

Scoping study for CBI project development Benin – Gender



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Resilience BV

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Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. METHODOLOGY	4
Inception phase	4
Data analysis	5
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK GENDER ANALYSIS	5
Gender equity in emerging economies	5
Theory on gender (in)equality	5
Gender domains in agriculture	6
Guiding principles for gender mainstreaming in projects	6
Gender transformative interventions	7
4. WOMEN AND AGRICULTURE IN BENIN	7
Introduction	7
Political commitment and key policies on agriculture and gender equality	8
5. STAKEHOLDER MAPPING WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN BENIN, ESPECIALLY IN AGRICULTURE	9
Main findings and conclusions	11
6. VALUE-CHAIN ANALYSES	11
The processed chili value-chain	11
The processed pineapple value-chain	13
The shea value-chain	18
7. OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERVENTIONS BY CBI	21
Chili	21
Pineapple	22
The shea value-chain	22
Reflection on CBI's gender transformative criteria	23
Annex 1: Contact details of main stakeholders	24
Annex 2: Literature References	25

Executive summary

This study has been commissioned by the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) and aims to formulate interventions that can be most effective in fostering gender transformative results in the processed fruits and vegetables, and natural ingredients subsectors of Benin. The study specifically examined Benin's chili, pineapple and shea sector, which came out as the most promising value-chains after the inception phase.

Like in many other countries around the world, in Benin women still face significant challenges in their ability to access and control productive resources and opportunities that are important for agricultural livelihoods. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, in Benin women comprise a major part of the agricultural labor force, but they are relatively less empowered and entitled than men in the sector.

Though women play a significant role in the production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. Women often do not benefit sufficiently from the implementation of government policies and strategies, although they are formally considered in some development policies and in agricultural modernization strategies. In addition to the socio-cultural constraints they face, women have little access to production factors, particularly land, credit, inputs, equipment and agricultural advice.

Chili has some interesting entry points for interventions, as women are active in processing and trading; there is strong existing production through an extensive cooperative system and horticulture is a focus area for the Netherlands in Benin. However, apart from the cooperative system, the value-chain is not well-organized, and a lot of production is finding its way across the border through irregular exports.

Pineapple is one of the most established agricultural value-chains in Benin, with a strong presence of formalized businesses and sector associations, significant exports, and a Geographic Indication for the Sugar Loaf variety. Moreover, women are active throughout the chain, from production to trading, though hardly as leaders of export or associations. However, the sector is causing some serious sustainability issues, especially due to deforestation, and already various donors are active in the sector, but not the Netherlands.

Finally, shea and its derivative shea butter are established value-chains in Benin. Shea is more established in the Northern part of Benin, where the climate is suitable for shea trees. The value-chain is dominated by women, from collection and production of artisanal shea butter to domestic trade, though exports are mostly managed by men. The world market for shea is still growing and the economic activity around shea nuts may actually sustain biodiversity, by supporting shea trees. It is a seasonal business though; competition from neighboring countries is strong and women often do not own the land on which the shea trees are grown.

Interesting entry points for interventions are:

- Interventions that aim to propel women in decision-making positions in the shea sector, especially at association level.
- Interventions that capacitate women cooperatives in the shea sector, for example by helping them to increase the quantity and quality of their products.
- Cooperation with the DEFIA program of Belgium's development cooperation agency ENABEL, on empowering women in the pineapple chain to be involved in direct exports of processed pineapple products to the EU.
- Capacitate women in processing pineapple, into (concentrated) juice or dried pineapple.
- Capacity building of small-scale women spices / chili processors in Benin's big cities.

For all these interventions an in-depth needs assessment could be added, in order to also address the women's decision-making power, self-esteem and opportunities for collective action.

1. Introduction

This report is the result of creative teamwork in three different languages and intense field work; careful literature and data analysis; the merging of value-chain theory on the one hand and gender theory on the other; and two months of diligent, hard work. The report reflects the results and analysis of the collected information in the past months. It aims to provide answers to the question which interventions can be most effective in fostering gender transformative results in two value-chains within the processed fruits and vegetables, and natural ingredients subsectors in Benin.

The report was commissioned by the Center for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), a Dutch government agency that has stimulated exports from emerging economies for more than 50 years. With the inputs of this report, CBI will decide on the focus of a new program in two value-chains, striving to be gender transformative. The value-chains that have been examined more in detail are chili, pineapple, and shea.

The goal of CBI's project will not only be to include women in activities, but to transform current gender beliefs and relations, and empower women to make strategic life choices and put those choices into action. Export can be a means to empower women, but most importantly, CBI's project aims to contribute to systemic change, which entails identifying and tackling underlying causes of gender problems within existing systems.

In the recommendations section of the report, we aimed to provide concrete, actionable suggestions for interventions on the one hand, while ensuring that these interventions can also adhere to one or more principles of a gender transformative project on the other. We hope this report informs and guides CBI sufficiently in making decisions on a potential gender transformative value-chain project in Benin.

2. Methodology

Throughout the study, a gender lens was applied in every stage of the research process and each research activity. As the core goal has been to provide recommendations for a gender transformative program with a value-chain approach, gender considerations have been key to the approach and methodology of this study.

For the study a mix of research methods were used in an iterative process. Generally, literature study and data analysis (inception phase) were followed by interviews and fieldwork, but also in later phases additional literature was analyzed and follow-up interviews were undertaken to make informed recommendations. Given the relative short time span of the assignment, we tried to prioritize high potential value-chains early in the process, as this allowed us to go into more detail quicker, particularly on the gender analysis.

INCEPTION PHASE

At the start of the study, four value-chains were identified, two within processed fruits and vegetables, and two within natural ingredients. These four value-chains have potential to on the one hand contribute to effective interventions that can be gender transformative, and on the other hand have proven export potential. The four value-chains were:

1. Dried chili pepper and powder
2. Dried pineapple and/or mango
3. The shea butter value-chain
4. The baobab food products.

After initial data analysis and literature study, it became clear that baobab did not have enough potential for a gender transformative CBI-project and to have enough impact. Only a handful of cooperatives are working on the crop; production volumes are low, and exports are limited to anecdotal evidence. Export of baobab products from Benin is absent in official data.

At the same time, it was harder to prioritize between the three remaining value-chains. Though shea seemed logical, as the only significant export product for the natural ingredients sector, the choice between chilies and pineapple was harder to make, as there are pros and cons for each of these value-chains (see chapter on value-chain descriptions). After presenting the results of the inception phase to CBI, it was decided to conduct research on all three value-chains during the field mission week.

DATA ANALYSIS

We started by collecting and analyzing quantitative data on the pre-selected value-chains. We used ITC TradeMap and triangulated these data with data from FAO-stat. In addition, we analyzed yearly production and export figures from both the fresh and processed products for the three selected value-chains.

Literature study

Literature was collected and reviewed on:

- Gender in Benin
- Gender theory and interventions
- Pre-selected value-chains in Benin
- Pre-selected value-chains in West Africa.

The literature was analyzed both in the inception phase and afterwards in an iterative process and provided a solid knowledge base to start the fieldwork. A complete list of literature can be found in the reference list at the end of this report.

Key informant interviews

Interviews with key informants and experts were crucial to add context-specific and tacit knowledge to broader information gathered through literature and data analysis. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the shea, chili and pineapple sectors in Benin, stakeholders in women empowerment in Benin and institutional stakeholders in Benin (like APIEX; EKN Cotonou).

A list of all interviewed stakeholders can be found in the interviewee list at the end of the report.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted with women producers and sometimes processors (in the shea sector) to better understand their roles, experiences, and activities. Information from these discussions provided valuable input for the analysis of women position within value-chains.

Writing process / SWOT-analyses

We analyzed information from literature and interviews through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis for each of the value-chains.

3. Theoretical framework gender analysis

GENDER EQUITY IN EMERGING ECONOMIES

In many countries around the world, women still face significant challenges in their ability to access and control productive resources. As elsewhere, in Benin women comprise a major part of the agricultural labor force but are less likely than men to own land or livestock, adopt new technologies, use credit or other financial services, or receive education or agricultural extension services. This limits overall agricultural and economic development.

However, gender equity is an important human right and sustainable development goal (SDG-5), as well as a fundamental pre-condition to achieve other development objectives including improved food security, (child) nutrition and education, poverty reduction, and women's health (UNIDO, 2015).

Numerous studies underscore the social costs of rural women's lack of education and assets, linking it directly to high rates of malnutrition, infant mortality and, in some countries, HIV/AIDS infection. There are also high economic costs: wasted human capital and low labor productivity that stifle rural development and progress in agriculture, and ultimately threaten food security – for both women and men. Furthermore, agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa could rise by 20% if women had equal access to land, seed and fertilizer (FAO, 2009). Women's work in agriculture is often unpaid and focuses on the cultivation of crops for household consumption. When agriculture is mechanized, women's work tends to be excluded from productive activities (Valencia et al., 2021).

THEORY ON GENDER (IN)EQUALITY

UNICEF has written extensively on the position of women and youth in developing countries and theory, tools and methods and how to analyze and address gender inequities. According to UNICEF, there is not one cause of gender inequality that can be isolated, but it works like a spiral, whereby inequality in one place gives momentum to inequalities in other areas.

Therefore, it requires a holistic approach to address these issues. Social institutions such as social norms, values and attitudes about gender roles are deeply rooted and play a key role in perpetuating gender inequalities. In many cases, these values often include the belief that women and girls are inferior or weaker than men and boys, that women are poor decision makers, that men have no role or skills for raising children, and that having a son is better than having a daughter. While gender roles and conventions have changed through the years, gender discrimination, gender stereotypes and pervasive gender norms have been perpetuated (UNICEF, 2018).

