

Issue 36

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ACA Creates New Training Program for Nigerian Farmers

The African Cashew Alliance has begun the first wave of its new farmer training program, with a Training of Trainers workshop held for 20 representatives of Nigerian cashew-farming regions. The workshop, held in Parakou, Benin, from September 26-27, 2014 was designed to ensure that the latest in good agricultural practices (GAP) reaches a wide farm-level audience.

The training covered key areas of GAP for the successful management and maintenance of cashew farms. Twenty farmer-trainers representing the Kogi, Kwara, and Oyo States of Nigeria participated in training sessions led by ACA's Agronomist, Mohamed Salifou, and received training materials to be used when sharing knowledge with their communities. Each trainer, upon returning to his or her respective village areas, will train at least 100 farmers, thus ensuring that at least 2000 farmers in total are trained.

Salifou explains, "Our research makes clear that

some of the biggest challenges for farmers in harvesting high-quality nuts are poor practices of nut collection, drying, packaging, etc. This program of trainings is specifically designed to address these issues."

The Training of Trainers session was organized with the assistance of Nigerian cashew processor and ACA member FoodPro, which identified cashew-producing areas in need of assistance to raise the output and quality of their cashew harvests, along with individuals appropriate to be trainers. The project is made possible through the support of the USAID TIME project.

The progress of the subsequent Nigerian farmer trainings will be jointly monitored by ACA and FoodPro, whose staff follow the implementation of training sessions on the ground. ACA will conduct field trip evaluations, as well as an additional training session covering harvest and post-harvest practices, in late November.



Trainees reviewing farm management materials with the flipbooks provided by ACA

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Participation in SIAL Exhibition Expands Horizons

On October 17, 2014, Managing Director Roger Brou traveled to Paris, France to participate in the renowned Salon International de l'Agroalimentaire (SIAL), a trade show which seeks to advance the agri-food industry. This year, food professionals from 200 different countries convened to see 1,757 innovative products, 250 conferences, debates, and keynotes, and 6,500 exhibitors from 105 countries. Representing both African agriculture and the cashew industry as a whole, Mr. Brou greatly contributed to the diverse array of food advocates.

His purpose for this trip was primarily to expand ACA's business network and to increase its international exposure in order to strengthen its partnership base and, ultimately, its efficacy in promoting the African



cashew industry on an international level. By actively engaging with people across different nut value chains, he gained a greater understanding of the current market trends, thereby equipping ACA to handle any future challenges and to embrace potential opportunities. He met with several ACA members to fortify relationships,

including Burkina Faso-based Gebana and Benin-based Caro Nuts and Fludor, while simultaneously meeting with organizations and companies which could become new members.

One such company, Katoen Natie, focusing on logistics, engineering, and food innovation in Antwerp, Belgium, invited Mr. Brou to visit its headquarters and to discuss membership and potential for future collaboration. On October 23, he visited the company and met with its

senior management personnel, ultimately resulting in a new membership agreement. The company is now excited to explore new business opportunities in the West African agricultural sector.



ACA Creates New Training Program for Nigerian Farmers

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FoodPro Production Manager Azeez Ayodele observed, "As a major buyer of raw cashew in Nigeria, we have a very strong interest in raising the quality of harvested nuts here. So, of course, we are monitoring the implementation of these trainings very closely."

The expected result will be a significant rise in the quality and output of Nigerian cashew nuts in Kogi, Kwara, and Oyo States. FoodPro, which purchases raw nuts for processing from all of these regions, will develop and implement a traceability standard that not only promotes best practices and information on cashew growing and post-harvest handling, but also creates market linkages between smallholder farmers and the international value chain.



The trainer-training project will continue in 2015 with further sessions covering control of disease and pests, and will then be rolled out to more cashew-producing countries across Africa, beginning with Benin and Côte d'Ivoire in 2015.



Managing Director, Roger Brou (right), verifying participants of the training program

ACA Quality and Sustainability Seal Highlight: Mim Cashew

The ACA Seal Program was launched in 2012 with the intention of improving and standardizing the quality, safety, and social components of cashew processing in Africa. Six African cashew processing facilities have achieved ACA Seal certification so far, and several more are currently implementing measures that will enable them to become Seal-approved within the next year or two. In October 2014, we spoke with the CEO of Mim Cashew, Mr. Joseph Yeung, to discuss the ways in which the ACA Seal has impacted the operations at his factory.

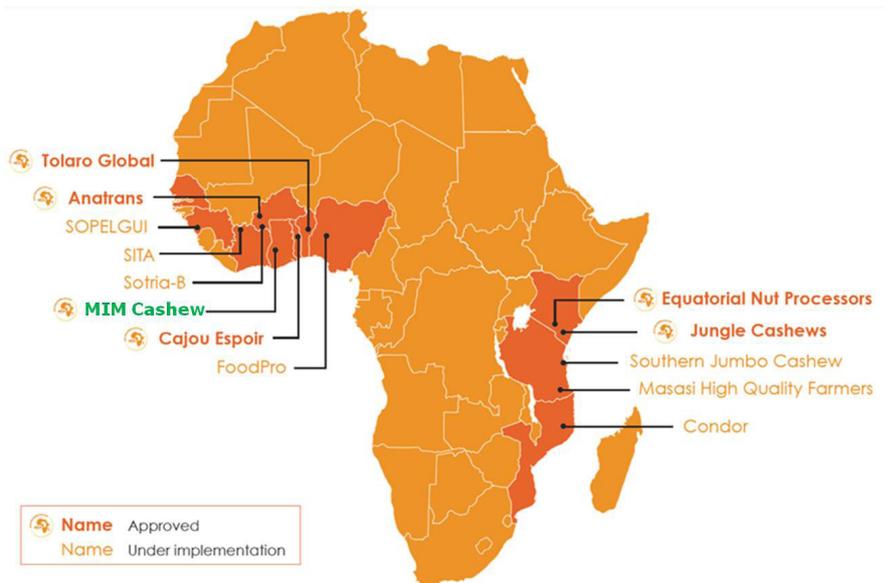
Mim Cashew was founded in 2008 with an installed capacity of approximately 200 to 300 metric tons (MT) per year – a modest but respectable amount for a company transitioning the land from a poultry farm into a high-functioning cashew processing facility. From its foundation until 2013, each year the factory’s capacity increased by an additional 300 MT; this year, the factory management chose to focus instead on improving efficiency. Prior to 2013, Mim experienced a labor shortage due to the arduous tasks associated with the piece-work model of processing (in which workers are paid according to the quantity of cashews processed). It takes a great deal of additional time and labor to determine the precise amount of cashew kernels produced per person. Thus, Mr. Yeung implemented a new system in which wages are determined by shifts worked by each employee. This saved a great deal of time, enabling many more workers to focus on the processing of the cashews, rather than expending energy determining exact weights and quantities per person.



