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Steve Hiler of American food products company Ralcorp Holdings.

A Promising Future for the African Cashew Industry – 7th ACA Annual Conference Highlights



The plenary session

From 17-20 September, cashew stakeholders from around the world gathered in Cotonou, Benin from to attend the 7th ACA Annual Conference. The event was the world's biggest cashew event to date, with more than 500 registered participants from 36 countries. Keynote speakers, sector-specific workshops, and hundreds of Business2Business meeting provided both first-time attendees and experienced industry players with key information and tools to facilitate the continued development of the African cashew industry.

Conference participants had the opportunity to learn from 90 speakers presenting in 26 workshops and panels, on topics ranging from finance and investment to small-scale processing. Ministers and ministerial representatives from ten countries were also in attendance, including Hon. MadinaSephrou, Benin's Minister of Industry, Trade and Small and Medium Enterprises. The high-level panel during the Plenary Session, "Today's Challenges for Tomorrow's Industry," included participants from Benin, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, The Gambia, Senegal, Mozambique, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Togo. Another feature of the conference, the 2nd World Cashew Expo12, showcased processing equipment from China and Sri Lanka, as well as 20 other exhibitors.

"I'm very encouraged," said Steve Hiler, of American food products company Ralcorp Holdings. "This is the first time I've come to West Africa. There are large investments and smaller investments – it's happening now. The food quality is building quickly."

Mim Cashew to Become 2nd ACA Seal-approved Factory

This month, the Mim Cashew of the Brong Ahafo Region is set to be official certified under the ACA Quality and Sustainability Seal. The Ghanaian processor, with facilities in the Brong-Ahafo region of the country, will be the second company to receive this approval, following the inaugural certification of Tolaro Global in May of this year.


Mim began the Seal-approval process in March, when the ACA Seal Team Advisor Jim Giles visited the site for an initial assessment of the site. A follow-up visit in June provided further technical assistance and implementation support. The seal team returned again in September, when Mim was granted provisional ACA Seal approval.

"We conducted a detailed quality assessment of the whole factory, as a well as a physical inspection of the site," said ACA Seal Advisor Gillian Epule. "The management has a good mindset, and we have been working closely with them to ensure the sustainability of the Seal at Mim."



Workers at Mim

Mim's provisional approval is expected to be made official by November. Giles, who was present for the final visit to the processing, commented on the "full support and cooperation on the part of Mim," which no doubt facilitated the successful Seal implementation process.



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ACA ACTIVITIES

About 100 attendees extended their conference participation beyond Cotonou to take advantage of the opportunity to see two main aspects of Benin's cashew value chain: production and processing of raw cashew nuts. Field trip participants traveled to a 45 hectare cashew plantation in Dassa-Zoumé, where farmers have received training from ACi on grafting and intercropping to increase productivity of the site. The trip also included a visit to SITAB SARL, a newly opened cashew processing factory designed to meet the highest international standards of processing, hygiene, and safety.



SITAB SARL Factory

ACA Core members choose a new Executive Committee



Jace Rabe, V. Rajkumar, Kofi Yao Appia, Madame Taraf, Edgar Maokola-Majongo, Anthony Waithaka, Tola Faseru.

The leadership of ACA underwent an evolution in Cotonou, Benin, as a result of the Executive Committee Elections held on September 18. Votes from Core Members elected the 2012-2014 Executive Committee, which will be led by Madame Georgette Taraf, ACA's first woman president!

Introducing Georgette Taraf, ACA's Newly Elected President

Following the elections in September, the ACA Executive Committee will now be led by Georgette Taraf, who succeeds Idrissa Kilangi, who acted as ACA President since March 2011. Madame Taraf hails from Benin, where she first became involved in cashew in 1996 as a buyer. A decade later, Madame Taraf entered the export side of the industry, establishing NAD&Co Industry in 2008, which opened a processing facility in 2011. She began working with ACA as head of the national committee in 2010, going on to serve as National Representative. This year, she helped establish a national platform for Beninese cashew stakeholders and managed organization in Benin for the successful 7th ACA Annual Conference in Cotonou.

1. Why did you want to become president of ACA?

I hoped to be President, to show our African sisters that firstly, we women can invest in industry in general, and also in particular in the cashew industry.

