



SAHEL
QUARTERLY



UNLOCKING THE PROMISE OF AfCFTA FOR AGRIBUSINESS IN AFRICA

APRIL 2022 | VOLUME 29

EDITORS' NOTE



Aisha Hadejia

**Manager
Sahel Consulting**

We are excited to present the 29th issue of the Sahel Quarterly, themed 'Unlocking the Promise of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) for Agribusinesses in Africa'.

Africa has 60% of the world's arable land¹ and a diverse climate that supports the cultivation of most crops found around the world. Despite this rich agricultural potential, Africa remains a net importer of food. For example, imports from Russia and Ukraine account for nearly 30% of the wheat consumed on the continent². This heavy dependence on food imports makes the ecosystem more vulnerable to shocks. According to IFPRI'S Food Security Portal, wheat prices have been volatile since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and international spot prices have risen to almost \$10/ bushel, the highest since March 2008³.

The solution to this is twofold: 1) African countries must increase their production of staple products and 2) they must create a continental supply chain that is resistant to external shocks.

Currently, intra-African trade in agri-food products accounts for only 13% of total trade in the region, compared to intra-EU trade which represents 72.2%⁴. AfCFTA heralds the promise of a more unified and prosperous Africa by giving businesses access to more suppliers and customers thereby enhancing the exchange of resources. This will contribute to creating a more stable and resilient supply chain, generate more wealth and improve livelihoods and nutrition for millions of Africans.

However, unlocking these opportunities requires urgent reforms by actors in the public, private, and development space to create stronger partnerships, more efficient infrastructure, and harmonized frameworks to promote a regional approach to agrifood trade.

This edition highlights some of the ground-breaking work Sahel Consulting and our partners are doing to promote agri-food trade across the continent- from export readiness initiatives to knowledge transfer on best farming practices and innovative business models.

This quarterly provides insights into practical solutions and opportunities that stakeholders can explore to key into larger markets, scale businesses, create more linkages, and contribute towards the smooth implementation of a consolidated African market. We expect that this quarterly will compel actors to design and implement sustainable and equitable initiatives to support trade for food and nutrition security.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as we did creating it.

1. Grow Africa (2018) 60% of arable land is in Africa and it has billions in investment potential. Available at: <http://www.growafrica.com/news/60-arable-land-africa-and-it-has-billions-investment-potential>

2. Statista (2022) Africa's Major Reliance on Russian and Ukrainian Wheat. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/27009/import-sources-of-wheat-in-africa/>

3. Food Security Portal. Available at: <https://www.foodsecurityportal.org/>

4. Bouët and Odjo(2019; AGRA, 2019). Africa agriculture trade monitor. Available at: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8020-8877>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

- 10 ————— Figure 1 - Cost of Variety Registration & Release across Select Countries
10 ————— Figure 2 - Average Duration of Variety Registration & Release across Select Countries

ARTICLES

- 04 ————— AfCFTA's Role in Connecting Africa's Agri-SMEs for a Sustainable Food System
07 ————— AfCFTA from the Perspective of Agripreneurs: Strategies for Success
10 ————— AfCFTA as a Catalyst for a Vibrant Seed System in Africa
13 ————— Nourishing Africa: Promoting Trade, Collaboration & Partnerships Among SMEs in Africa
15 ————— AfCFTA: Implications for Women-led SME Participation in Regional and International Export Markets
17 ————— Building Bridges via Knowledge Sharing & Transfer in the Roots & Tuber Value Chains Across African Countries

SAHEL AND NOURISHING AFRICA UPDATES

- 21 ————— Sahel Got Talent
22 ————— Sahel Consulting in the News
23 ————— Sahel Consulting Speaks
24 ————— Sahel Capital Speaks
24 ————— Nourishing Africa Speaks

AfCFTA'S ROLE IN CONNECTING AFRICA'S AGRI-SMES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

BY AISHA HADJIA

Overview of Cassava Production in Africa

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to the food security and economic development of Africa. They are responsible for more than 80% of the continent's employment and contribute to over 50% of its collective GDP⁵. The SME ecosystem connects farmers, processors, aggregators, consumers, and service providers, thereby providing goods, services, and employment for millions of Africans⁶.

