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## A Message from The Interim Managing Director

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The African Cashew Alliance has served as an important guiding support for the growth of the African cashew industry these past ten years and I am excited to join the team at the Secretariat as the Interim Managing Director during this important moment of change for the Alliance. Coming from ComCashew, I am no stranger to the African cashew industry and the work ACA has been doing these past ten years. My work with ComCashew since 2010 has allowed me to develop an expansive understanding of the cashew industry as well as a broad network of industry contacts, both which I bring with me to ACA.

current situation of the industry today. This will be followed by the recruitment of a substantive Managing Director to steer implementation of the planned change agenda for the period of 2018 to 2022.

And so, here's to a bright future for ACA! Throughout these next few months, I look forward to working to create an even stronger Alliance that will be able to better serve you.

To make it to a decade is an important moment for an organization. It is a moment to celebrate, but also a moment to reevaluate. Now is the time to look back at the past ten years and recognize the successes and failures. The only way for ACA to grow as an organization is to learn from the past. The industry has evolved in the past decade and ACA must evolve with it if it is to stay relevant.

Although these past few years have been filled with change for ACA, I am here to assure you that with this next transition there will be a stronger and more stable organization that will be able to better serve as a backbone for the industry. Ultimately, our members and stakeholders will benefit from this moment of change. Together with ACA's Executive Committee and the Secretariat, I will be working on finalizing a strategy for the organization for 2018 to 2022. A new vision, mission, and set of objectives will be created that will better fit the





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### ACA Holds 2016 Annual Staff Retreat

Returning from the holidays, ACA Secretariat held its annual staff retreat from the 13th to 14th of January 2017. Themed “Strategizing for Greater Impact and Results”, the retreat aimed to brainstorm and gather ideas for the preparation of a new strategy for the Alliance in 2017 and beyond. After 10 years of existence, in a very dynamic industry, ACA has definitely gotten to a point where re-strategizing to meet the pressing needs of the industry, such that the organization becomes relevant for its existence is necessary. Mr. Ernest Mintah, Interim Managing Director of ACA and facilitator of the retreat, also emphasized the need to work together, build a strong secretariat team and create an open work environment for greater impact.



Other important objectives of the retreat included stock taking of 2016 (highlights and challenges), presentation of departmental work plans for the first quarter in 2017, preparations toward the 2017 annual conference in Benin and team building. The retreat addressed all these objectives and was very constructive in gathering ideas for the coming years as well as the organization of a successful 2017 conference. ACA interim Managing Director facilitated great sessions that created the opportunity for staff themselves to come up with ideas for resource mobilization and service offers for ACA.

By the end of the retreat, staff members had developed stronger bonds through creative team building exercises and departments had received detailed and useful feedback on work plans for the first quarter.

Several of the concepts discussed during this retreat will be considered during the upcoming creation of a new strategic plan for ACA. Overall, the retreat was a great success and Staff has developed great hope and expectation for better years of making a great impact in the future for the Alliance!

### ACA Seal Highlight: Sobery Sarl

Founded in 2013, Sobery Sarl is a cashew-processing factory located in Bouake, Cote d'Ivoire. Site construction and installation of machines was completed in March 2015 with full production starting in June 2015 after the first sale of the year. The factory has an operating capacity of 5,000 TPA and has been a member of the African Cashew Alliance since 2014.

Sobery Sarl's mission seeks just remuneration of chain efforts and thus supports fair trade. The company is also committed to social projects and has constructed roads to facilitate access to villages and built a water storage system for the village of Nanievogo in Ferké.

Although relatively new to the industry, Sobery Sarl is open to all markets and continuously seeks the best conditions to benefit not only themselves, but also their suppliers and service providers. The company's main service is the sale of certified organic nuts, conventional nuts, and raw nuts. Access to finance, raw nut price volatility, and labor and electricity costs have been difficulties in the past for the plant.

Sobery Sarl believes the cashew kernel is a product intended for consumption and as such bad hygiene during processing can be dangerous for the final consumer. Due to this belief, the

company was motivated to acquire the ACA Sustainability and Quality Seal. Sobery Sarl believes that being ACA certified indicates the ability to maintain, if not improve upon, hygiene levels. Therefore the company's Quality Control Manager and his team intend to work ceaselessly to ensure that all quality control systems in place are functioning and adhering to the measures required by the ACA Seal Program.

Having earned the ACA Seal, Sobery Sarl looks forward to gradually increase their production volume and be well positioned to engage in new markets.

The ACA Seal was created in 2012 and is awarded to processors who meet the highest global standards for food safety and social and labor laws. The ACA Seal ensures cashews are produced within facilities complying with the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act. Additionally, processors who are granted the ACA Seal often acquire other internationally recognized food safety certifications such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO 22000.

For further information about how you can improve your processing facility, please contact Dorcas Amoah (damoh@african-cashewalliance.com).



## Developing the African Cashew Industry

For the last three decades, Africa has become a well-known agricultural commodities producer with cashew nuts consistently ranking as one of the most economically important commodities. Produced by more than thirteen countries in Africa since the 18th century, the 1970s were the golden years for the African cashew industry, where domestic value-addition was at its peak. In this area, cashew processing reached over 200,000 MT due to contributions by Mozambique based mega processing facilities mostly owned by Anglo-Americans. However, increased political instabilities across the African continent as well as the enforcement of unfavorable trade policies, which were adapted by local governments upon World Bank advice, have factored into the decline of this industrial movement, causing major damage to the confidence of cashew investors in Africa. While Africa has continued to increase its production of raw cashew nuts, processing has stagnated far below that of the more industrialized economies in Vietnam, India, and Brazil. The loss of this value addition is significant, as it is estimated that a 25% increase in RCN processing within Africa would generate more than \$130 million in household income and substantially improve the lives of many families in rural areas.