Furthermore, this year the work day was shortened slightly, ending around 3pm rather than 5pm or 6pm. This served as a motivational tool for the mostly female employees: it prevents exhaustion, and provides ample time for them to return to their homes to prepare meals and spend time with their children, thus significantly boosting staff morale.

The revenue generated from this increase in productivity permitted Mr. Yeung to hire more employees, who in turn contributed to greater production, thereby creating a cycle of increased production reinforced by a larger base of labor. Thus, while about 1,300 MT were processed in 2012, 2013 experienced a leap to 3,500 MT. This trend will continue in 2014, with the expected volume of 4,500 MT. The majority of Mim’s employees are women (about 85%), most of whom work in the shelling and peeling stages of cashew processing. Since the workers come from the surrounding community, the local economy has received an additional \$90,000 USD via workers’ wages since 2008.

With such a solid foundation and willingness to adopt new practices and policies in order to advance, Mim was always a promising candidate for the ACA Seal program, and remains a compelling example of its usefulness. It is clear that the factory was built with certain principles: as Mr. Yeung puts it, “we set a very high standard for ourselves.” Having worked previously with organizations such as TechnoServe and the African Cashew Initiative, Mim already had a general conception of the pillars which characterize the ACA Seal. During the initial implementation



phase of the Seal Program in 2012, the company faced very few obstacles and quickly qualified for the Seal. In October 2014, Mim was approved for the third consecutive year.

“Daily production is constantly checked and tested,” says Mr. Yeung, explaining how the factory upholds the standards demanded by the Seal.

While processing capacity, efficiency, and product safety and quality have increased dramatically since 2008, the factory has recently been faced with a major obstacle to the continuation of this trend: at the beginning of the last cashew season, Cote d’Ivoire announced a ban on transit of raw cashew nuts (RCN) across land borders, resulting in most RCN being transported via the Port of Abidjan and exported to high-processing countries such as India and Vietnam. Mim previously sourced a great deal of its RCN from Cote d’Ivoire; in fact, prior to the ban, the factory had planned to import 2,000 MT of RCN from its western neighbor. Coupled with Ghana’s lack of protective measures to retain its own RCN for domestic processing, Mim and other Ghanaian cashew processing plants now face major shortages of raw material.

However, for Mim, the effects of the Ivorian export ban have not been as harmful as for other medium-sized Ghanaian processors, due to its status as a Seal-certified factory. It has received recognition from international buyers, particularly in the US, for its high quality and admirable labor standards. The fact that ACA’s Seal of approval is stamped on each exported box increases its attractiveness to international buyers, who increasingly choose products which are compatible with international standards of quality and sustainability. In fact, when its management attends the World Cashew Convention in Dubai early next year, Mim hopes to expand its network of buyers into the Middle East, using the ACA Seal as part of its marketing platform. So, while the Ivorian block on raw nut export is certainly less than ideal, the international exposure and loyalty of buyers gained largely through Seal certification has ensured that Mim’s future remains bright.



ACA Mourns its Former President, Mr. Idrissa Kilangi

Dear Cashew Friends and Colleagues,

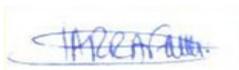
It is with deep sorrow that we announce to you the passing away of our former ACA President, Mr. Idrissa Kilangi. Mr. Kilangi passed away on 12 September 2014 in Tanzania due to an illness. His burial took place in his hometown of Iringa in the southern highlands of Tanzania.

Mr. Kilangi was initially elected as the first Vice President of the ACA Executive Committee in 2010 and was then promoted to President to replace his predecessor, Mr. Cherif Hibrahima, who died unexpectedly during his tenure. Mr. Kilangi served for 2.5 years as President. He was an honorable man who dedicated his life to making the cashew business a feasible livelihood for many people. He was also involved in cashew nut processing, employing hundreds of people from various communities. His commitment was outstanding and exemplary, which led to his formal election to the ACA presidency in September 2011.

We are losing an outstanding leader and role model. We will continue to honor his memory by following the many examples he has established for the cashew community. May his soul rest in peace, Alaihel-Salaam!

On behalf of ACA and the entire cashew community, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues.

Sincerely,



Georgette Tarraf

ACA President



Cashew Calendar 2014

November

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 17 - 18 | RONGEAD Workshop in Khorogo, Cote d'Ivoire |
| 17 - 19 | Cashew National Workshop in Guinea-Bissau |
| 26 - 28 | SIETTA Conference in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire |

December

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| 18 - 20 | SICA Cashew Conference in India |
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