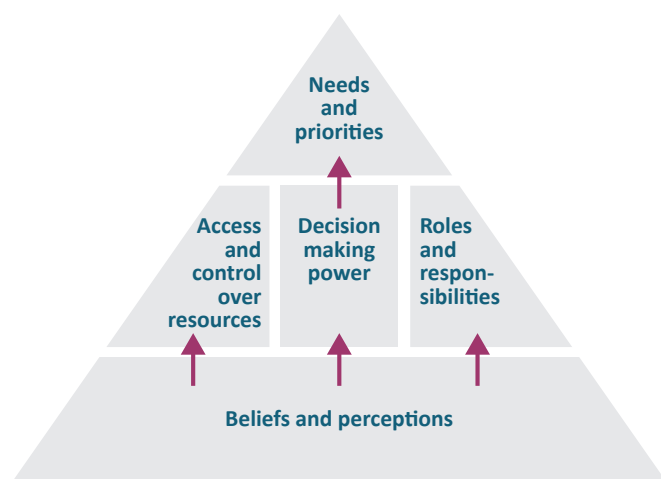
GENDER DOMAINS IN AGRICULTURE

Recurring in gender mainstreaming literature are key domains to measure and influence gender equality in project implementation (FAO 2021; UNICEF 2018). The aim is to increase understanding of the implications of each of these domains for the domestic and agricultural activities of project beneficiaries, leading to implications for the overall approach and activities of a project.

The domains are derived from gender mainstreaming literature from UNICEF¹:

1. Beliefs and perceptions
2. Access to and control over resources
3. Roles and responsibilities and
4. Needs and priorities.

Figure 1. Gender domains in the agricultural context



For this study, a domain called *decision-making power* was added in the middle. This domain is partly derived from the domains under and next to it. These domains provide structure to understand the underlying implications of women's constraints and opportunities in the two value-chains, for example social norms, leadership, decision-making, self-confidence, time and poverty due to unpaid care work.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PROJECTS

We consider four guiding principles to mainstream gender in projects: (i) use a gender lens, (ii) define your beneficiaries and successes, (iii) support what is already happening and showcase that, and (iv) dare to include targeted, affirmative action (Memelink et al., 2022). Since the recommendations for interventions are for a gender transformative project, the most important principles are principle two and four.

1. Is it a man or a woman: using a gender lens

Women and men's roles in society differ along with their interests, needs and the challenges they face. Gender mainstreaming goes through all levels. This study used a gender lens and clearly asked: is this a man or a woman? Will our intervention be beneficial for different interests and needs of the stakeholder?

2. Start at the beginning: defining your beneficiaries and selection criteria

In this study, based on the established gender lens and recognition of the different value-chains and actors, we carefully identified the potential targeted beneficiaries and successes. These are based on specific pro-gender criteria.

3. Be realistic: support what is already happening and showcase that

Through this principle we recognize the limitation of a project to generate full gender transformative change. But importantly, there are often already positive developments taking place, which can be put in the spotlight. As such, for this study, we tried to identify a number of success stories, cases and practices that can be showcased.

4. Dare to be bold: women's empowerment involves additional, targeted affirmative action to address persistent gender gaps

Alongside showcasing, sharing of experiences, and supporting what is going well, gender transformation will only happen with additional, targeted affirmative action to address persistent gender gaps. Therefore, the most important objective of this study is to recommend specific interventions targeting women and leading to gender transformation.

¹ UNICEF – Gender toolkit; integrating gender in programming for every child in South-Asia.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTIONS

This study aims to provide recommendations for a gender transformative project. Principles for a project that is gender transformative are:

- *Considers gender norms, roles and relations for women and men, girls and boys and how that affects access to and control over resources.*
- *Considers women's (girls') and men's (boys') specific needs.*
- *Addresses the causes of gender-based inequities and promotes gender equality.*
- *Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles, and relations.*
- *Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men, girls, and boys (WHO, 2011).*

Furthermore, CBI formulated provisional criteria for gender transformative projects, as presented in Table 1 below. This study aimed to include these principles and criteria in our research, and formulation of our recommendations. In the following chapters this will be further elaborated on.

Table 1. CBI's provisional gender transformative criteria for projects

■ An in-depth gender analysis has been a central part of the BC design.
■ The BC targets women's empowerment (decent work for women in the workplace or entrepreneurship).
■ The root causes of inequality (social norms, cultural beliefs, values) have been addressed up-front in the BC.
■ The project aims to transform unequal gender relations. It tends to improve the social position of women (how they are valued in society) as well as the realisation of their rights.
■ Objectives, outcomes (results) and indicators explicitly aim to confront gender inequality, gender roles and stereotypes.
■ Men are engaged in project development and implementation to promote gender equality.
■ Local women and/or women's (business) associations can make their voices heard in the project implementation.
■ Project addresses not only the access of women to resources such as assets, financial services, information, and inputs but also their decision-making, self-esteem of women, collective action.
■ Gender transformative indicators are included in the Results Chain (indicators are gender disaggregated).
■ Specific human and financial resources are allocated to address the root causes of gender inequality.
■ Cooperation is sought at sector level, with complementarity roles of various actors, to work on systemic change.

4. Women and agriculture in Benin

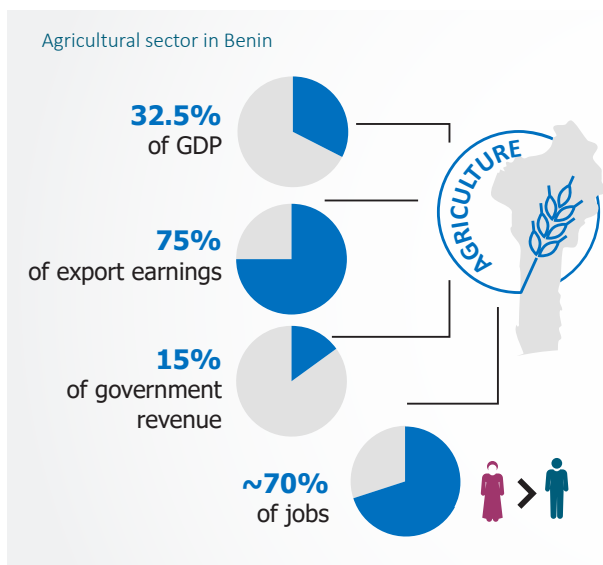
INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is a key sector for the Beninese economy as it contributes an average of 33% of GDP, 75% of export earnings, 15% of government revenue and provides around 70% of jobs (PSRSA Evaluation Report, 2016). It is therefore the sector that has the highest potential to contribute to national economic growth and poverty reduction.

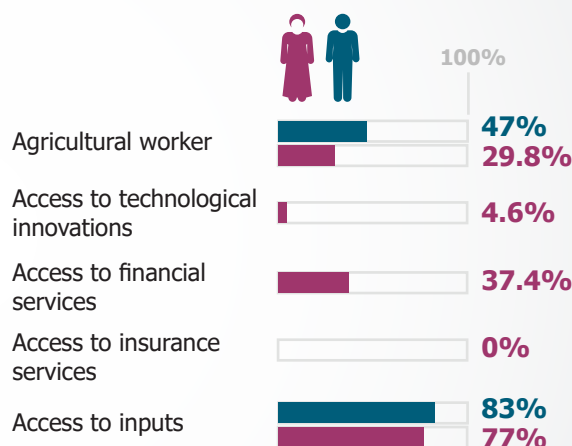
Women play a significant role in the production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products. While generally, there are more male farmers in cash crops and more women in food crops, the trend seems to have changed in recent years. In fact, in certain cash crops such as pineapple, shea butter and cashew nuts, collection, processing and marketing activities at the local and regional levels are the preferred areas of control for women. For production, women represent 15 to 30% of small pineapple producers and 42% of rice producers (PSDSA, 2017–2020).

Despite their importance to the agricultural sector, women do not benefit sufficiently from the implementation of government policies and strategies, though they are formally considered in some development policies and in agricultural modernization strategies. In addition to the socio-cultural constraints they face, women have little access to production factors, particularly land, credit, inputs, equipment, and agricultural advice. For example, notwithstanding Law No. 2013 on the land code in the country, 6% of women, compared to 94% of men, have access to guaranteed land rights. For land ownership, 36% of men own land, compared to only 13% of women, according to the EDSB-V (EDSB, 2019). The low rate of women's access to land resources highlights the low level of women's secure access to land due to socio-cultural constraints that attribute land ownership to men, especially in rural areas. Inheritance continues to be one of the main means of access to land resources in Benin, especially in rural areas. And in a patriarchal society like Benin, this type of access has always discriminated women.

Only a small percentage of land is available for women in Benin. Some land is made available to women by their spouses, but often this land must be used for food crops production to supplement the household's food supply. In addition, analyses of the division of labor within family farms show that women spend much more time than men on field activities during a cropping season. In fact, on family fields, women take care of important tasks like sowing, weeding, watering, harvesting, transportation and drying of products, while men take care of clearing, plowing, manuring and storage activities.



Women in agriculture



While 33% of jobs held by women are in the agricultural sector (INSD 2019, EMICoV 2015), agricultural employment represents one if the sectors in which discrimination against women is significant. Indeed, men are often working as agricultural employees, while most women are expected to assist in the agricultural work of their husbands, in addition to their household activities. According to the African Development Bank (ADB), women account for 30% of agricultural workers compared to 47% for men, though in total the agricultural workforce has more women.

One of the factors leading to discrimination (apart from socio-cultural constraints) is the low level of education/training of women, which does not allow them to know their rights or to claim them. The low level of education is the main reason for low participation in decision making bodies. It is also an important factor that prevents women from accessing and seizing opportunities in the agricultural sector, which severely limits women's performance in terms of production and, consequently, their participation in the entire sector. Regarding access to new technologies, only 5% of women have access.

Compared to men, women have twice as little access to agricultural advisory services. In terms of access to agricultural finance and insurance for women, much remains to be done. According to institutional analyses, difficulties in accessing credit stem from the low level of land ownership, which could provide collateral. Despite new financing instruments through microfinance institutions, like the National Agricultural Development Fund (FNDA), only 37% of women engaged in agriculture have access to financial services and only men have access to insurance services (Cauberg et al., 2018).

According to the evaluation report of the Plan Stratégique de Relance du Secteur Agricole (PSRSA), 77% of women had access to inputs compared to 83% of men. In 2019, 27% of the individual farm areas that were rehabilitated or protected

are farmed by women, and regarding training on sustainable land management, only 32% of the actors trained are women. In addition, in 2019 7% of the decision-making positions the Ministry of Agriculture were held by women. In non-government organizations supporting agricultural development, 23% of positions are held by women (INSD, 2020).

These figures raise questions and indicate the need to put in place measures to improve the level of representation of women in decision-making bodies. Gender is explicitly considered in the Strategic Development Plan for the Agricultural Sector in Benin (PSDSA) and the National Agricultural Investment and Food and Nutritional Security Plan (PNIASAN), with gender promotion as a guideline. Women are mentioned as a specific target group for financing and insurance mechanisms. It is the policy objective that these instruments are adapted and accessible to a diversity of types of farms and categories of actors in the agricultural sector.

POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND KEY POLICIES ON AGRICULTURE AND GENDER EQUALITY

The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is now an accepted principle in all development policies aimed at human development and poverty eradication. In Benin, successive governments have taken measures to protect and promote human rights, particularly those of women, which has led to the creation of a legal and institutional framework for gender. As early as 1977, Benin promulgated its fundamental law, Article 124 of which enshrines the equality of men and women. Benin has subsequently ratified several conventions and protocols on gender equality and equity and acceded to several international and regional commitments that are specifically concerned with gender equity and equality.

An example of this is the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of December 18, 1979. Also, the Constitution of December 11, 1990, confirms the sanctity and inviolability of the human person in article 26. Implementing these international conventions enabled Benin to adopt corrective measures, policies, and legislative provisions favorable to women. In 2001, the Beninese government adopted the National Policy for the Advancement of Women, accompanied in 2002 by a multi-sectoral action plan. In June 2006, Benin's Population Policy was developed. It aims, through its objective 9, to "create favorable conditions for the full participation of women in the development process and for the enjoyment of its fruits".

To reinforce these policy measures, the National Gender Policy (PNPG) and its multi-sectoral action plan were adopted in 2009 to serve as a reference framework for all ministries. The overall objective of the PNPG is "to achieve equality and equity between men and women in Benin by 2025 for sustainable human development". The PNPG also aims to reduce in the short term and eradicate in the long term the disparities between men and women in the legal, economic, and social spheres.

In the agricultural sector, the Policy for the 'Promotion of Women in the Agricultural and Rural Sectors of Benin' was developed and adopted in 2001. The overall objective is to "contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of rural people by giving women and men the opportunity to participate equally in the development process of Benin.

In 2011, the agricultural sector was provided with a manual for considering the gender aspect along with an action plan following the guidelines of the PNPG, the Benin-Alafia Vision and the Growth Strategy for Poverty Reduction (SCR 2011–2015). In the latter document it was noted that there is a persistence of gender inequalities that aggravate the situation of access to basic social services and opportunities. The strategic orientation of this manual revolved around: (i) strengthening the institutionalization of gender at all levels for a better consideration of gender in agricultural sector policies, programs and projects; (ii) ensuring the empowerment of women in order to reduce their level of poverty; (iii) strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations and other private actors in the agricultural sector in terms of gender promotion; and (iv) ensuring the management of the process of gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector in Benin.

5. Stakeholder mapping women empowerment in Benin, especially in agriculture

In Benin, several organizations have taken on the mission of promoting gender equality. On the country's civil society platform, 459 local and international NGOs are registered as working on gender issues. We will describe the main ones below.

Institut National de Promotion de la Femme (INPF)

At the national level, the main public body recognized for the promotion of women is the National Institute for Women (INPF) created by Decree No. 2009-728 of December 31, 2009. Placed under the supervision of the Presidency of the Republic, the INPF first functioned as a body for reflection, study and promotion of women. Its responsibilities were to: (i) initiate and conduct studies on women and their impact on development; (ii) collect, update and disseminate data on the status of women in Benin; (iii) establish and produce statistics in the field of gender; (iv) propose policies and strategies to improve women's living conditions; (v) work to reduce inequalities between men and women; and (vi) to ensure capacity building for girls and women through theoretical, technical and practical training. In other words, the INPF aimed to improve the legal status of women and ensure they can take advantage of the existing laws and regulations.

As part of its mission to promote women's participation and contribution to public and political life, the INPF has carried out several activities. Among these, the first is the development and validation of its 2011–2015 strategic plan, which is divided into the following strategic areas: (i) strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of the national gender mechanism; (ii) setting up an information system on women; (iii) promoting women's rights, equal opportunities, equity and women's leadership; (iv) setting up training courses leading to diplomas; (v) promotion of women's access to health care; (vi) strengthening women's economic power; and (vii) development of a functional mechanism for including a gender approach in development activities. Analysis of these strategic areas shows that the INPF has become one of the most important public players advocating for gender equity and equality in Benin. However, it should be noted that the Institute is currently underresourced, both in terms of staff and finances.

In July 2021, the INPF was reorganized. In its new configuration, the INPF becomes the INF (Institut National de la Femme) and its mission is to work for the promotion of women in the political, economic, social, legal and cultural spheres, both in the public and private sector. It will also oversee fighting against all forms of discrimination and violence against women. The Institute will have an active listening service that will receive reports of discrimination or violence against women. In addition, the INF will be able to take legal action for these types of acts. The INF is a public organization with a legal personality, financial autonomy, and is attached to the Presidency of the Republic.

Women in Law and Development in Africa-Afrique de l'Ouest (WiLDAF)

Another important civil society organization, the Pan-African Network Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF), was created in 1990 and installed in Benin in June 1999. WiLDAF is one of the main actors working on the promotion and defense of Women's Rights in Benin. This organization is active in 22 African countries. The mission of WILDAF-Benin is to inform and train actors; strengthen the capacities of women; and have lobby and advocacy activities to influence governments and their partners. Its vision is 'A Benin where all women know their political, economic and social rights and enjoy them effectively'.

Réseau pour l'Intégration des Femmes des Organisations Non Gouvernementales et Associations Africaines (RIFONGA)

RIFONGA is a network of non-governmental and non-profit organizations (47 NGOs and associations at the time of its establishment, with 32 still active today). Its member associations work in various sectors (environment, agriculture, education), but the network's activities are focused on the representation of women in political decision-making entities. RIFONGA works to improve the representation of women in decision-making entities. RIFONGA is present in the twelve departments, and often organizes capacity building sessions for women to occupy decision-making positions. The vision of RIFONGA is to reach 50% of women in decision-making entities at all levels.

The fight for the respect of women's rights is the workhorse of RIFONGA. Recently, RIFONGA has organized a workshop for the adoption of the law on equality and parity; and works for equality between men and women so that women are represented in all sectors of activity. RIFONGA also fights against violence against young girls in the professions through training and awareness.

Association Nationale des Femmes agricultrices du Bénin (ANaF-Benin)

In the agricultural sector, the National Association of Women Farmers of Benin (ANaF-Benin) is recognized as the national umbrella organization of women farmers' groups from all regions of the country. It was established in 2007 and works for the empowerment of rural women in general and women farmers in specific. ANaF's mission is to work on the one hand for the improvement of living and working conditions of women farmers, while on the other hand strengthening the position of women farmers.

ANaF has a pyramidal structure that starts from the villages (with women groups) to the communes through the Communal Associations of Women Farmers (ACFA), then the departmental level with the Departmental Associations of Women Farmers (ADFA), and finally the national level. It has 2,853 women groups that are members, 77 communal associations of women farmers and 11 departmental associations. It has a total of 59,853 members, a small percentage of whom are men (436 or less than one percent).

The main activities of ANaF are:

- Training of women groups in administrative and financial management and conflict management.
- Training in agricultural product processing techniques.
- Support in equipment for the transformation of agricultural products.
- Support for farmers organization structuring.
- Advocacy for the involvement of women in decision-making.
- Defense of women's interests for their inclusion in agricultural value-chains.

Investment and Export Promotion Agency (APIEx)

APIEx is a government institution created to boost exports, promote Benin as an investment destination and meet the daily needs of companies in terms of strategic intelligence and access to reliable, relevant, and interactive economic and commercial information on national and foreign markets. In other words, APIEx is an organization that can facilitate trade and investment. It plays the role of interface between the public and private sector in the area of exports and investments. APIEIX is placed under the supervision of the Presidency of the Republic and is endowed with legal, organizational and financial autonomy. Its mission is to:

- Promote investment and services to investors.
- Promote exports and services to exporters.
- Ensure the strategic watch and economic intelligence to increase the level of investment in export products both in quantity, quality, and diversification.

APIEIX does not have a gender expert and does not seem to focus much on gender related topics.

Partenaires techniques et financiers

All of Benin's technical and financial partners (TFPs) have a gender dimension in their action plans. In the rural and agricultural environment specifically, the TFPs that are active in gender promotion are UNDP, FAO, AFD, Eclodio, USAID, ECOWAS, ENABEL, IFDC, GIZ, Swiss Cooperation and CECI. These TFPs have invested in the operationalization of the National Gender Promotion Policy (PNPG) in the agricultural sector.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the objectives of a potential CBI project in the area of processed fruits and vegetables, and natural ingredients, at the interface of private sector support, exports and gender, ANaF stands out as a possible partner, while APIEx could be considered as well. Depending on the type of activities supported by CBI the two organizations could implement the following:

- ANaF: grassroots activities that promote better working conditions for women involved in production and processing of the selected commodities, as well as some lobby and advocacy activities for women rights in the selected value-chains.
- APIEx: though at the moment APIEx does not pay much attention to gender equality in the investment and export sectors, it could be a deliberate choice for CBI to start some gender-related lobby and advocacy activities together with APIEx. This could also change the organization cultural and future thematic focus of the organization.

6. Value-chain analyses

In this chapter we provide our analyses of the three selected value-chains: chilies, pineapple, and shea. Again, a gender lens has been applied, looking at specific opportunities for gender transformative activities in the value-chains.