In the past ten years, the public and private sectors alike have recognized the strategic value of this crop. In 2004, the African cashew industry began to awake from its dormancy and started revamping its growth through private entrepreneurs, as well as USAID and TechnoServe support programs. The founding of the African Cashew Alliance (ACA) in 2006 was motivated by the desire to mobilize and further strengthen African cashew stakeholders through private sector and public donor initiatives. This was indeed a historic moment for the African agri-business industry. With the vision of seeing a globally competitive African cashew industry that benefits the entire value chain, from farmer to consumer, ACA seeks to increase cashew processing within Africa and improve competitiveness and sustainability through facilitating public-private cooperation with improved business environment. Since the founding of ACA, the African cashew industry has taken significant strides, both in RCN production and processing together with mobilized and organized African Cashew value-chain.

West Africa has become visible with increased cashew production, particularly Cote d'Ivoire, which now produces over 700,000 MT and is the world leader in RCN production. The region learned a great deal from Mozambique, Kenya, and Tanzania in boosting their raw seed production and in growing the domestic processing industry. The ACA Secretariat has been actively promoting the tremendous investment opportunities available to local and foreign investors. Increased visibility and investment has resulted in a clear increase in both production and processing volumes in Africa. In 2016, the Alliance monitored 1.67 million MT of domestic cashew production with 110,000 MT of processed kernels and more than 278,000 MT in total installed capacity. The Alliance continues to encourage production and processing enhancement by directly engaging with cashew stakeholders via various public and private project initiatives, technical, business advisory assistance, and market information services. Despite widespread difficulties in RCN procurement throughout 2016, the strategic importance of value addition within Africa continues to be recognized. In promoting processing, targets for 2020 have been set for over 1.6 million MT of stable production and

increased processing volumes of up to 300,000 MT. These targets are equally shared by cashew producing countries, private investors, and government agencies, as well as public donors.

From 2014 and up until the most recent cashew harvest season, challenges have continued to present themselves as a step backwards for the cashew investors in Africa. Price speculations, with growing external competition for raw seed, have slowed the growth of this nascent industry by reducing processing volumes to 27,000 MT and stagnating new investments in 2016. Therefore, the Alliance has been actively advising African lawmakers and policy implementers to develop a business environment conducive to growth, with industry incentive schemes ripe for sustainable industrial development. Recent advocacy efforts resulted in positive industrial policy changes, especially in Cote d'Ivoire and Benin Republic, where governments have introduced processing encouragement plans. Some of these policies include special buying windows, increased RCN export levies, no taxes on kernel exports, three to five year tax holidays for investors, and kernel export enhancement grants and bonuses. The Alliance is also advising ECOWAS countries in West Africa to further collaborate in facilitating cross-border cashew trade in order to grow together as group economies, learn from each other's strengths, and to explore hidden trade opportunities.

Each year, the Alliance organizes the world's largest cashew convention, the ACA World Cashew Festival & Expo, which serves as a major effort to engage new investors and technological innovators with local cashew stakeholders in Africa. The Alliance gladly invites all members and global cashew stakeholders to participate in our upcoming "World Cashew Festival & Expo 2016", which will be held in Cotonou, Benin Republic from 18th-22nd September 2017. Furthermore, the Alliance continues to engage direct stakeholders via industry awareness campaigns, training, and advisory programs on technology trends, economic feasibility studies, market information services, food safety & quality assurance assistance, and promotion of local consumption. Increased development in the next few years has the potential to assure the visible and sustainable growth of the African cashew industry on a global scale. The African Cashew Alliance continues to work hard to achieve this ultimate goal and to build long-term economic stability within Africa.



Article author and ACA Secretariat Staff Sunil Dahiya



## The Recipe Room: Better Than Takeout Cashew Chicken



### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. To a gallon-sized zip-top bag, add the cornstarch, salt, pepper, chicken, seal, and shake to coat chicken evenly.
2. To a large skillet, add the oils, chicken, and cook for about 4 to 5 minutes over medium-high heat, flipping and stirring so all sides cook evenly. Chicken should be about 80-90% cooked through.
3. Add the broccoli, bell peppers, edamame (I add it straight from the freezer), garlic, and stir to combine. Cook for about 3 to 4 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender and chicken is cooked through; stir intermittently. While vegetables cook, make the sauce.
4. To a medium bowl add the soy sauce, honey, rice wine vinegar, chili-garlic sauce, ginger, and whisk to combine; set aside.
5. Add the cashews to the skillet and stir to combine.
6. Add the sauce and stir to combine. Allow sauce to simmer over medium-low heat for 1 to 2 minutes.
7. Add the green onions, stir to combine, and serve immediately. Chicken is best warm and fresh but extra will keep airtight in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Source: <http://www.averiecooks.com/2016/05/better-than-takeout-cashew-chicken.html>

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- about 1.25 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, diced into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 heaping cups broccoli florets
- 1 cup red bell peppers, diced small
- 1 cup shelled frozen edamame
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced or pressed
- 1 cup unsalted dry-roasted whole cashews
- 3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey, or to taste
- 1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Asian chili garlic sauce, or to taste
- 3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3/4 to 1 cup green onions, sliced into thin rounds  
(from about 3 or 4 green onions)

### Upcoming ACA Activities

#### February

28th-5th ACA Walmart trainings in Kenya

#### March

26th-7th ACA visits to Valency International and FoodPro in Nigeria

#### April

19th-28th ACA training in Cote d'Ivoire under GDA2



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