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Success Story: Training on Good Agricultural Practices increases Income for Beninese Cashew Farmer

The African Cashew initiative (ACi), conducted a research among cashew farmers in Benin. While examining success factors of ACi farmer trainings, a farmer from Agbassa Kpa, a small community north of Djidia, emerged as a role model for African cashew farming. He was part of the first group of ACi trained farmers in Benin and has received trainings on farm management and Good Agricultural Practices, for harvesting and post-harvesting for two and a half years.



*A focus group discussion with a group of Beninese farmers under a mango tree
Photo: ACi*

An ordinary working day of the Beninese farmer starts with an early morning walk of about two hours before reaching the four hectare cashew farm, he has owned for more than 20 years. It is post-harvesting season at the moment, which means his daily activities consist mostly of maintaining the farm. Following Good Agricultural Practices in order to uphold the farm, he prunes the cashew trees,

does underground weeding and establishes fire belts around the farm to prevent bush fires. To ensure food security the farmer also applies intercropping, whereby he grows yam, maize, cowpea as well as vegetables such as okra, pepper and garden egg. During the harvesting season the farmer mainly consumes the harvested cashew apples instead of bringing meals to the farm. This saves him money and food resources.

In order to get an additional source of income, besides cashew growing, the model farmer collects tree branches after pruning the farm for producing and selling charcoal. To increase the cashew yield, the farmer uses grafted seedlings from nurseries when planting new trees, since they last longer and increase quality of the raw cashew nut (RCN). In Benin, cashew farmers usually harvest 500kg per hectare. However, through the employment of the Good Agricultural Practices this trained farmer increases his yield from 500kg per hectare up to 680kg per hectare.

His involvement in bulk selling increases bargaining power and boosts the price he receives from selling the RCN. Through bulk selling this farmer is able to compare prices on the international market, which guarantees him a fair price for each ton of RCN's. Another advantage of collective selling is the regular meetings at the bulk selling stations, as they offer informal knowledge sharing among cashew growers in the community. Some of the money he earned from bulk selling is reinvested in labour to clear the land during the post-harvest season and to collect the cashew nuts during harvest season.



A lively discussion among Beninese farmers on cashew production
Photo: ACi

Apart from him and his wife, four external labourers work at the farm twice a week to keep labour costs low. After paying wages the farmer still holds enough money for handing out small loans to other cashew growers, who were not part of the ACi trainings. This Beninese farmer presents an excellent example of how advanced knowledge in cashew growing as well as farm management result in an increased and steady source of income to ensure food security for his family and payment of school fees for his children.

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