Despite their immense contribution to Africa's growth and stability, agri-SMEs operate in some of the harshest business environments in the world. According to a report by the World Bank, only two (2) Sub-Saharan African economies (Mauritius and Rwanda) rank in the top 50 on the ease of doing business table⁷. This is largely due to constraints such as lack of access to finance, redundant agricultural policies, insecurity, erratic power supply, and inadequate access to inputs, information, and affordable machinery.

Creating an environment where SMEs flourish will empower the continent's growing population via job creation, increased income, and food security. It will also unlock opportunities for new investments within the continent.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) signed by 54 countries is the largest free trade agreement in history. The agreement aims to facilitate the free movement of goods, people, and services across member countries with little or no tariffs and eliminate other non-tariff trade barriers. Thus, presenting African agri-SMEs with opportunities to tap into bigger markets, and further integrate into the global supply chain.

Opportunities Presented by AfCFTA to Agri-SMEs

- **Access to Larger Markets:** Decade long efforts have gone into improving the productivity and efficiency of food producers, but less consideration is given to the creation of markets and linkages for farmers to sell their produce. This inadequate access to markets reduces the revenue of farmers and contributes to post-harvest losses, which is estimated at 30-50% in sub-Saharan Africa⁸.

By creating a single market, AfCFTA grants agri-SMEs access to more suppliers of raw materials and incentivize the creation of business models on a regional rather than national scale. This opportunity to scale

businesses across the continent has the potential to boost Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035, and in doing so lift 30 million Africans out of extreme poverty⁹.

- **Lower Import Tariffs:** Businesses face higher tariffs (an average of 6.1%) when they export within Africa than outside it¹⁰. It is no wonder why some African businesses prefer to trade with customers outside the continent. AfCFTA aims to reverse this trend by decreasing import tariffs between countries by 90%, making it preferable and profitable for SMEs to participate in regional markets.

SKT Aeroshutter

SKT Aeroshutter is a licensed drone operator in West Africa headquartered in Ghana. The company develops and designs unmanned aerial vehicles which are increasingly in demand in the African agricultural sector for geographic mapping and accurate data collection to guide farmer decision-making.

With offices in Ghana, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, and projects across West Africa, SKT faces a reoccurring challenge; Every time equipment is transported across borders, duty charges must be paid. Sometimes these charges are so high, it hinders project implementation in some countries.

SKT is positive that when fully implemented, AfCFTA will enhance technology transfer and innovation between countries via the free movement of experts and equipment to share knowledge and accelerate technology development in Africa.

5. World Economic Forum (2015). Why SMEs are key to growth in Africa Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/why-smes-are-key-to-growth-in-africa/>

6. AGRA News Center (2019). The hidden middle: Bringing SMEs into the light Available at: <https://agra.org/news/the-hidden-middle-bringing-africas-smes-into-the-light/>

7. The World Bank (2020). Doing business 2020. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/business-enabling-environment>

8. (Deloitte. (2015). Reducing Food Loss Along African Agricultural Value Chains. London. Available at [www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/za/Documents/](http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/za/Documents/consumer) consumer)

9. The World Bank (2020). The Africa Continental Free Trade Area. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area#findings>

10. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area Questions & Answers. Available at: <https://knowledge.uneca.org/ATPC/sites/default/files/PDFpublications/>

SMEs sourcing raw materials from neighboring countries at a cheaper rate will make food products more affordable and readily accessible, which is expected to increase household welfare, and improve nutrition and food security. This is particularly important as Africa needs to feed its growing population in a sustainable manner first before focusing on exporting resources.

- **More Job Opportunities:** In addition to the free movement of agricultural produce across borders at a cheaper and faster rate, the agreement also facilitates the movement of skilled and unskilled labor, the flow of investment, and intellectual property across the continent.

In addition, the use of ICT to drive growth in agriculture has given rise to new business models and innovative solutions to Africa's food and nutrition crisis. This provides young agripreneurs the opportunity to find meaningful and fulfilling jobs that create impact and give rise to 'Proudly African' products and services that can compete globally.

- **Increased Investment in the Region Towards Better Infrastructure & Financial Structures:** Two other contributing factors to the low intra-African agri-food trade are the lack of adequate infrastructure for storage and transport of produce, and the absence of a common payment system to ease transactions between African traders.