2. How long have you been working in cashew, and what first led you to participate in the ACA?

I have been working in the field of cashews for at least 15 years. I have been involved in ACA since its inception, because it is a Pan-African association that advocated for the promotion of African industry.

The huge success of the conference was made possible thanks to more than \$210,000 in support from Platinum Sponsors ECOWAS-TEN, Kraft Foods, and African Cashew Initiative, as well as Gold sponsors Olam, Intersnack, ARECA, GIZ, USAID, and Delmas.

Missed out on all of these incredible events? Mark your calendar for the 8th World Cashew Conference and Expo, to be held 16-19 September in Lagos, Nigeria!

"I want to promote the building of the National Associations in each cashew-producing country," said Madame Taraf after being elected. "Africans can begin to interest themselves to processing. It's an opportunity, we can't miss that."

The elections were held following the Plenary Session of the 7th ACA Annual Conference. ACA Managing Director moderated the elections, with Roger Brou present as election observer. Of the 124 registered core members, 88 were present and voted at the elections, a 70% participation rate.

The new Executive Committee will also be comprised of two vice presidents - Kofi Yao Appia of Côte d'Ivoire and Edgar Maokola-Majongo of Tanzania, as well as Tola Faseru of Nigeria, Jace Rabe of the United States, V. Rajkumar of India, and Patrick Wainaina of Kenya.

"As Vice President I would like to share my experience as a grower and farmer of cashew nuts with the ACA countries," said Mr. Maokola-Majongo, who owns 150 acres farm of cashew trees in Southern Tanzania. "With concerted and collective work, Africa can increase cashew nut production in Africa ten-fold in 10 to 15 years."



Madame Georgette Taraf

3. What are your short term and long term goals for your presidency?

The strategy is already drawn. It is primarily to promote the birth of national platforms and develop the nut processing industry by stimulating actors, encouraging financial institutions to invest in the sector, and seeking government support for development policies related to the sector.

4. As national representative for Benin, you played a huge role by hosting the conference. What aspects of the conference were you most proud of?

As President of the organizing committee of the conference, I was really amazed by several factors:

1. The will and volunteerism of all members who worked to make this conference a success. Thank you to all.
2. The high-level panel, which was the first which had the actual presence of the ministers of fraternal countries. It showed the interest that our governments have in this sector.
3. Finally, the Expo, which is always interesting.

5. How do you envision the role of ACA in the cashew industry will change in the next five years?

The role of the ACA in support of the industry should be one that links skills and services with country platforms where the industry is growing.

Conference Facilitates Industry Cooperation through Signing of two MOUs

The conference provided an opportunity for cooperation among cashew associations as part of ACA's Partnership and Advocacy service offer. The National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN) and ACA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate promotion of the cashew industry in Nigeria. The agreement outlines a framework that will guide institutional development, exchange of information, and implementation of programs for cashew business development.

ACA and l'Autorité de Regulation du Cotonet de l'Anacarde (ARECA) signed a similar MOU focused on promoting the development of the Ivorian cashew industry. This partnership will build sustainable cashew farming and processing in Côte d'Ivoire, by facilitating a platform for cooperation between private and public stakeholders in the cashew business there.

These agreements are an essential part of ACA's advocacy and partnership work, which encourages national institutions to expand cashew development by providing useful stakeholder platforms. ACA is working to partner with every National Cashew Association in all cashew producing countries in Africa. Thus far in 2012, ACA has signed four MOUs with National Associations and Public Entities: four individual agreements with the Kenyan Nut Processors Association

ACA Member West Africa Markets Link wins Ghana Export Promotion Authority Achievement Award

On Friday, September 2012, ACA Member West Africa Markets Link (WAML) was awarded the Gold Award for the Export of Cashew Nuts in 2011 by the Ghana Export Promotion Authority. Winfred Osei, Managing Director of WAML, accepted the award at the 22nd National Awards for Export Achievement in Accra, Ghana.



Winfred Osei Owusu on the left

ACA must deepen the partnerships that develop with financial institutions in order to have institutions that master the role they have to play in funding the sector. The ACA must be able to connect its members with all the services that they need.