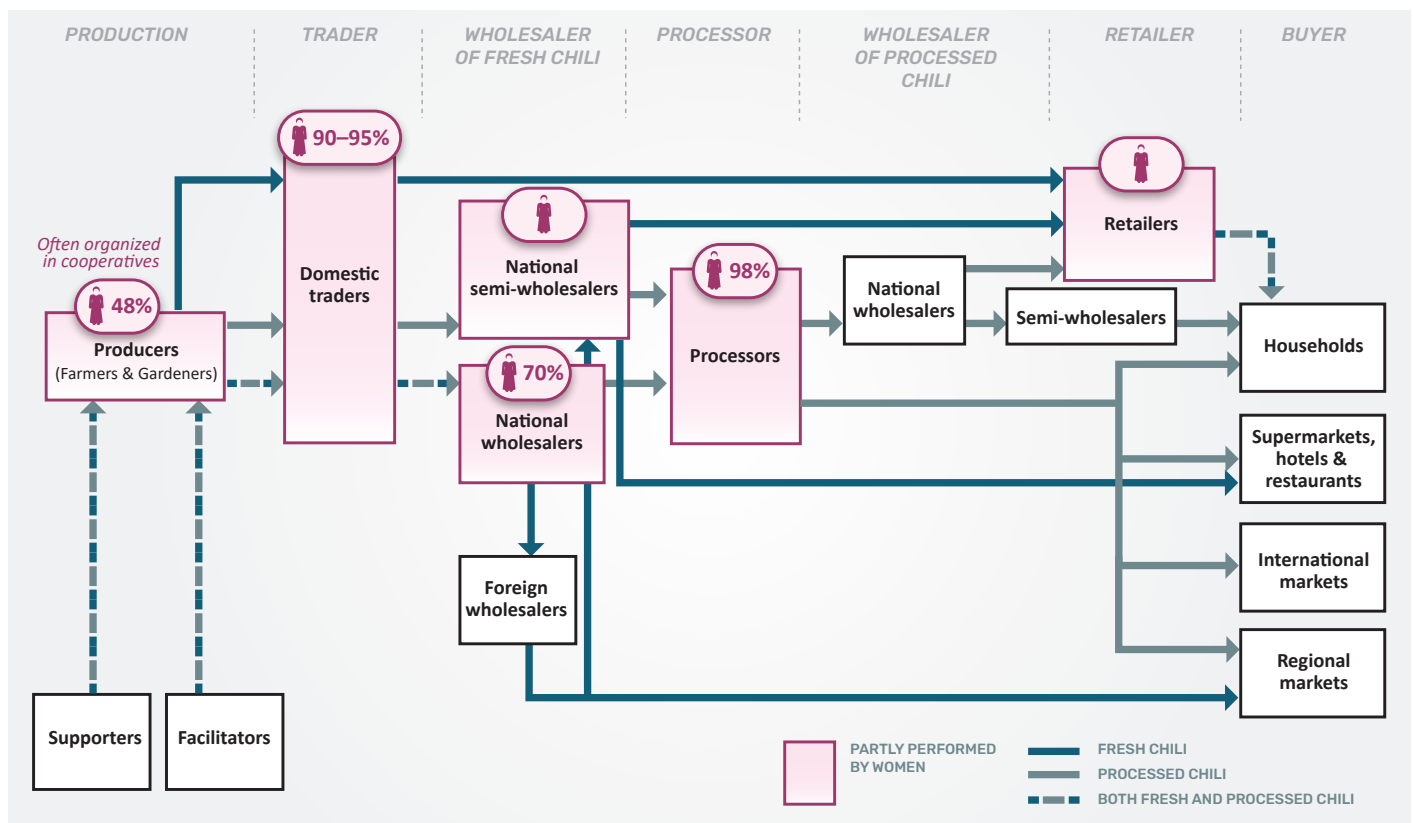
THE PROCESSED CHILI VALUE-CHAIN

Organization of the sector

It is not always easy to disentangle the chili sector from other value-chains, as chilies are often produced together with other vegetables. Moreover, a distinction should be made between long chilies and smaller habanero peppers. Both types of chilies are grown abundantly in Benin and are marketed as separate products. Combined, chili is the second most important vegetable of Benin, after tomato. Most chilies are produced in the southern part of the country.

The processed chili value-chain falls in the domain of the informal sector. Farmers and gardeners are responsible for around 75,000 tons of chilis per year. Though most chili production is done by smallholder farmers on plots of 0.5 to 5 hectares, they are usually organized in cooperatives.

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the chili value-chain



These cooperatives collect the chilies and sell the chilies in bulk to domestic traders, or directly to national (semi)-wholesalers, foreign wholesalers and sometimes even directly to retailers. From the wholesalers, the chilies can end up at the domestic or regional market, or they are sold to processors. Processors dry and sometimes grind the chilies. Processed chilies can again be purchased by wholesalers but can also go directly to domestic or foreign markets, supermarkets, or the hospitality industry.

Processing of chilies is limited to drying on a relatively large scale and grinding by various small-scale processors in Cotonou. The chili powder is then often mixed with other spices or fishmeal and packaged in small plastic pots for retail. These pots with mixed chili powder are consequently sold to retailers; mostly domestic ones, but some batches are destined for other West African countries.

The market for dried and ground chili pepper in Benin was estimated at around 49,000 tons in 2018. Most of the vegetable exports from Benin (tomato, chili, habanero, and carrot) passes through national wholesalers to foreign wholesalers from Nigeria. However, especially for chilies they are also exported to other neighboring countries like Togo and Ghana (ACED, 2021). Exports to neighboring countries are small and irregular. Typically, chili traders meet each other in the middle of the night to make trade deals on bulk loads of chilies, after which the purchasers transport the chilies to the borders to smuggle them across.

At the current level of sector organization, export of chilies and chili products to the European Union from Benin seems unrealistic. The high-quality standards of buyers from the European Union cannot be met by the current production system; chemical use is high and undocumented; aflatoxin levels are often exceeded, and transport costs are high. Current exports of pepper and pepper products amounts to a few thousand dollars, with as main destination other West-African countries (ITC TradeMap, 2022). No data were available on the potential of chili exports from Benin on ITC's Export Potential Indicator.

The chili sector as such does not have any formal organization, but more generally for horticulture there is the Fédération Nationale des Organisations de Maraîchers (FENOMA).

Position of women in the sector

According to FENOMA, 48% of the 63,000 vegetable producers are women. The main constraint for women is access to land, and women disproportionately have to rent land compared to men (32% vs. 21%). However, in a study by ACED it was found that women, regardless of the zone, were involved mostly in the production of tomato, onion, and carrot while men were involved in the production of pepper (both chili and habanero).

As described above, processors are mainly women operating at a relatively small-scale level of 100–500 kg per month. They make use of relatively low-tech equipment with a limited processing capacity. These women processors are based in cities like Cotonou, Calavi and Porto-Novo. They are not formally organized in any association.

Traders, also mostly women, are less organized than producers, but have a major influence on price volatility of the vegetables (including chilies) in the country. According to ACED (2021), they create an information gap on prices to misinform producers and, based on the high perishability of products, dictate their prices to buy the products. Also on the physical markets, most sellers are women.

Most of the (irregular) exports is done by men; women have no important role to play in this lucrative business.

Key sustainability issues in chilies sector

The production of chilies in Benin almost solely takes place by smallholder farmers on small plots of lands and productivity is low. As a results more land is needed to increase overall output, leading to the clearing of land and deforestation; a phenomenon observed in most of the African continent.

Chemical use is an issue, both for the environment as well as for public health. Pesticides no longer allowed in many other countries are still being used in Benin, partly because of the lack of enforcement or regulations, and sheer availability of pesticides in the country. This forces farmers to resort to informal sources (especially from Nigeria) or to use crop protection products used for the cotton sector (that are more toxic and not registered for human consumption). In addition, it is assumed that maximum residue levels (MRLs) of chemicals, as imposed by the EU, are often exceeded multiple times. The same holds for aflatoxin levels due to insufficient storage practices.

SWOT-analysis

Strengths	Weakness
• High existing production • Two important and well-consumed chili varieties (long & habanero) • Processing and domestic trading dominated by women • Availability of raw materials in sufficient quantity	• Informal, unorganized sector • No formal exports; only irregular exports to neighboring countries • No cooperatives specifically for chilies; together with other vegetables • Difficult logistics of a perishable product • Exceeding Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for chemical use • Aflatoxin levels often exceed public health limits after improper storage
Opportunities	Threats
• Growing market for both fresh and processed chilies • Several existing small-scale women-led processors of chili products in urban areas (Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi, Porto-Novo) that can improve and expand • Horticulture is a focus sector for the Netherlands in Benin • Not many other donors / NGOs working in the sector	• Strong competition from other countries on the world market • Risk of lack of interest from other markets due to not respecting MRL-levels for chemicals and/ or aflatoxin levels

THE PROCESSED PINEAPPLE VALUE-CHAIN

The pineapple sector in Benin contributes 1.2% to the national GDP and 4.3% to the agricultural GDP. The subsector ranks third behind cotton and cashew nuts (INSAE, 2014). It represents an important source of income for farmers and is one of the sectors in which women and youth can be self-employed, with more than thirty different positions identified within the value-chain (ACED, 2017). For these reasons, the pineapple sector has an important position in various development policies of the last two decades.

Pineapple production

With respect to the geographic distribution, the Allada plateau, located in Benin's Pôle 7 (Abomey-Calavi, Zè, Tori-Bossito, Allada and Toffo), is responsible for nearly 90% of total pineapple production of the country. The remainder of pineapple production is located in the departments of Collines (Pôle 4), Zou and Couffo (Pôle 5), Plateau (Pôle 6), Ouémé and Mono (Pôle 7).

Five pineapple varieties are grown in Benin: Smooth Cayenne, Sugar loaf, Queen (yellow and orange), Red Spanish and Perolera.

The Smooth Cayenne and Sugar Loaf varieties dominate the national market, with 80% of the pineapple production area covered by the Smooth Cayenne alone (BAI/MAEP, 2017). This variety contains between 12 and 16% sugar. Production of

Table 2. Different pineapple varieties and their production locations

Varieties	Pôle 7			Pôle 6	Pôle 5		Pôle 4
	Atlan-tique	Mono	Ouémé	Plateau	Zou	Couffo	Collines
Smooth Cayenne	+++	+	+	++	+	+	+
Sugar loaf	+++	+	+	++	+	++	+
Queen yellow	-	+	++	++	+	+	++
Queen orange	-	+	+	+	+	+++	+++
Red Spanish	-	-	-	+			+
Perolera	-	-	-	-	-	+++	+++

Smooth Cayenne is in decline due to the high cost of planting material and the degeneration of existing planting material that makes it susceptible to wilt (Tossou et al., 2015). With the support of various government organizations, TFPs and the actors of the pineapple sector, the African Intellectual Property Organization registered the Sugar loaf variety with a Geographic Indication in 2021. According to FAO statistics, pineapple production (all varieties) in Benin increased from 266,041 tons in 2010 to 440,179 tons in 2020, an increase of 66%.

In addition, the production of organic pineapple remains low because of the difficulties of selling it on the market. The organic pineapple producers are grouped within the RéPAB (Network of Organic Pineapple Producers) which is in partnership with the company 'Les Fruits Tillou', founded and directed by Mrs GUEDEGBE.