The promise of AfCFTA in boosting the region's economic activity will no doubt attract global investments geared toward strengthening transport and logistics services and enhancing e-commerce options to ease trade across different economic zones.

- **Trigger Regulatory Process Reforms to Ease Trade:** Navigating the certification, regulation, and quality assurance landscape of different African countries is a complex process that requires different sets of documentation. Having a common framework across AfCFTA countries will help SMEs partner and trade easier.

For example, the Nigerian government conducted a review of documentation required for cross-border trade. This process reduced the number of documents required for export from 10 to 7 and from 14 to 8 for imports, and in doing so reduced associated costs.

Actions required/ Recommendations

For SMEs to fully key into these opportunities and benefit from AfCFTA, targeted and concerted efforts need to be made by three categories of stakeholders:

AfCFTA Secretariat

Increase access to information on AfCTFA: It is imperative that agri-SMEs have a good understanding of what AfCFTA entails and the opportunities it presents.

An Interconnected cross-boarder e-platform should be established to share relevant information on business opportunities, changes in regulations, policies and taxes, logistics costs and prices of commodities at farm gate and major African markets.

Improve evidence-based decision making: Research on consumer demands and regional nuances needs to be made open-source and available to SMEs. This will enable them to make data-driven decisions, adapt to different customer demands, and design strategies to respond to the market adequately. This will also guide potential investors in the African agri-food space. An example of this is Nourishing Africa, a digital platform focused on equipping and connecting agri-food entrepreneurs who are transforming African agriculture and food landscapes with access to information, experts, markets, and linkages to financial services in 37 countries.

Create unifying standards and regulations to ease intra-African trade: Non-tariff barriers such as quality control standards, licensing, testing, and certification in different countries continue to hinder SME participation regionally. Harmonization and recognition of standards and cross-border cooperation between regulatory authorities will significantly ease the free flow of goods and build trust between suppliers and customers.

In addition, a standard index of agri-food commodities approved for cross-border trade should be developed and circulated among AfCFTA countries. This index with clear names and quality standards for each product will enhance transparency in trade among actors who may not speak the same language and also assist SMEs to know exactly what they are procuring across borders.



11. UNDP (2020). The futures report. Making AfCFTA work for Women and youth. Available at: <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/the-futures-report--making-the-afcta-work-for-women-and-youth.html>

Government Agencies & Development Partners

- **Close infrastructure gap to enhance free and safe movement of products and services across borders:** Significant investments must be made by African countries towards improving technology and infrastructure, especially at the borders. Road networks must be rehabilitated, storage facilities standardized to properly store commodities. This will significantly reduce wastages at the port due to delays and also enhance the ability of countries to deliver quality products and detect substandard/ counterfeit products.
- **Empower and build the capacity of SMEs with the critical skills to grow and scale their businesses:** For AfCFTA to achieve its aim of driving social and economic development in Africa, the agriculture and agribusiness sector must be involved in policy creation and decision-making processes. The active involvement and representation of Agri- SMEs in the implementation of AfCFTA means their needs will be better communicated and prioritized by the government, donors, and private sector. This support will also encourage SMEs to formalize their processes, and be prepared for intra-African trade.
- **Collaborate with fintech actors to improve e-commerce structures:** Ministries and Agencies should collaborate with banks and other financial operators to create and promote solutions that will ease payment and currency challenges plaguing SMEs. Africa must learn from other regions and adopt a common currency for ease of doing business.

Also, the capacity-building of financial institutions must be prioritized to enable them better understand the complexities of agricultural financing. This will facilitate the design of more products to supply export credit to SMEs to facilitate regional transactions.

In addition, African governments must collaborate to build a robust commodity exchange market that connects the whole continent and allows farmers to sell their produce anywhere on the continent on the spot or in the future.

- **Align national trade policies with the provisions of AfCFTA:** African governments must re-align the focus of the national trade policies with the objectives of the AfCFTA. This will ensure that the import and export policies and sentiments of countries do not hamper the implementation of the AfCFTA and the achievement of its goals.

Agri- SMEs

Seek out strategic partnerships: Agri-SMEs must cultivate cross-border relationships and strategic partnerships to establish sustainable supply chains for their businesses. These partnerships can be made via active participation in commodity associations, cooperatives and innovative hubs designed to bring agripreneurs and experts together.

