



Improving food safety in the shea and cashew nut value chains

The project aimed to improve the competitiveness of cashew and shea butter production in local, regional and international markets, using an analysis of good agricultural practices, value addition, and quality.

STDF/PG/048

Status

Completed

Start Date

01/06/2008

End Date

31/01/2011

Project Value (US\$)

\$560,539

STDF Contribution (US\$)

\$512,139

Beneficiaries

Benin

Implementing Entities

Centre de Recherches Agricoles d'Agonkanmey (CRA- Agonkanmey)

Partners

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Background

Benin's economic activities are dominated by agricultural production, with favourable conditions for cashew and shea butter. These products have a high export potential, but there are challenges to fully exploit this. Shea and cashew nut production is characterized by high mycotoxin contamination. The quality standards on cashew and shea were also not applied by producers and processors along the value chain.

The project fit into the national policy of diversifying agricultural production in Benin. Capacity building on quality standards and value addition was vital to overcome export challenges and boost rural livelihoods.

Results

The project carried out preliminary research on good practices and existing standards on shea and cashew nut production. Two workshops shared findings on existing standards, good production and processing practices and quality control systems. Four technology options were tested in three pilot sites nationwide.

Across the value chain, producers, collectors, processors, exporters, extension and quality control officers, were trained on, and made aware of, good practices, compliance with standards and the HACCP quality process. Documents in French and two local languages were circulated, with 500 actors in the cashew sector and 300 actors in the shea sector being trained. Research institutions and microbiological laboratories were also trained on how to strengthen their analytical capacity on mycotoxin.

The project studies also showed how to improve the traditional processing of shea nut into products that would meet the needs of markets such as cosmetics and the chocolate industry.

Recommendations

Providing training to other stakeholders, and share materials more widely would boost good production and marketing practices in the cashew and shea value chains, and increase competitiveness of products.

Extending research to the organization and management of the production process and marketing would further the quality of the products, and help to build in an economic analysis of technology options.

Exploiting shea butter production in the 22 villages identified would create a new business opportunity.