There are approximately 3,794 pineapple producers in the country, including 331 women (PADA, 2014). 63% are small producers having less than 1 ha; 18% are medium producers with 1 to 2 ha; and 19% are large producers that have more than 2 ha. 13,307 people work directly in pineapple production and over 29,267 individuals live directly off the income from pineapple production, as each pineapple farm feeds an average of 7.8 people (ONS, 2016).

Pineapple processing

Pineapple processing absorbs 26% of the total supply of fresh pineapple available in Benin. The two main processed pineapple products are: pineapple concentrate/juice and dried pineapple, representing 18% and 8% of total processed pineapple products respectively. These products are generally sold in large urban centers, in the sub-region and in the European market. According to the FAO report on the state of the sector, the processing sector includes 99 processing units that can be divided into three categories: industrial, semi-industrial and artisanal (FAO, 2017). The pineapple processing units are geographically distributed as follows: 63.6% in the Atlantic, 6.1% in the Littoral, 2% in Collines and 1% in Borgou. These units employ an average of 13 people, with an average processing capacity estimated at 360 tons of pineapple per year. Of these units, 34% are founded and managed by women (ONS, 2016).

Concerning the demand for juice, 60% of the national quantity produced annually is consumed locally (i.e., about 900,000 litres/year) compared to 40% exported to countries in the sub-region (B2A, 2016). The demand for juice on the local market has increased substantially in recent years. In the West African sub-region, Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Senegal are popular consumer markets. These four countries alone take up nearly 90% of Benin's exported pineapple juice.

In addition, the consumption of fresh pineapple by local industries is significant and evolves according to the processing capacity of each industry. Often this consumption is characterized by supply contracts with producer groups, as is the case for example between the PROMOFRUIT factory with the cooperatives of the IRA Platform, and Les Fruits Tillou with REPAB. In 2017, the demand for fresh pineapple in the processing sector was estimated at 35,640 tons per year (Cosinus Conseils, 2017).

There are also opportunities for dried pineapple. There is strong demand for the product, but exports mainly take place by air freight whereas the European buyers prefer sea

freight. For example, Mrs GUEDEGBE has a partnership with a client in Switzerland with whom she has a contract for 50 tons per year. The customer requires that the shipment is made by boat in batches of 6 tons per shipment. The implication is that she must produce 6 tons of dried pineapple (thus transforming 120 tons of fresh pineapple) before each shipment. The available drying capacity is too small for this, and it takes several months for processing the required volume. Such a long lead time has repercussions on the quality of the dried pineapple (e.g., problems of uniformity). Therefore, most dried pineapple processors look for a buyer who can accept air freight and smaller quantities (1 to 2 tons).

Pineapple trading

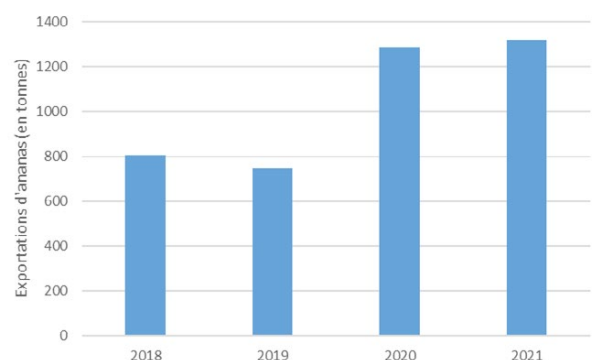
Fresh pineapple traders on the local and regional markets are essentially women who buy fresh pineapple from producers and then resell in urban markets, along roadsides or at the borders of countries in the sub-region. Trading of fresh pineapple in local and sub-regional markets is mainly done by women. They are the main collectors, wholesalers, and retailers.

Besides fresh pineapple, Benin exports other pineapple products, especially pineapple juice, concentrated juice and canned pineapples. Figure 3 presents the evolution of Benin's pineapple products export.

Pineapple exports to international markets are handled by 18 companies. Only two of these companies are founded and managed by women. For international markets, exporters obtain pineapples from producers and transport them to the European market by airfreight, given the high perishability of the varieties produced in Benin.

Moreover, in terms of price competitiveness, pineapple from Benin is competitive on the European and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) markets. Benin's Geographic Indication for sugar loaf provides an opportunity to expand exports to the international market, though much marketing activities would be needed to exploit this unique selling point. The Geographical Indication further requires homogeneity of fruits.

Figure 3. Evolution of pineapple exports from Benin to the EU27 from 2018 to 2021. (Source: EuroStat)



Organization of the pineapple sector

The direct actors of the pineapple sector in Benin are grouped into families of actors and are members of the Association Interprofessionnelle de l'Ananas du Bénin (AIAB), which was established in December 2016. The AIAB is a multi-stakeholder exchange platform with the aim of bringing together all actors: producers, processors, distributors, researchers, and financiers, in order to better structure the sector and to increase production and quality and improve the marketing of fresh fruit and derivative products on regional and international markets. Figure 5 provides an overview of the value-chain.

Among the producers we can distinguish:

- Individuals who do not belong to any cooperative and have informal business relations with the market.
- Producers in cooperative societies acting in a commercial strategy and whose relations with the market are more formalized.
- Large producers who have a business relationship with one or more of the downstream companies.

All producers are represented at the national level by the Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Producteurs d'Ananas du Bénin (FENACOPAB), which was formed in 2014 and now includes about 13,000 producers.

Figure 4. Exports of pineapple products from Benin

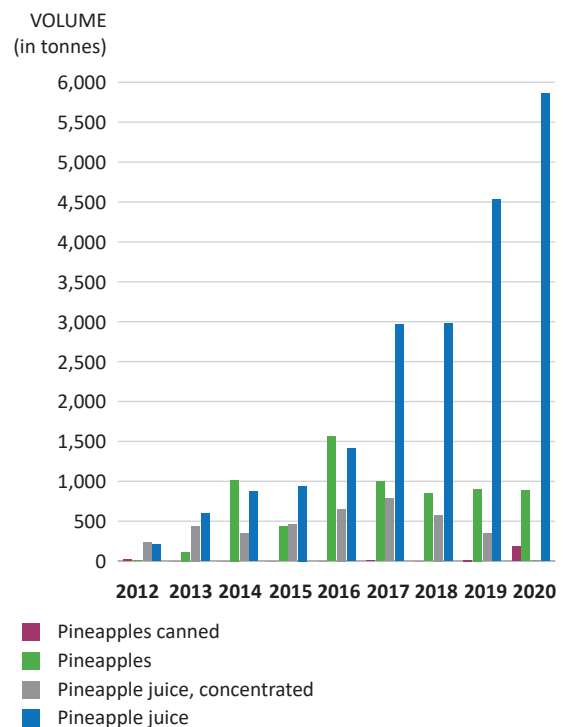
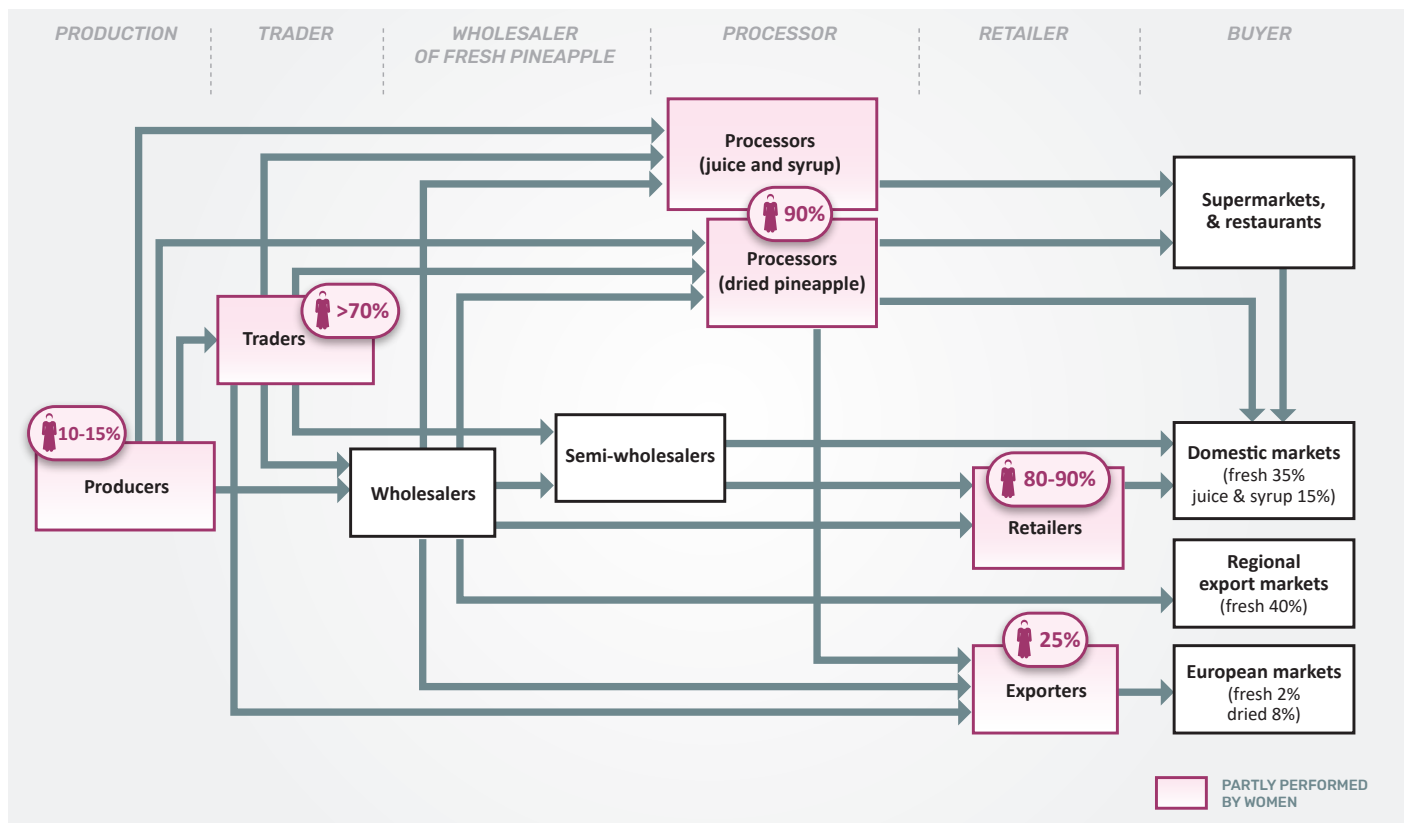


Figure 5. Processed pineapple value-chain



For the pineapple processors, there are artisanal and semi-industrial processors, either individually or in cooperatives, who are organized in the Fédération Nationale des Coopératives de Transformateurs d'Ananas au Bénin (FENACOTRAB) or the Association Nationale des Transformateurs du Bénin (ANATRAB). Industrial processors have often organized their suppliers in networks of producers or clusters. The processors are represented by FENACOTAB in the AIAB.