To take full advantage of AfCFTA, agri-SMEs must also be proactive in seeking out information from relevant regulatory bodies and take this into consideration when setting up and/or scaling their businesses.

Conclusion

Agriculture is a key lynchpin in making AfCFTA work in favor of the African region. Given that agriculture and agribusiness are projected by World Bank to be a trillion-dollar industry in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030, AfCFTA must connect Africa's agri-food systems in such a way that it is inclusive, productive, and attracts foreign investments. This connection will ensure that Africa feeds itself in a sustainable manner, promote decent employment for youth, and reduce poverty.



AfCFTA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AGRIPRENEURS: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

BY HOSEA YAKUBU AND SAIDU ABUBAKAR

Regional integration is crucial for Africa's economic development and food ecosystem transformation. AfCFTA is a development strategy aimed at consolidating Africa's economies into one large market that has the potential to deliver economies of scale, improve competitiveness, drive foreign direct investment, reduce poverty, and enhance the continent's bargaining power on the multilateral front.

Despite the fresh shift in the growth poles of the global economy from developed countries to emerging and developing countries, Africa lags and remains sidelined. This is partly because the continent remains a fragmented bundle of small resource-rich but commodity-dependent economies. For Africa to optimize its resource endowments and translate them into welfare gains for its teeming population, regional integration is vital.

It is not surprising that African leaders and policymakers are showing more interest and making commitments toward fast-tracking the African Economic Community. The first step in this renewed effort was the agreement reached during the African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa in January 2012 to establish a Continental Free Trade Area. A framework agreement was signed in March 2018 during the summit in Kigali, Rwanda by an initial group of 44 countries to bring the AfCFTA into force¹².

Despite championing the agreement and moving for its speedy development, Nigeria abstained from signing the agreement. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria attributed the abstention to the need to protect the economy, especially the industries and small businesses, from external pressures and competition that could lead to closures and job losses amidst the teeming youth population of the country. Nigeria eventually signed the agreement in 2019 and ratified it in 2020, and it is expected that some progress have been made two years later¹³.

It is on this premise that Sahel Consulting interviewed two companies to understand what has happened over this period from the perspective of agripreneurs.



ACE Foods is an indigenous Nigerian company established in November 2009 with the mission to provide nutritious and tasty food made from the best of West Africa's cereals, grains, herbs, and vegetables.

Q. How is ACE Foods seeking out and cultivating cross-border relationships to create high-impact partnerships?

R. ACE Foods has developed relationships with buyers in Europe, N/America, Asia, and S/Africa by focusing on the quality of service, customer satisfaction, and competitive price. We export products such as dry split ginger, birds' eye chili, and other finished products to these regions. Over the past three years, we have exported over 300MT worth of different products.

Also, our operational capacity and reputation have brought about partnerships with development organizations such as Family Health International (FHI) which enable us to further impact smallholder farmers who cultivate the products by equipping and supporting them with training and inputs for a more sustainable supply chain.

12. Tralac (2018) Independent study on the potential benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on Nigeria: Study report. Available at: <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/13229-independent-study-on-the-potential-benefits-of-the-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta-on-nigeria-study-report.html>

13. African Center for Economic Transformation (2020) The AfCFTA May Be the Last Opportunity for Africa's Economic Transformation. Available at: <https://acetforafrica.org/media/opinion/the-afcfta-may-be-the-last-opportunity-for-africas-economic-transformation/>

Q. How ready is AACE Foods for AfCFTA?

R. Currently, AACE does most of its cross-border trade outside the African region. However, it is obvious that AfCFTA will have an effect on our local market, especially around sourcing raw materials. We anticipate a shift in demand and supply dynamics which will affect the price and availability of raw products. AACE has set up a robust supply chain structure for sustainable and dependable supply by working directly with over 10,000 smallholder farmers to source our materials.

Q. How is AACE foods working to ensure competitiveness given that an open market would mean an influx of similar goods from other African countries?

