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“Reconcile land system changes
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Effect of the adoption of organic certification on the economic performance of cashew producing farms in north-west Benin

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of organic certification on the productivity and economic performance of cashew-producing farms in Northwest Benin. It evaluates whether adopting organic certification improves farmers' profitability and identifies the main obstacles to its adoption. It is set against a backdrop where organic farming is promoted as a pathway to sustainability and international market access, though its uptake remains limited. Data were collected in October 2024 from 257 cashew producers across eight communes, including both certified (86) and non-certified (164) farmers. Using structured questionnaires and interviews, the study gathered insights into farming practices, income, and perceptions of certification.

Results show that 52.92 % of certified farmers experienced increased income due to premium market access, while a small proportion (6.23 %) saw no change, and 3.5 % reported income declines linked to high conversion costs. Additionally, 56.81 % observed positive ecological impacts, such as improved soil quality and biodiversity.

Nonetheless, challenges persist: 48.25 % of farmers cited certification costs as a major barrier, often requiring cooperative membership to reduce expenses. Limited access to training (39.69 %) and difficulties in marketing organic products profitably (38.13 %) were also significant obstacles. Productivity-wise, certified farmers saw their yield increase by 50.4 %, from 559.44 to 841.58 kg/ha. Economically, organic certification improved the net margin by 1.78 %, boosted return on invested capital by 128.72 %, increased the cost-benefit ratio by 73.57 %, and raised ROI by 53.35 %.

In conclusion, while organic certification enhances the profitability and sustainability of cashew farming, its adoption is hindered by financial and administrative constraints. Policy measures such as subsidies, improved training, access to credit, and market development are essential to scale up certification and support smallholder farmers in Benin.

Keywords: Adoption constraints, agricultural productivity, Benin, cashew farmers, economic performance, farmers' perception, organic certification, profitability, sustainable agriculture