Most of the traders are organized in the Cooperative Society of Pineapple Traders of Benin (CCAB). The eighteen (18) exporters are grouped together in the National Association of Pineapple Exporters of Benin (ANEAB). CCAB and ANEAB are members of the AIAB.

Donor projects and NGOs

DEFIA-program ENABEL

ENABEL is the Belgian development agency, which implements governmental development cooperation in its fourteen partner countries, of which Benin is one. In Benin, among others ENABEL runs a large pineapple program called Développement de l'Entreprenariat dans la Filière Ananas (DEFIA).

The DEFIA program aims to contribute to the implementation of Benin's plans for agricultural investments and food security, by improving agricultural incomes of actors of the pineapple value-chain in southern Benin. The main objective is to significantly increase the income of 6,000 agricultural entrepreneurs.

Activities are organized on capacity building through: 1) the development of entrepreneurial coaching and agricultural advisory services; 2) the financing of productive investments; 3) the connection and facilitation of business links between actors (producers, processors, traders, financial and non-financial service providers); and 4) the creation of infrastructures to improve the business environment.

The beneficiaries of DEFIA are: 1) small and medium-sized enterprises processing and marketing juice and dried pineapple (organic/conventional) and exporters-traders of fresh pineapple; 2) (family) farms producing pineapples; and 3) service companies involved in field work, supply of inputs, packaging, equipment, advice, and transporters. The planned activities specifically target women, who are very present at the level of the processing and marketing links. The general objective of the program is to contribute to the creation of decent and sustainable jobs and increase the income of economic actors and households and improve Benin's trade balance.

ENABEL has indicated that currently they are not active on stimulating exports from Benin to the European Union and they would be interested to partner on this with an agency like CBI.

Projet d'Appui à la Compétitivité des Filières Agricoles et à la Diversification des Exportations (PACOFIDE)

PACOFIDE is a program financed by the World Bank and implemented by Réseau de prévention des crises alimentaires (Food Crisis Prevention Network; RPCA). The program aims to improve the access of producers and SMEs in the agri-food industry to export markets in certain chains, including pineapple. The program aims to increase exports of high-value agricultural products from Benin. In terms of key results, the project will contribute to increasing the volume of official exports in targeted agri-food value-chains. Project results will be achieved by facilitating private sector investment in selected value-chains and fostering productive linkages between producers and agribusinesses with the aim to bring significant impact on job creation, poverty reduction and income generation for the rural population of Benin.

The program started in June 2020 and will last until the end of 2026. The project takes place in the regions of Banikoara, Malanville, Kandi, Karimama, Nikkki, Ndali, Djougou, Parakou, Tchaourou, Ouessé, Banté, Savalou, Dassa Zoumé, Djidja, Couffo, Cotonou, Ouémé, Atlantique, Djigbé in Benin. The program has a very large budget; USD 160 Million has been allocated by the World Bank, but it is distributed over a large number of value-chains.

ONG Bouge

The NGO Bouge works in various value-chains, including pineapple. They support specifically activities on pineapple processing, as they have the conviction that processed pineapple products will add most value to the Beninese pineapple sector and its actors.

The position of women in the pineapple sector

The value-chain analysis specifically highlights the presence of women at producer level: they represent 15 to 30% of small-scale pineapple producers as farm owners. Moreover, they comprise more than 40% of the agricultural labor force on pineapple plantations. In addition, collection, processing, and marketing of pineapple, both at local and regional level, are done by women, with 83% of processors being female and about 90% of domestic traders being female.

At the production level, women in pineapple-producing regions are confronted with problems of access to land resources linked to the patrimonial nature of the land tenure system. Production is much more the concern of men, most of whom are young graduates or school dropouts, as they are partly landowners.

Export potential (to regional and EU markets)

The demand for sugar loaf on the European market exists, but it is in fact a small niche: only 2% of Beninese production is exported to Europe. 90% of European pineapple consumption comes from Costa Rica, with its MD2 variety that can be transported by (much cheaper) sea freight. In addition to Costa Rica, also Ecuador (4%) and Côte d'Ivoire (3%) export substantial quantities of pineapple to the EU. Benin operates in the much smaller segment of airfreight pineapples, that includes the sugar loaf variety (also exported by Ghana and Togo) and Smooth Cayenne (Loeillet, 2020).

SWOT analysis

Strengths • Proven track record of pineapple producers in Benin with pineapple being the third biggest export crop • Strong presence of women in various parts of the sector • Existence of an interprofessional organization • Existence of improved production and processing technologies • Sugar loaf variety has a Geographical Indication • Existence of quality control and monitoring mechanisms • Existence of certified companies • Availability of a fruit dock at Bernadin Gantin airport to facilitate exports • Existence of financial and technical partners	Weakness • Poor access of producers to specific inputs (i.e., fertilizers, pesticides) • Insufficient skilled labor for work (e.g., land preparation, weeding) • Low access to appropriate processing equipment • Difficulty in obtaining approvals for regional and international trade in pineapple and pineapple products • Lack of infrastructure of packaging products for export • Difficulty in implementing quality control – lack of a traceability system and risk mapping to properly plan controls • Lack of access to finance for SMEs to expand business operations
Opportunities • Government priority sector • Growing interest of financing institutions • Strong demand for Benin pineapple and its products on export markets • Possibility of developing other high value-added chains for export markets: e.g., frozen, cut, canned slices, organic pineapple, pineapple in individual cartons, fresh or processed pineapple with a fair-trade label • Existence of other areas suitable for pineapple cultivation	Threats • Competition from imported juices and sweetened drinks • Competition from other pineapple producing countries • Risk of rejects due to non-compliance with MRLs for pesticides, particularly ethephon • Risk of restriction of cultivable surfaces following the strong land pressure in the Atlantic because of continued urbanization

Key sustainability issues

The main negative environmental impact of the pineapple sector in Benin is deforestation, leading to loss of biodiversity and carbon sinks. Plantation agriculture is typical for pineapple production, with large tracts of land clustered and used for monocropping. In order to limit this negative impact, farms could be supported to maintain some trees as land boundaries. The EU's new Green Deal will pay increased attention to the topic of reforestation and sustainability, and farms growing export crops are likely to be affected by this.

The high use of pesticides is another sustainability issue. The type of chemicals used and the practice of applying them can have negative impacts on public health. The issue can be mitigated by more training on both the type of pesticides use and their application.

THE SHEA VALUE-CHAIN

Organization of the sector

Like in other West African countries along the Gulf of Guinea, shea nut trees grow in the northern part of Benin, in natural conditions. Shea trees are not grown commercially in plantations, but simply co-exist in the landscapes of northern Benin. Often, they are found in plots of smallholder farmers, making them the property of the farmer whose land it happens to be. Women ownership of land is rare. Benin's shea product sector accounts for approximately 2% of total shea production worldwide.

Shea nuts can be processed into shea butter, which can be used for both food and cosmetic products. It is the women, both at village level and in the countryside, who collect the shea nuts. often these women are organized in cooperatives, which are also involved in various processing steps, storage, and domestic trade. Most shea nuts (about 90%) are sold to traders, though various processing steps can precede the sales, including cooking, drying, crushing, another round of drying and sorting. A smaller proportion is processed at village level into shea butter and then sold to domestic traders, which may sell it further to exporters or, sometimes, local manufacturers.

Shea butter production is a seasonal business, as the shea nut season in northern Benin runs from June till October. Processing and sales of shea nuts may also continue after that period, as the nuts are not very perishable and may be stored for months in storage facilities or houses in the

village. In principle, the price of shea nut is fixed by the government (Focus Group Discussion Ouighi; interview with Mr Armand KINGBO, Coordinator AKB, April 2022).

According to FAOstat, the export of shea nuts from Benin has grown rapidly in the years between 2015 and 2020, reaching about 80,000 tons in its peak year 2019, with a value of about USD 40 million.

These data can be complemented with data from the Export Potential Indicator from the International Trade Center. Shea nuts are included under the category of *Oilseeds & oleaginous fruits not elsewhere specified (nes)* in ITC's TradeMap. The Export Potential Indicator shows that Benin's export potential for shea is by far not reached, with India being the only large market already satisfied currently. Export destinations like North America, Europe but also Egypt show great potential, as well as regional markets like Nigeria and Ghana.

The position of women in the shea butter sector

Women dominate almost all segments of the shea value-chain in Benin, from collection to pre-processing and processing to domestic trade. Normally, the women collect and process shea nuts alongside other activities like farming, household chores and taking care of children. The collection of the nuts does hold risks, as women may come across dangerous animals like snakes and scorpions; deaths because of bites or stings from such animals are reported (Focus Group Discussions Ouighi; Serarou, April 2022).