R. AACE Foods provides natural and high-quality products from rich African soil. The quality of the product on one side speaks for itself. On the other hand, we are working on making AACE Foods a household brand and want to be present in every home. This will always create connectivity between our products and our growing customers. We will not stop there, there will also be continuous improvement in our brand which will always make our customers stick to us and make us stand out even with the competition.

Q. What are some of the major challenges facing AACE foods in terms of cross-border trade?

R. Challenges experienced by AACE Foods include:

- Bureaucracy and congestion at the port cause delays in shipping our products and increases in lead time. Sometimes, this delay can cause damage to products before it gets to buyers.
- Lack of transparency from the customer's end is a problem we contend with. Some customers are not transparent enough in their dealings, especially on the status of the goods they receive and the processing of payment.
- Variation in preferred payment methods across different regions is a challenge also. Providing a uniform payment method for all buyers that will be favorable to AACE Foods is difficult. Sometimes we must shift ground for a win-win situation.
- The customs and taxes levied on different products are high and always changing. This is an additional overhead cost that needs to be dealt with during cross-border trade.

Q. What role must stakeholders (government, financial institutions, businesses, etc.) play to ensure SMEs take full

advantage of the benefits presented by AfCFTA?

- The government needs to establish workable policies that will protect SMEs and vulnerable industries.
- Infrastructure needs to be put in place that will enable Nigerian businesses to produce in large quantities to cater to in-county and export demand.
- More investment needs to be made in grassroots interventions that focus on enhancing the productivity of raw material producers.
- Provision of low-interest-rate loans for SMEs and easy access to other credit facilities.
- Business needs to develop sustainable plans and strategies to make them take full advantage of the opportunities.
- Adoption of ICT tools such as cross-border payment platforms, telecommunications networks, and internet access are ingredients needed to ensure success. This will give room for the availability of data, and connection to buyers and sellers in a seamless manner. High-level ICT infrastructures in transportation will solve some of the challenges faced with logistics. This includes e-documentation for all cross-border transportation procedures
- There must be a systematic improvement in the capacity of the Nigerian customs service to secure and enforce our borders to prevent dumping, smuggling, and other illegal cross-border activities which will impose a bigger threat to our products and have other disadvantages to health and the economy.

Q. With the progress made so far, how do you foresee the changing market landscape in Africa in terms of food security and access to nutritious food for Africa's growing population?

R. More still need to be done to ensure food security and access to nutritious food. There is a reduction in production in some parts of Africa due to insecurity (such as tribal conflicts, banditry, insurgency), climate change, urbanization, high cost of production, and many more factors. This reduction continues even with the fact that Africa's population keeps increasing. To bridge this gap, more innovations are required in African agriculture practices, especially at the grassroots. Initiatives like AfCFTA will help to boost food security. This is because there will be the active involvement of all stakeholders across the continent.



JAM The Coconut Food Company is an integrated coconut processing company that serves the food, cosmetic and pharmaceutical markets in Nigeria and across Africa. JAM operates a circular coconut processing facility which ensures that every value in the coconut is tapped in the processing lines.

Q. One of the much-anticipated benefits of AfCFTA is opening larger markets for Agri-SMEs? What successes has JAM The Coconut Food Company recorded in doing business outside Nigeria?

R. AfCFTA is indeed highly anticipated, however, agro-processors in Nigeria must conduct a great deal of research to ensure that their price of raw materials is competitive across the continent. We started preparing for AfCFTA back in 2018 through Trade Shows across Africa. These Trade Shows gave us great customer insight as well as insight into parallel or competing products to ours, in Africa.

Apart from Trade Shows, we also belong to many Africa-wide business groups and associations. These associations give us strong leverage for market insights into various countries across the continent.

Q. What are some of the major challenges facing JAM The Coconut Food Company in terms of cross-border trade?

R. Competitive pricing for our raw material to ensure the prices of our goods is viable continent-wide. If other countries have access to the same material at a lower cost, it means we are priced out of the AfCFTA opportunity.

Q. How ready is JAM The Coconut Food Company for AfCFTA?

R. Every time we think we are ready; we move the goal post for ourselves again. So, I would say about 70% ready at this time, but I'm sure that number could change in a month.

We are working tirelessly to set up our own coconut plantation. We are also working to build a strong network of smallholder farmers who can supply our raw materials at a competitive and fair-trade price.

