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# ACA Quality and Sustainability Seal Strengthened by Flash Reminders

The ACA Quality and Sustainability Seal is recognized internationally as an industry-wide accepted certification program ensuring compliance with global standards of quality, food safety, and fair labor standards. The program is compliant with all of the stipulations outlined by the US Food Safety Modernization Act. The Seal program was established with a threefold vision: to increase African cashew competitiveness in the global market; to provide expert services to processors at a discount price; and to help the African industry to avoid making mistakes that older industries in other parts of the world have already made.

The unique value of the ACA Seal lies in the way that the process for receiving the Seal is tailored to each individual processor, in order to maximize efficiency and remedy locally-specific issues. ACA Seal Coordinator Peter Nyarko is responsible for conducting an initial assessment of the processing facility, and identifying areas that must be addressed in order to meet the benchmark requirements for the Seal program. He then works with the leadership and management teams to develop a roadmap, outlining the changes that must be made and guidance on how to accomplish these changes. Approximately one year after the gap assessment is completed, Mr. Nyarko returns to the facility to evaluate their progress, and to conduct a final audit if it appears that they are ready to be certified. If all factory operations comply with the required standards, the factory receives the ACA Seal.

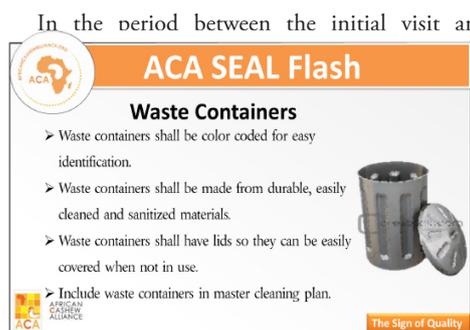


the final assessment, regular communication is maintained through the Seal Flash, a unique feature of the Seal program. Sent via email to each processor on a bi-weekly basis, the Flashes are quick tips and reminders of the various standards and requirements of the Seal. Every two weeks, a new Flash with a new reminder is disseminated, covering different tips regarding the Seal's 14 food safety and quality standards, from hand washing to clothing requirements to equipment cleaning. Many processors print these out and display them in relevant areas of their facilities. For example, one processor in Kenya has hung a Flash regarding proper use of waste receptacles on each of the facility's garbage bins.

Since its development in 2011 and official launch in 2012, the ACA has approved six processors across Africa as meeting the standards of the Seal: Tolaro Global in Benin; Mim Cashew in Ghana; Jungle Nuts in Kenya; Anatrans in Burkina Faso; Equatorial Nut Processors in Kenya; and Cajou Espoir in Côte d'Ivoire. Seven more processors are currently in the process of acquiring the Seal.

As the program gains wider international attention, there is an increased demand among international buyers and consumers to purchase ACA-approved cashews: two major snack companies – Kraft Foods (USA) and Intersnack (Europe) – have already committed to buy only ACA-certified cashews. The Seal program has achieved so much success that it is now one of the major drivers of ACA membership.

Image of cashew nuts. Text: "Your partner for a sustainable African cashew sector". Intersnack logo. Contact info: "Contact us at cashews@intersnack-procurement.com www.intersnack.com"



### ACA Facilitates Educational Exchange Between Two West African Processors

L'Ivoireenne de Noix de Caju (INC), a recently recruited ACA member, recently made a formal request to the ACA to receive the benefits of ACA business linkages and assistance in launching and developing its cashew business venture. INC is a new cashew processor seeking to invest in a new processing facility with the capacity to produce 3,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) in Cote d'Ivoire.

Thus, from 23 - 25 February 2014, ACA Business Advisor Mr. Sunil Dahiya provided training and instruction to the Managing Director of INC by taking him to Mim Cashew, an esteemed ACA member and Seal-certified processor based in Central Ghana. Through this visit, INC gained valuable guidance from experts at Mim Cashew.

