification programmes that promote sustainable agriculture, such as Fair Trade or Rainforest Alliance. These programmes can provide access to markets and buyers who are interested in sustainably produced goods.

REAF

[The Rural Entrepreneurs in Agri-Food \(REAF\) programme](#), funded by the GIZ and implemented by Berytech in Lebanon, aims to enhance the business and product viability of innovative start-ups that focus on sustainable rural economic development in South Mount Lebanon, as well as Central and West Bekaa. This project includes financial grants for the participating start-ups.

Self-initiate:

- Collaborate with other farmers or cooperatives to pool resources and expertise to implement sustainable agriculture practices.
- Attend sustainability-focused events or conferences to network with potential partners or investors and learn about funding opportunities.
- Partner with universities or research institutions to access funding or technical expertise to implement sustainable agriculture practices.
- Look for investors or partners who are interested in supporting sustainable agriculture projects. This could include impact investors, socially responsible investors, or companies that have sustainability goals.
- Consider crowdfunding to raise funds from a community of individuals who are passionate about sustainable

agriculture.

- Agricultural and national development banks: Agricultural banks are specialised in giving loans for companies in the agricultural sector. Strengthen your network around organisations supporting farming, development or exports. These are very often selected by international NGOs to implement projects that might include grants and other type of business support. Look for new project openings and register in their databases, so they can contact you for upcoming opportunities.

Loans and services for agricultural activities provided by banks

[The Agricultura Bank of Egypt](#) provides special loan types and services for agricultural activities and has branches in rural areas of Egypt. Also look into your country's agricultural or development bank. These institutions often have special schemes for the agricultural sector.

This study was carried out on behalf of CBI by [Globally Cool](#).

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