Q. What role must stakeholders (government, financial institutions, businesses, etc.) play to ensure SMEs take full advantage of the benefits presented by AfCFTA?

R. In my field of coconut processing, Govt, DFIs, Research Institutions, and Foreign Investors should join us to invest in Coconut Plantations and Coconut Processing Hubs. This will help to reduce the cost of production and quicker product acceptability across Africa.

Q. With the progress made so far, how do you foresee the changing market landscape in Africa in terms of food security and access to nutritious food for Africa's growing population?

R. I foresee great demand on Africa to feed the world with organic, safe food. This has its pros and cons and must be managed with dexterity, so we do not repeat history as we did with oil, and wealth is created for farmers nationwide. Secondly, transport and logistics across Africa is currently very prohibitive to trade. A rail network crisscrossing and connecting African countries would resolve the current exorbitant shipping fees. Finally, access to more markets across the continent means more revenue for my company, more jobs created, and more impact made.

Conclusion

Though the AfCFTA has been ratified in most of the African countries that signed up, it has not fully taken effect, and lots of businesses have gone ahead to establish other business relationships to fast-track international trade. It is expected that once the AfCFTA is fully in effect, lots of businesses will experience great transformation leading to great socio-economic development.



AfCFTA AS A CATALYST FOR A VIBRANT SEED SYSTEM IN AFRICA

BY AISHA HADJIA AND GRACE OMINI

Background

The food on our plate depends heavily on the type of seed farmers have access to and utilize on the farm. Although several factors are responsible for Africa's slow agricultural development, smallholder farmers' limited access to improved seed varieties is a major contributing factor.

The use of improved high-yielding varieties has been shown to boost grain yields and farmer profitability by up to 40%¹⁴. This has significant implications for Africa's push towards food and nutrition security and self-sufficiency. Given the effects of climate change on rainfall, resulting in unpredictable weather patterns that disrupt the planting season, variability of seed and food production will keep increasing, making millions of farmers unable to access seeds when needed. To improve access to quality seeds, a regional trade system that makes cross-border trade faster, cheaper, and easier is necessary.

Seed Registration and Trade in Africa

Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa are largely responsible for the regulation, control, and introduction of new seed varieties except for South Africa. This is a long, tedious, and expensive process that can take breeders several years and thousands of dollars in costs to complete.

For example, in Nigeria, the crop variety registration and release process comprise of on-station, multi-locational, and on-farm trials which must be conducted before the submission of applications for approval. A study conducted by Sahel Consulting showed that this process can take up to 54 months and cost as high as \$44,000 per crop. These factors discourage private sector involvement and investment which further inflicts the burden on the already stretched public sector.

Furthermore, when a variety gets registered in one country, this process would have to be repeated in another country if the crop is to be commercially traded before farmers can have access to it. This results in African countries releasing fewer varieties which limits available seeds for trade and restricts farmer access to improved varieties.



Figure 1: Cost of Variety Registration & Release across Select Countries

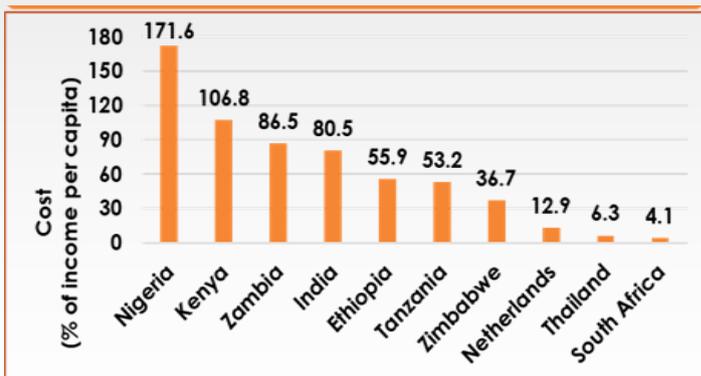
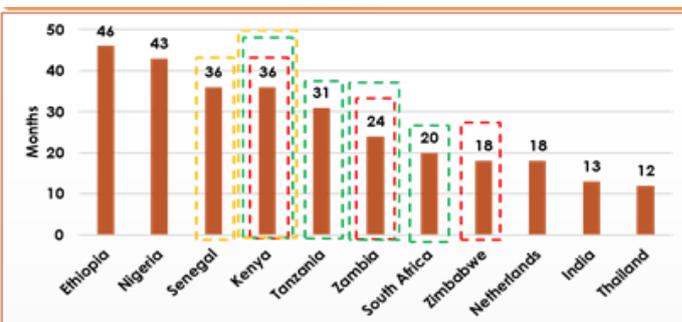