Figure 6. The shea butter value-chain

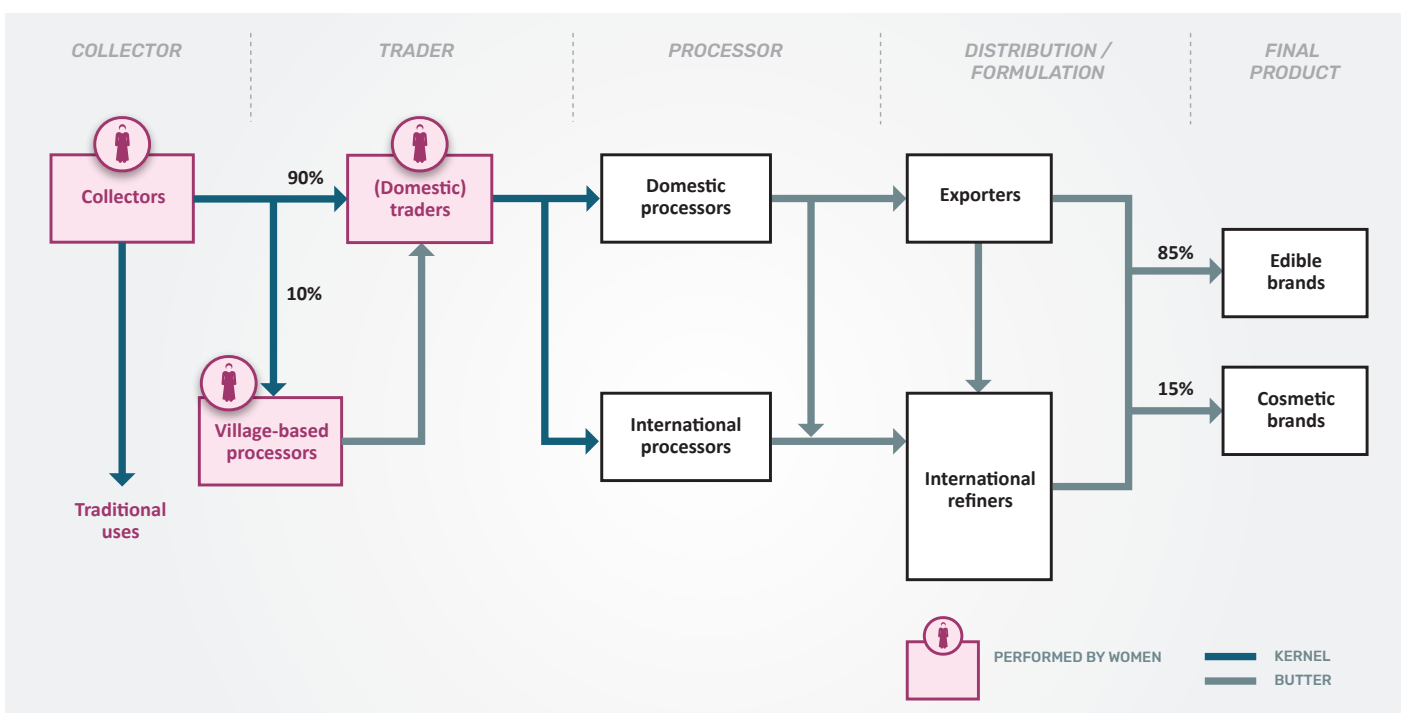
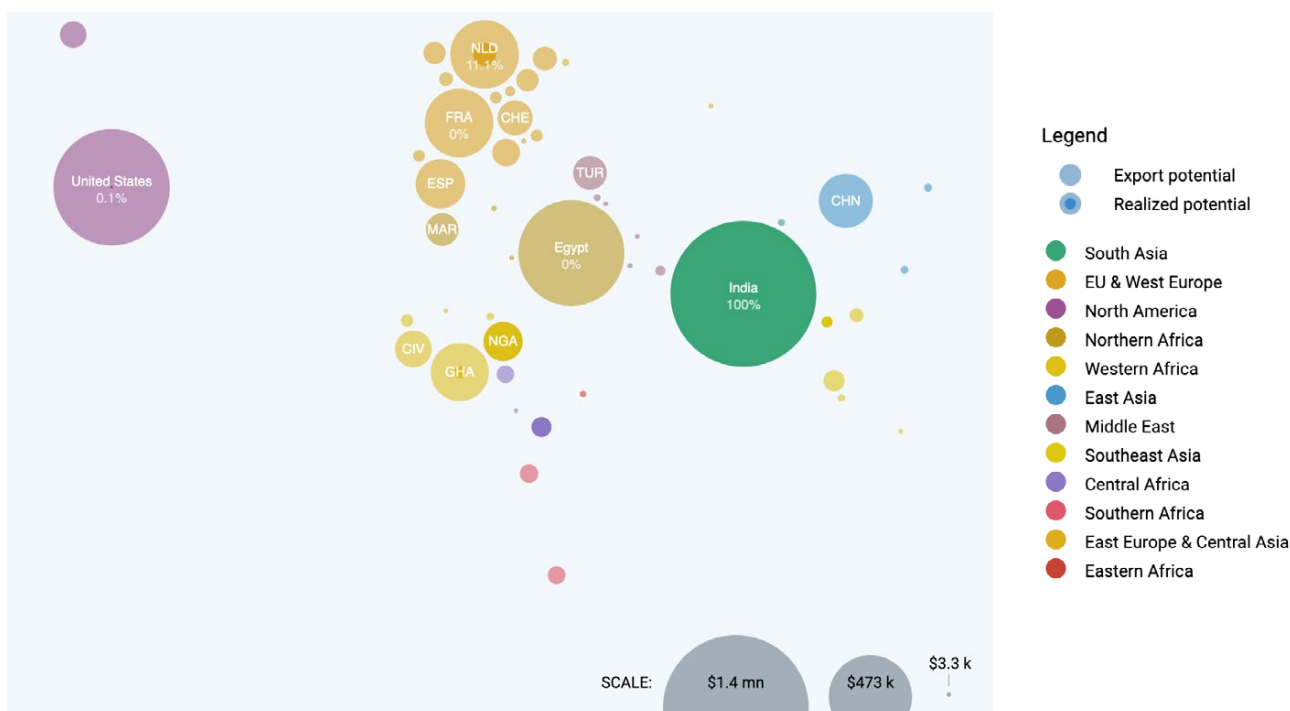


Figure 7. Export potential for shea nuts from Benin. (Source: ITC Export potential Map)



Shea nut gathering traditionally occurs according to normative rules about where and how the activity should be conducted. In fields cultivated by indigenous farmers from a specific area in Northern Benin, shea nuts are property of the land's custodian. Typically, men grant their wives access to nuts on cooperatively farmed household fields, and married women retain collection rights on their personal plots. In fields temporarily 'borrowed' by migrants, these migrants do not have exclusive rights over valuable tree products. In unclaimed lands used for grazing and gathering, nut collection is traditionally open to all on a first come-first serve basis (Focus Group Discussion Ouighi; Elias & Arora-Jonsson, 2016).

Shea butter processing at village level comprises only about 10% of total processing though, the rest being done by industrial processors. This industrial processing, as well as exporting, which are the more lucrative activities in the shea value-chain, are mostly managed by men.

IKB / AKB

IKB is the overarching sector organization for shea in Benin. It stands for Interprofession Karité Benin and consists of four so-called professional 'families':

1. Producers
2. Processors
3. Domestic traders / wholesalers
4. Exporters

Before the establishment of IKB, there was the Association Karité Benin (AKB), which establishment was supported by the Global Shea Alliance. Next to the four professional families constituting IKB, the AKB also welcomes equipment suppliers, NGOs and development partners. It aims to facilitate quality control; capacity building of cooperatives and processors; trainings; and access to finance. It has its head office in the northern city of Parakou. The coordinator of AKB is Mr Armand KINGBO, who at the same time is the Secretary-General of IKB. The president of IKB is Mr Gilles ADAMON, who at the same time is the founder and CEO of a processor and exporter called Natura.

Sector organizations and programs

FNPK

An important organization part of the IKB, though fully independent, is the Fédération Nationale des Productrices d'amandes et de beurre de Karité (FNPK). The FNPK is founded in 2020 and represents the women collectors and producers of shea products in Benin and seventy cooperatives, with a total member base of 70,000 women.

The FNPK has 15 offices in the various northern regions in the country. Its official mission is to bring together all women in Benin working on the production of shea products. Currently they are financed through a bank loan and in the future they aim to broker trade deals for the cooperatives they represent. The president of FNPK is Madame Mamatou DJAFFO and its coordinator Mr Arnaud AYEDEHIN.

UDPK

Union Départemental des Productrices d'amandes et de beurre de Karité (UDPK) is the representation of the FNPk at the level of each of the twelve departments of Benin. It coordinates the activities of the communes in each department and reports to the FNPk.

Cooperatives

Many women collectors and processors of shea nuts are members of cooperatives that often operate at village level. Sometimes these cooperatives are small, consisting of only 10–15 women, but there are also larger ones, partly depending on the size of the village or town from where the women conduct their shea nut activities.

Exporters

There are between eight and ten companies in the country that are involved in the export, often combined with some sort of processing, of shea nuts, shea butter or other shea products. Important ones are Natura, Benotec, Kael, LCB, KNAR, FLUDOR, Wakapou and Zikora, mostly operating from Cotonou and in some cases with processing facilities around the city of Bohicon (Natura, FLUDOR).

Key sustainability issues

Negative environmental impact from the shea sector mostly occurs after processing it into shea butter. During shea butter processing different types of by-products are generated and are either further used or disposed of. These include waste brown water and waste black sludge. The disposed sludge inhibits plant growth and contributes to changes in soil structure in the countryside. Field observations show that these negative environmental effects can be mitigated by semi mechanized methods that consume less water and fuel wood in the extraction process, compared to the traditional method (Jibreel et al., 2013).

On the other hand, current practices of shea nut collection and processing may contribute to a more sustainable livelihood in Northern Benin. By using the products of the shea tree for economic use, residents in north-Benin are discouraged to cut shea trees for other purposes like charcoal production. In this way, the economic use of the shea nut contributes to nature conservation and biodiversity.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weakness
• Women are involved in all segments of the value-chain • Enabling environment with sector associations present • Critical mass of exporting companies present • Relatively high revenues – cash crop • Opportunities both in food and cosmetics sector • Benefits for local environments and biodiversity • Forcer of social cohesion and organization	• Labour-intensive (both collection and processing) • Seasonal economic activity • Collection of the nuts can be dangerous (snake / scorpion bites) • No women exporters of shea products; all exporting companies are managed by men • Hard to scale up production • Shea is not a focus area for the Netherlands in Benin
Opportunities	Threats
• Demand for shea products is still growing internationally, incl. new markets • Growing awareness for the importance of nature and biodiversity conservation • Not many other donors / NGOs working in the sector	• Strong competition from neighboring countries • Deforestation

7. Opportunities for interventions by CBI

This chapter provides recommendations for gender transformative and gender aware activities in Benin. The opportunities are divided in interventions for the chili, pineapple, and shea value-chains, as well as general recommendations for project implementation. The interventions are linked to CBI's (provisional) gender transformative criteria as presented in the theoretical framework, especially since some interventions lean more towards gender awareness than full gender transformative interventions. The chapter closes with a reflection on the gender transformative criteria related to the proposed interventions.

