

# Insights

Issue No.18

## Social Impulses through the Cashew-Industry in Ghana

Exposure and Dialogue Programme (EDP) in Accra & Sunyani / Ghana  
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Cooperation partner: African Cashew initiative (ACi)



Exposure- und  
Dialogprogramme e.V.

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### Editorial



The Exposure and Dialogue Programme (EDP) provided an opportunity for African Cashew initiative (ACi) to gain insight into the impact of its activities on the lives of farmers, sustainability of its interventions and to determine investment prospects.

Feedback from participants provided awareness into issues such as innovations in mechanization of farm work, continuous support to farmer organizations and incentives to protect in-country processing. The interesting perspectives of participants who are also private

partners and the refreshing insights of participants relatively new to the sector are valuable to ACi.

At the farmer level, the EDP was well received and farmers felt motivated and happy to host the participants. To them, their involvement was as a result of their hard work and their implementation of ACi trainings. Some felt that the EDP will encourage more farmers to practice GAPs because they would also want to host participants the next time there is an opportunity.

EDP participants were open to and enthusiastic about the new experiences and learnings. Even though some participants' have been ACi partners since 2009 and have a lot of prior knowledge of the industry, they found the experiences very insightful. They use their first hand experiences for strategic planning of their companies / organizations engagement in the sector. The experience had a positive effect on them both personally and professionally. ACi will use the insights also in the formulation of a Phase 3 of the project from 2016 to 2019.

It was also an opportunity for networking among participants and national stakeholders of the industry, to raise questions and give recommendation of what is needed on the ground, e.g. "Work never ends. Therefore farming practices should be more mechanized"

*Sylvia Pobee & Rita Weidinger*  
*African Cashew initiative (ACi), Accra/Ghana*

### Learning experience for the Caribbean



My experience in Tain District and in Accra during the most recent EDP/ACi programme was a life-influencing experience, as I like to describe it, because it is one of those experiences obtained within the framework of professional exercise, but which impacted me for life. The learning curve in terms of cashew production, promotion of quality and challenges faced by the cashew industry as a whole, was a steep one, which was necessary for proper comprehension of the African reality. It was also an opportunity to understand how the African Cashew Experience could also be relevant to the Caribbean in a Small Island Developing State context, which is mine.

Beyond the professional exercise, the experience I had living and working with a farmer who faces adverse conditions but who lives a life of dignity, was most extraordinary. The depth of the person also struck me – more than just a farmer, more than just a worker, their life stories were the stories of many, no matter where they grew up or which part of the world they happened to live in...I could have identified with it, the human relations, the challenges and the hopes. The frequent power cuts that plunge homes and lives into darkness until the timid light of the morning gives way to a burst of relentless heat, structure (or limits) peoples' activities around the sunlight. The back-breaking farm work or household work served to remind me of the distance development has taken some of us away from poverty, yet paradoxically, too far from the bliss of hard work that produces sweet sleep at night.

For me, the cashew life experience was unforgettable: how life can be woven around the cashew farm, to the extent that the trees can take on the resemblance of one's progeniture...and represent one's life. Much ground has been covered by the ACi and its partners in terms of the production and promotion of good quality nuts in Ghana...there is still much distance to go, with the development of by-products and value addition.

*Paula Hippolyte-Bauwens  
Head of Chancery and First Secretary  
Embassies of the Eastern Caribbean States and Missions to the EU,  
Brussels/ Belgium*

### About the Balance of Experience



An EDP has a content relevant level and a level related to personal experience. It is a pronounced learning experience on both levels. I was maybe an "atypical" participant at the Ghana EPD, because I understood little of the trade structures around the theme "Cashews" at that time. At the content relevant level I could learn a lot by participating in the program: about the work itself, regarding the costs and prices, about production conditions and procedures, the many levels between the gathering of the cashew and removing the raw cashew nut, up to the hands of the customers reaching for a tin of roasted cashew nuts in my local supermarket. Among the participants were, in part, experts and professionals who are active in this field, be it as economic policy or as development policy parties. An exciting exchange thus resulted.