Figure 2: Average Duration of Variety Registration & Release across Select Countries



An analysis of the crop variety registration and release process across some countries highlight key activities that impact the duration of the process such as:

- Concurrent conduct of DUS and VCU testing
- Exemptions for foreign varieties or acceptance of DUS test data from foreign authorities
- Exemptions for specific crops such as vegetables

Source: Sahel Consulting 2021

For more information on the study, please visit [baseline-assessment-of-the-crop-variety-release-and-registration-system-in-nigeria](https://www.sahelcapital.com/baseline-assessment-of-the-crop-variety-release-and-registration-system-in-nigeria)

However, efforts are being made by public, private, research, and development actors to harmonize seed

14. CGIAR, Research program on grain legumes and dryland cereals (2018). Improved varieties and quality seed boost yields and profits for Myanmar farmers. Available at: <http://gldc.cgiar.org/improved-varieties-and-quality-seed-boost-yields-and-profits-for-myanmar-farmers/>

regulations and encourage trade by leveraging on Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

The ECOWAS seed regulations framework allows the movement of seeds between ECOWAS countries without the need for repetitive testing and registration. This harmonization of rules around registration, certification, and marketing of seeds in the ECOWAS region is only applicable to certain crops that are vital to food security and trade in the region; maize, pearl millet, rice, sorghum, cassava, Irish potato, yam, cowpea, groundnut, onion, and tomato¹⁵. This collaborative effort helped avert an impending food crisis during the 2015 Ebola epidemic¹⁶. The ECOWAS region was able to respond quickly and supply seed to the hardest-hit countries to safeguard against a total breakdown of farming structures.

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA):

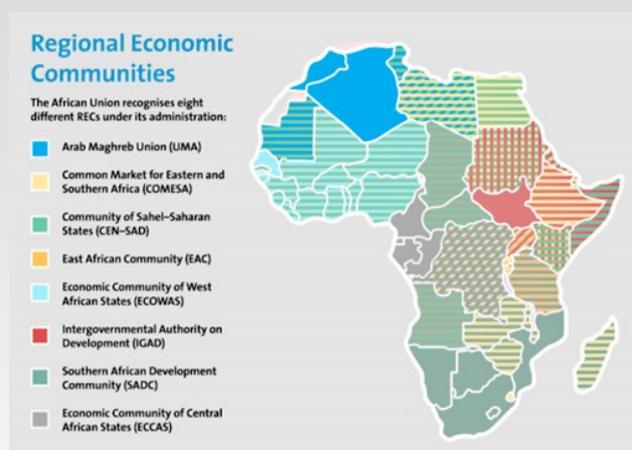
As of 2018, under the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan, 7 out of 21 member states have completed the harmonization of their national regulations in line with the regional seed trade regulations, while the others are preparing to begin the alignment process.

The Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC):

In partnership with the Food, Agriculture and National Resources Policy Network (FANRPAN), SADC implemented the Harmonized Seed Regulatory System (HSRS) in 4 pilot nations. Although two-thirds of SADC members have signed the MoU to operationalize the regulation, only Zambia has been successful in domesticating the regional seed trade policy which established commonly agreed standards on Seed Variety Release, Seed Certification, and Quality Assurance, and Quarantine and Phytosanitary Measures for Seed.

However, these harmonization efforts are not without their challenges. The RECs in Africa have overlapping memberships, different regulations, and varying institutional capacities of member countries making harmonization a complex process. Sometimes, national seed regulations may conflict with the regional requirements which means new varieties may be released and traded nationally but will not be registered in the regional catalog for free movement within the region. AfCFTA presents the opportunity to create a unifying framework for the continent, and facilitate the integration of smaller markets into one formalized seed trade system.