Table 3. CBI's provisional gender transformative criteria for projects (repetition from theoretical framework chapter)

■ An in-depth gender analysis has been a central part of the BC design.
■ The BC targets women's empowerment (decent work for women in the workplace or entrepreneurship).
■ The root causes of inequality (social norms, cultural beliefs, values) have been addressed up-front in the BC.
■ The project aims to transform unequal gender relations. It tends to improve the social position of women (how they are valued in society) as well as the realisation of their rights.
■ Objectives, outcomes (results) and indicators explicitly aim to confront gender inequality, gender roles and stereotypes.
■ Men are engaged in project development and implementation to promote gender equality.
■ Local women and/or women's (business) associations can make their voices heard in the project implementation.
■ Project addresses not only the access of women to resources such as assets, financial services, information, and inputs but also their decision-making, self-esteem of women, collective action.
■ Gender transformative indicators are included in the Results Chain (indicators are gender disaggregated).
■ Specific human and financial resources are allocated to address the root causes of gender inequality.
■ Cooperation is sought at sector level, with complementarity roles of various actors, to work on systemic change.

CHILI

As the chili sector in Benin is relatively informally organized, there are less entry points for CBI interventions than for shea and pineapple. However, we still identified a few, especially related to criteria ii (women's empowerment through support on entrepreneurship), and xiii (access and control over resources).

1. Capacity building of small-scale women spices / chili processors (criteria ii, v and ix). CBI could provide training on business skills, marketing skills, financial literacy and management skills to processors in urban areas like Cotonou, Calavi and Porto-Novo, which are often female led / owned. Most of these processors are small-scale, processing between 100 and 500 kg of chilis per month. Preparing them for the European market may be ambitious or will take several years, given the current phase of these companies' development.

The women processors of chilies indicated a need for better quality processing equipment. Access to equipment from places like India, the EU or China would improve the quality of their product and the quantity of their output and provides opportunities for exports outside West Africa. This type of support will need to go hand in hand with some form of access to finance.

2. At production level, chili farmers are often organized in farmer cooperatives. These cooperatives are a mix of men and women, though men are often overrepresented. Specific support activities could target women producers in vegetable cooperatives, improving their bargaining power and stimulating and capacitating them to become cooperative leaders.

3. In general, we recommend working with the Netherlands Embassy, when addressing issues in the enabling environment for the chili sector (criterion xi). Currently, there are no sector associations for chili and almost all trade takes place informally. For such a support activity, FENOMA (Benin's horticulture association) could be a partner. While supporting FENOMA, CBI can focus specifically on gender and promote gender transformative cooperation at sector level. At the same time, specific gender objectives related to criteria ii, iii, iv, vii and viii can be formulated based on a specific participatory needs assessment. Lessons can be drawn from EHPEA, the Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association, which has a strong gender awareness component.

PINEAPPLE

- 1. Collaborate with ENABEL, Belgium's development cooperation agency, on empowering women in the pineapple chain to be involved in direct exports of processed pineapple products to the EU.** ENABEL mainly supports pineapple production and processing activities but is less active in export promotion and market linkage. Currently, only one exporting company in the sector is female-led (i.e., Les Fruits Tillou); the other 17 are owned and managed by men. DEFIA has a strong gender focus and carried out a gender analysis of the sector (criterion i) and at least two gender experts are working on the project. In such an intervention, collaboration with APIEx can also be explored. Before starting any design of new activities we recommend to have an in-depth discussion with the PACOFIDE project, given their focus on export markets and large budget (USD 160 million).

Another opportunity could be training and capacity building of women employees of exporting companies, though this would first require a needs assessment of the current staff situation at the various exporting companies of pineapple products (criterion ii).

- Since almost all exporting companies are male-led, women's empowerment could focus on the position of women employees in the workplaces (criterion ii). Gender transformative interventions could aim at changing the root causes of inequality (i.e., wages, criterion iii) or unequal gender relations (criterion iv) through workshops and facilitating discussions between men and women in the company (criterion vi), or perhaps even by setting up a worker's association. However, more in-depth analysis or a needs assessment is needed to assess the feasibility of such an intervention.
- 3. A specific intervention could be formulated to capacitate women in processing pineapple, into (concentrated) juice or dried pineapple (criteria ii, v and ix).** A female only incubation/acceleration program could be considered (criterion ii), with training modules focusing on processing skills, self-esteem (criterion viii), business, financial and marketing skills. As part of the training access to finance could be brokered, for the companies to invest in new processing equipment. There are good examples of 100% female accelerator programs from Ethiopia and Ghana (both implemented by MDF and Resilience). In Ghana the focus was more on access to finance, while in Ethiopia the focus was more on exports.
- 4. Improve exports and the position of women in the pineapple sector by supporting AIAB through its economic unit for the valorization of the obtained Geographical Indication.** Concretely, CBI can facilitate

a market study and/or a (digital) trade mission to link Beninese exporters with European importers. This intervention would strengthen the sector as a whole but is not very gender transformative.

THE SHEA VALUE-CHAIN

As described in the SWOT-analysis, some good opportunities exist for the shea sector in Benin. The sector is already empowering and organizing women at country-side and village level in Northern Benin. In addition, the export potential for shea products, particularly shea butter, is far from satisfied, both in nearby markets as well as high-end markets in Europe and North America. At the same time competition from neighboring countries is strong.

Though women dominate most segments of the shea value-chain, there are still important challenges with respect to organization of women in associations and cooperatives. There are a number of entry points to strengthen the position of women in Benin's shea value-chain:

- 1. Support interventions that aim to propel women in decision-making positions, especially at association level (criterion viii).** Though the president of the FNPB is a woman, the overarching Interprofession Karite Benin is presided over and managed by men. Moreover, FNPB's day to day operations is managed by a man who has more decision-making power in practice than on paper. In general, collaboration with FNPB is recommended as it is a relatively strong organization and operates at sector level (criterion xi).

CBI could consider providing leadership and management trainings to women at different levels of sector organizations, i.e., cooperative level, UDPK-level and possibly at management level of FNPB. As such, CBI can provide training for female board members on leadership and management skills (criterion ii). In addition, CBI can support workshops and group discussions on decision-making also engaging men (criterion vi) and to transform gender norms on leadership (criterion iv), especially when discussions about social norms and cultural beliefs are challenged (criterion iii).

Success stories about female leadership should be showcased within the sector and beyond. Exchange visits between cooperatives that facilitate group discussions could be included. Success stories of female leadership within the shea value-chain can also be more widely shared and serve as an example (criterion iii) for other agro-processing value-chains. Although this does not directly address the root cause of gender inequality, it does challenge cultural beliefs by showing successful alternatives to the social norms.

- 2. Interventions that capacitate women cooperatives, for example by helping them increase the quantity and quality of their products (criteria ii, v and ix).** In order to do this well, it is important to better understand what kind of product features buyers want; especially buyers that are in a position to pay higher prices. These can be exporters, industrial processors, wholesalers (who consequently sell to exporters) or even importers from a destination country.

Before starting such an active we recommend undertaking a needs assessment of shea cooperatives in the north of Benin. It is encouraged to do this in a participatory manner, considering criterion vii (local women and/or women's associations can make their voices heard in project implementation).

CBI could further work together with FNPk, or directly with women cooperatives, to:

- Provide or facilitate trainings to strengthen cooperative management.
- Facilitate access to better quality equipment, for example from India, Europe or China, for shea cooperatives. Use of improved should go hand in hand with capacity building on operations and maintenance. In this way women can provide better quality and increase revenue. Currently, local technology is used, which leads to relatively low-quality shea butter, or no technology at all, which is very time- and labor consuming.
- Improve market linkages: linking processors to buyers, support on business planning, negotiation skills and facilitation of (in)formal partnerships (criterion ii).
- The overall intervention is likely to be more successful when combined with an access to finance activity. For this collaboration could be sought with other development partners like GIZ-Benin.

- 3. Interventions that empower women at collection and processing level, by facilitating access to knowledge and technology.** Through such activities, many women can be targeted and as a result many women can increase income (and as such improve their livelihoods, criterion xiii). This can be done as part of the collaboration with the cooperatives. At the same time, we acknowledge that these interventions could be outside the scope of regular CBI activities. They also may not transform the sector itself, nor may be gender transformative.
- 4. CBI has worked on the positioning of Nigerian SMEs in the niche market of artisanal shea butter, as it was proven that a market for such products exists in the European Union.** Something similar could be replicated for shea butter exporters from Benin. At the same time, the market for artisanal shea butter is still small and promoting more production could flood such a niche market.

- 5. Generally, the sector needs export market linkages with European importers.** Training and acceleration of exporters to improve their product quality and prepare them for the European market can be beneficial for the sector as a whole, but is unlikely to benefit women specifically, as exporting companies are generally run by men. As such, it is unclear whether increase in revenues will trickle down and reach the women at cooperative level. This activity can also be considered in combination with activity 2, which could improve its inclusiveness.

REFLECTION ON CBI'S GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE CRITERIA

Criterion i, the in-depth gender analysis, is applied throughout this study; although for further operationalizing interventions a few needs assessments are required. Important recommendations include interventions with all-women shea cooperatives and women chili or pineapple processors, and such interventions would almost automatically cover the project design principles of criterion v and ix: including gender transformative indicators in the results chain. Specific follow-up needs assessments can focus on an analysis that includes current decision-making of women, their self-esteem and opportunities for collective action (criterion viii).

Other criteria (ii, iii, iv, vi, vii, xi) have been addressed in the possible interventions above. Criteria ii, vi, vii, viii focusing on women empowerment, their organization and capacity building, can easily be operationalized through trainings, while considering access to resources in general and access to finance in specific. Interventions tackling criteria related to social norms and cultural beliefs (criteria iii, iv) remain most challenging to formulate, as we could not come up with concrete activities that would directly lead to behavioral and mind-set changes.

Nonetheless, "support on what is already happening and showcase this", is a strong way to generate change related to criterion iii and iv (root causes of inequality) and to promote equal gender relations. Change takes place through inspiring examples. And as such the project could support change makers; those women that confront the social norms and provide alternative for the social position of women. These would need to be showcased in such a way (and through the right channels) so as they reach the target audience, e.g., farmers, processors, and managers.

Specifically, to address criterion vi (women engaged in project formulation), the project team should be self-reflective, keep their gender lens open and ask questions through that gender lens. In the continuation of the project implementation, implementers should be aware of the subtle processes that maintain inequalities and they need to be aware of their own bias.

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RES  LIENCE