Mr. Joseph Yeung, the Managing Director of Mim Cashew, accompanied the INC representative to the factory site and shared Mim's initial challenges and solutions, competitive cashew strategy, upcoming opportunities, and ongoing expansions in order to provide INC with advice on best practices and to bridge the learning gap.

This trip was a great demonstration of the supportive and collaborative nature of the African cashew industry. Despite the inevitability that they will eventually become competitors in the industry, Mim selflessly shared valuable information with INC, who expressed their gratitude to Mim Cashew and ACA for facilitating such an educational tour.



### Cultivating the Next Leaders of the African Cashew Industry

In April, the African Cashew Alliance, in collaboration with the African Cashew Initiative (ACI), organized a Master Training Program (MTP) and Cashew Workshop in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire. ACI officially invited ACA Business Advisor Sunil Dahiya to deliver an intensive training session on cashew processing potential in Africa, global cashew processing trends and techniques, corporate social responsibility, processing challenges in Africa, and the way forward.

This event was organized by the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) and was attended by 62 participants from both private and public sector organizations representing Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The primary focus of this five-day training session was to develop a pool of expertise in the cashew value chain by deepening industry knowledge.

The Master Training Program was divided into three distinct parts, each part taking place in a different country. The inauguration of the program was held in Bobo, Burkina Faso in December of last year, followed by a five-day session in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire. The final session will be held in Accra, Ghana in July.

The African Cashew Alliance and the African Cashew Initiative aim to propagate knowledge regarding agricultural practices from one country to another through a process of collective exchange. This program will help different producers share their experience-based knowledge, and learn different processing techniques practiced across West Africa.

Upon completion of the training period, participants from all seven participating African countries will receive a certificate recognizing them as Master Trainers. After the final session, scheduled for July 2014, the MTP participants will be classified as ACA Certified Local Experts and will be qualified to implement a range of projects, drawing from their new variety of expertise.



## Country Highlight: Kenya Distinguished for Stellar Processing Capacity



Despite an East Africa-wide fall in 2014 cashew harvests caused by poor rainfall, the Kenyan cashew industry continues to make major strides, and the decade-long sectoral slump of the 2000s is now little more than a distant memory. The past five years have seen a consistent trend of expanding cashew processing, increasing global competitiveness, and the alleviation of poverty through job creation and income generation in rural communities.

The new era of Kenyan cashew production began in 2009, with a government ban on the export of raw nuts from Kenya: this ensured that all, or at least the vast majority, of Kenyan cashews are now processed in-country. 2010 saw the beginning of the industry's engagement with the African Cashew Alliance, and the foundation of the Nut Processors Association of Kenya (NutPak), a major industry platform and voice for nut processors, and a link between donor agencies, government ministries, value chain development organizations, research organizations, market development agencies, NGOs, and other actors related to nut value chains both in Kenya and abroad. NutPak has greatly contributed to the recent renewal of the Kenyan cashew industry through close partnership with the ACA.



Traditionally, Kenya has faced many constraints that restricted the potential of its cashew sector. On the production side, the growers must deal with biological concerns such as tree diseases, harmful pests, and overcrowding of the tree populations. There are also socio-economic constraints: most cashew farmers typically have trouble purchasing inputs or gaining access to credit due to prohibitively high interest rates and collateral requirements. Furthermore, the lack of farmer organizations and groups, and the weak linkages between researchers, extension personnel and farmers limits the opportunities for knowledge and technology transfer.

The true strength of the Kenyan cashew sector is now in its processing facilities. Five years ago, Kenyan processors were processing around 5-6000 MT per year; now, the industry typically processes over 10,000 MT, and has the operating capacity to process around twice this amount. This component of the cashew value chain nevertheless still wrestles with obstacles including insufficient supply and poor quality of raw nuts, high costs of inputs to establish and maintain processing plants, and reliance on foreign equipment.

The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), a research center dedicated to addressing agricultural limitations and identifying ways to overcome these constraints, has recently invested great effort and funding in the cashew industry, disseminating research-based solutions to stimulate widespread adoption of effective and relevant technologies.

