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“Our Money Falls from the Tree”: A Value Chain Approach for Cashew Helps Farmers in Northern Benin Improve their Income

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Abstract

In northern Benin, cashew production is characterised by a large number of small-scale farmers with 0.5 to 2 hectares of cultivation area with diversified cropping systems. Cashew production is growing constantly in the last 15 years and raw cashew nuts are after cotton the second largest agricultural product for exportation. The cashew value chain is among the priorities of the national diversification policy since 2004. Main problems of the cashew sector in Benin are a low productivity per tree (1 to 2 kg per tree) due to a poor farm-level technical knowledge, a weak research support and limited access to extension services and other inputs. Processing of the raw nuts is still stagnating; only 3% of the production is processed in Benin, the majority of raw cashew nuts are exported to India.

For the cooperation programme Conservation and management of natural resources (ProCGRN) cashew is one of the selected value chains with the objective to provide the rural population of the Atacora/Donga region in northern Benin a better benefit from sustainable cultivation of natural resources. Using a value chain approach (ValueLinks) on the national and regional level allowed to public and private actors in the cashew sector a participatory analysis of problems and opportunities in cashew production, processing and marketing. The programme helps farmers to increase the quality and quantity of their primary production using approved good agricultural practices. Producer groups on local and regional level are targeted to improve business linkages. Processing of cashew for the local demand and exportation is one of the opportunities especially for women to provide employment possibilities and added value in the value chain.

Keywords: Benin, cashew, primary production, processing, value chain approach