And yet EDP is so much more than that, because the 2nd level is added. We really lived and worked three days with a farmer, a deep and broadening experience. Shortly after arriving, I texted my wife, our host was "truly very poor". In the three days I came to notice - without wanting to glorify material poverty - what fortune he actually has: his family, whereby the biological connection in a vast extended family appears to work, his courage with a wealth of ideas and plans, his (Muslim) religious beliefs. The work on the plantation was also a learning experience: after 2 hours "you knew" how it worked, understood the tasks and processes. But how well, as the EDP lasted three days, in order to understand the toil and sweat, resentment and satisfaction, the load of the morning and the success of the harvest in the evening.

The "balance" of experience that an EDP enables, is long lasting and the participation in EDP is strongly recommended.

*Dr. Stefan Vesper  
General Secretary of the Central Committee of German Catholics, Member of  
the EDP e.V., Bonn/Germany*

## Work never ends



During the exposure, the first and very confronting experience for me was physical limitation. Smallholder farming in Africa is a manual job; it requires a top-fit body. Due to my “bad” condition, and illness in that specific week, I realized that I am simply not able to do the job from my host day-in, day-out!

The risks in life are always around. In Africa that is not different than in Europe. However, in Europe there are (financial) safety nets. Is that good or bad? I do not know. It gives a kind of security, yet, it also may lead to a situation that persons in Europe do not accept and adapt to new circumstances.

I have noticed a tremendous difference between family and community life in Ghana and that in Holland. I live and work in an area where individualism seems to be the best and only direction in life. And I do not even live in a large city! What a difference did I note in the village of Peter and Emma. Family ties and the fact that people are or may become one day dependent on the other, make it that they aim to keep the relations good. In our society, I see that the ties are (too?) loose.

As I have travelled to and in developing countries regularly during the last 20 years, I am quite familiar with the image of poverty: huts, children running around half naked, a life outside, small scale farming operations, beggars, .... , I have seen that in many countries. Of course, most of it through the windows of a car, never ever, by living for some time in a village of small-scale farmers myself. It is due to that experience, the exposure, that I start asking myself questions on my life, life-style, family and work.

*Wim Schipper*

*Sourcing Manager Africa*

*Intersnack Procurement B.V., Doetinchem/Netherlands*

## „Open up for EDP approach“



Although I had quite some business travel experience in Africa the programme offered true exposure. After the first introduction meeting with the EDP team and some of the participants, I started to realize this was really different. At arrival in Ghana it was great to get to know the diverse group of participants, partly from private sector, financial sector and non-profit organisation. Mr Ofori was one of the first farmers to start farming Cashew in his region and watched how more farmers started to plant the trees. He saw how the cashew production in Ghana grew from nothing to a main agricultural crop. It was a true privilege to spend four days with Mr

Ofori at his house and working with him on his farm. Imagine that you would have a total stranger around your house for four days, taking him to your work and everywhere you go. But most of all sharing your live story with all the ups and down and challenges you (have been) facing. In Europe we would probably go crazy after two days. I was particularly impressed by the passion of Mr Ofori for the product, the entrepreneurship, the positive way of life and the local leadership amongst the farmer community. That truly inspired me.

So what did I do differently after the exposure? It helped me to add a new perspective when dealing with (project) decisions related to the cashew sector. I often imagine that Mr Ofori or Felicia, a worker on the farm, would be looking over my shoulder and wondering what they would have to say about it.

But most of all: the experiences and numerous times of reflection at the most odd moments during the EDP, meeting great people that provide you with new insights and make you think about how you thought about certain things.

My advice to future participants: Open up for the EDP approach and take time to go through all the steps was a learning journey. You need however to make time for it and take a step back and slow down. That was not always easy for me and first lesson to learn.

*Bas van den Brink*

*Senior Program Manager*

*IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative, Utrecht/ Netherlands*

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### ***EDP – Development has got a face***

*Exposure and Dialogue Programmes are offers for further training and dialogue to promote sustainable and responsible acting carried out in developing and newly industrialized countries. They enable management staff and decision-makers from field of politics, business, church and civil society to have intense encounters and dialogues with people living in poverty.*

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### **Imprint**

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