Cashew processor Jungle Cashews was the first company in Kenya to engage with ACA, in 2010. Now an ACA Seal-certified organization with an installed processing capacity of 30,000 MT, Jungle Nuts is a model of how businesses can work together with the ACA to strengthen the cashew sector all across Africa. When Jungle Nuts was planning its first processing plant, the ACA arranged for the firm's management to visit a similar factory in Cote d'Ivoire and study its techniques. Now, it is Jungle Nuts which is providing the business lessons to other aspiring processors: in the past year the firm has welcomed business delegations from as far away as Nigeria, seeking to study their success.



Kenya-based Equatorial Nut Processors Ltd. (ENP) has made particularly spectacular progress in recent years. Originally focused on macadamia nuts at its inception in 1992, ENP has since expanded to incorporate cashews and other nuts to its operations. ENP serves as a model to other processors, boasting capacity to process 9,000 MT of Nut in Shell (NIS) at their state-of-the-art agro-processing facility. ENP became an ACA member in 2012 and became the 5th ACA Seal-approved company in September of 2013, after achieving the proper food safety and quality benchmarks. Following ACA Seal certification, ENP has also received further internationally-recognized certification in HACCP and ISO 22000.

In March 2014, ENP became a member of the ACA's Advisory Board - the first 100% African-based organization to sit on the board giving strategic advice to the ACA's Executive Committee and Secretariat. Elsewhere in the industry, Kenyan processor Jungle Nut also gained ACA Seal certification last year, approved in May 2013.



Through partnership with the ACA, NutPak, KARI and other major actors in the sector, the producers and processors of the Kenyan cashew industry are achieving far, far greater success than a mere decade ago, and this upward trend is expected to continue.

## Ghana's Official Cashew Season Launch Sparks Governmental Support

On April 5th the Ghana Cashew Industry Association, in collaboration with the Ghanaian government, officially launched Ghana's cashew season in the town of Wenchi. The theme of the event was "Harnessing the Economic and Climatic Benefits of Cashew; the Strategic Non-Traditional Export Commodity."

The event commenced with an opening address delivered by the Honorable Alhaji Hakibu Dauda, the Municipal Chief Executive for Wenchi. He commended the industry for its impressive accomplishments throughout 2013, and particularly praised the Brong Ahafo region for its strong performance, having contributed more than half of the overall national production of RCN. These statistics demonstrate that Ghana has become a major player in the sub-region in terms of RCN production and export.

This launch was a significant step forward for the Ghanaian cashew industry. In addition to simply marking the beginning of the season during which cashews are heavily produced and processed, it also attracted interest and provided exposure for the industry to the government and the general public. Stakeholders had the opportunity to use the launch as a platform to critically evaluate the gaps that exist within the value chain, as well as the barriers which hinder their collective effort to improve the industry's regional and global position.

Ghana's Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr. Nii Lantey Vanderpuije, expressed the government's commitment to supporting the production of cashews so that it would reach the 200,000 metric tons it anticipated for the next cashew season, despite being an often overlooked export. He pledged that his ministry would support the cashew industry in order to make cashew production attractive to investors and promote it to being the country's most important industry. Furthermore, he

indicated that he hopes the industry will become more sustainable, advising farmers and processors to sell their cashews locally, rather than to foreign buyers. He concluded his remarks by stating his profound excitement for the future of the industry, applauding the immense employment opportunities that have recently been created across the value chain.

The Acting President of the Traditional Council of Wenchi, Nana Kakabo Adinkra II, called upon the government to regulate the prices for each grade of cashew as it has done for the cocoa and other crop-based industries.



### Cashew Calendar 2014

#### May

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|---------|--|
| 15 - 17 | VINACAS Forum and Rendezvous in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam          |
| 20 - 22 | International Nut & Dried Fruit Convention in Melbourne, Australia |



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