6. What do you think are the most interesting changes taking place in the African cashew industry?

One of the biggest changes taking place in the industry is the growing national popularity for the processing industry, as well as the development of technologies that facilitate better work in factories. We are also seeing a new perspective from nut buyers who are looking to Africa as a producer of cashew kernels, from which they hope for and expect a lot.

"The strategy is already drawn. It is primarily to promote the birth of national platforms and develop the nut processing industry by stimulating actors, encouraging financial institutions to invest in the sector, and seeking government support for development policies related to the sector," said Madame Taraf.



Idrissa Kilangi, the President of ACA with Bamba Mamadou

(NutPAK), Côte d'Ivoire's Autorité de Régulation du Coton et de l'Anacarde (ARECA), The National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN), as well as a Regional Cooperation Platform in East Africa. The regional cooperation initiates cooperation among four organizations, including ACA, NutPAK, Tanzanian Cashew Processors Association, and Associação dos Industriais do Cajú (AICAJU). ACA will open an office in Kenya to run the East-Africa and Southern Africa cashew platform.

The award, given for companies working with non-traditional exports, rewards outstanding businesses for their work based on export volumes, as well as the company's impact on the specific trade sector.

"We recognize that this is a mark of recognition of what we do," said Mr. Osei. "We see this award as a way to raise the profile of our company, while also motivating us to do more."

An ACA member since 2008, WAML plans to open a cashew processing factory by 2014, designed to become a Seal-approved facility by 2015. ACA will provide technical assistance for the development of the factory and implementation of the Seal program during over the next three years. This expansion demonstrates WAML's commitment to expanding their presence in the market and adding value to the cashew commodity chain in Ghana.

"We, as a company, are not just traders – we ourselves are growing cashew, most importantly," Mr. Osei remarked. "We are particularly interested in showing that when we penetrate markets, it translates into new opportunity for the country and also for the community. By expanding our presence in the market, we can add value to the chain, reaching all the way to the farmer."

ACi steps into a new phase.

As it builds on lessons learned in its first phase, the African Cashew initiative is preparing itself for an exciting second phase with final contractual steps to be taken with the following main contributors: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the German Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ).

In its efforts to increase the competitiveness of African cashew production and promote sustainable growth in production, processing and farmer income in five African countries (Benin, Burkina, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mozambique) by bringing public and private sector actors together to implement activities on all steps of the cashew value chain using sustainable mechanisms, ACi had numerous successes between 2009 until 2012 in its first phase. These include the training of 240,000 farmers across its 5 project countries, linking 29,000 farmers to the Fair Trade Market and increased installed capacity of processing in 4 countries from 8,250 MT in 2009 to 38,300 MT in 2011.

With these successes in view, ACi aims to consolidate and sustain the growth achieved by focusing strongly on providing opportunities for the development of more effective linkage mechanisms and incentives between farmer (organizations) and processors in its new Phase. Here, the focus will also be on collaboration with public sector partners to develop, multiply and distribute improved planting material for enhanced cashew production whilst helping to develop professional seedling production in nurseries, clonal gardens and model farms. In addition, phase II will pay particular attention to producers, exporters and Government bodies/representatives and also on the continuous growth of The African Cashew Alliance.

Perhaps the most significant strategy shift for ACi Phase 2 is a Cashew



ACi M&E team in the field

Matching Fund, which was launched on 1st September 2012. In its first call, a total of thirty applications were received from five ACi supported countries; a majority of these targeting better farmer linkages, and others aiming at research and multiplication of improved cashew planting material. All applications are currently reviewed by the Technical Experts of both ACA and ACI, and after Board approval, successful applicants will be given the month of November to prepare and submit a full proposal for the final approval stage. Concluded projects will start their private sector led implementation by beginning 2013. This will bring lots of new opportunities and also some challenges – we will keep you informed.



Cashew Calendar 2012

Please contact the ACA Secretariat to participate in any events, contribute ideas, or add an event to the cashew calendar.

January

19-21 PTNPA Convention, Palm Spings, USA.

February

Cote d'Ivoire Cashew Day, Abidjan

Guinee Cashew Day, Conakry

May

21 - 23 INC Congress, Barcelona, Spain

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