Figure 3: Overview of Sub Saharan African Economic Communities



Source: ECDPM 2018

Potential Opportunities & Development Impact of AfCFTA on the African Seed System

AfCFTA's ambition is to promote intra-African trade that will stimulate robust industrial development across the African continent through the elimination of tariffs and non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Below are some of the opportunities for the development of the seed system in Africa:

- **Harmonization of regulations and policies around seed trade:** A mutually recognized seed registration and release system across AfCFTA countries would make seed trade easier, faster, and cheaper. A harmonized seed variety certification standard will also enhance greater regulatory cooperation and shared commitment to food and nutrition security among Africa's Regional Economic Communities.
- **Improve smallholder farmer access to improved seeds:** Demand for seed will continue to increase with Africa's growing population. By opening up the seed market, AfCFTA will encourage competition between seed companies which will lead to increased efficiency and improved production, consequently producing better quality seed varieties at a more affordable price for farmers.

15. Kuhlmann, et.al. Syngenta Foundation (2018). Seed policy harmonization in ECOWAS: A case for Nigeria. Available at: https://www.syngentafoundation.org/sites/g/files/zhg576/f/seed_policy_harmonization_in_ecowas_the_case_of_nigeria_2019.pdf

16. Katrin Kuhlmann. Syngenta Foundation (2015) Harmonizing Regional Seed Regulations in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Assessment Available at: https://www.syngentafoundation.org/sites/g/files/zhg576/f/seedpolicy_new_africa_regulation_comparative_analysis_september_2015.pdf

- Encourage private sector participation in the seed sector: A streamlined seed trade system would reduce the cost and duration of registering and trading improved seeds. This would encourage more private sector participation of regional and international actors like agro-dealers and investors in the regional market.
- Catalyze the formal seed sector: A unified framework operating with a common catalog of varieties stands a better chance of edging out the informal seed sector and the sub-standard seeds in circulation. The impact of this in the near future is that fewer farmers would rely on saved or shared seeds for planting, thus increasing the amount of food for household consumption and sale which would increase household nutrition and income respectively.
- Continuous sensitization and capacity building for agricultural extension service agents and agro-dealers on the available high-yielding varieties in the market is necessary to enhance farmers' access to quality seeds at the right time.
- Collaboration between border agencies, regulatory bodies, and seed system actors across the AfCFTA region is key to setting up a functional seed delivery system across the continent to guarantee seamless transportation and storage of seeds.
- Private sector participation must be encouraged in the decision-making processes regarding quality control guidelines and regulations to ensure adherence to standards.

Recommendations and Key Considerations

- Governments and relevant agencies must collaborate to develop frameworks and instruments to capture all relevant data regarding varieties, actors, and requirements for trade. This one-stop hub of information will make it easier for farmers and other actors to access improved varieties.

Conclusion

Mutual recognition of seed registration and regulatory laws across AfCFTA member countries has the potential to promote a vibrant and competitive seed industry that will provide millions of farmers with affordable improved seed varieties. However, more work needs to be done for countries to conform to regional and international best practices that will usher in the food ecosystem transformation Africa is looking towards.



NOURISHING AFRICA: PROMOTING TRADE, COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS AMONG SMES IN AFRICA

BY AISHA HADEJIA & RAHMAT EYINFUJOWO

About 10-12 million young Africans enter the workforce every year in a region where an overwhelming 94.9% of youth aged 15-25 are informally employed and are mainly engaged in subsistence agriculture¹⁷.

Although the African agriculture and agribusiness sector continues to grow, agri-SMEs face challenges such as difficulty in accessing capital, limited access to timely market information, poor market linkages to integrate into the formal value chain, and lack of critical skills to scale their businesses. The lack of credible and comprehensive information in the food and agriculture landscape limits cooperation and linkages within African companies as entrepreneurs find it difficult to cultivate relationships with partners outside their countries.

Given the population size employed by the agriculture sector, the key to the success of AfCFTA lies in creating an enabling environment to promote intra-African trade in food products by improving access to market information and boosting investment and export.

Nourishing Africa is an initiative born out of the dire need to provide the much-needed linkage between actors in the agri-food space by making information available and accessible. With the vision to provide a home for millions of entrepreneurs across Africa, Nourishing Africa is a one-stop hub connecting agripreneurs and equipping them with the critical tools to scale their businesses. A positive outcome of the Hubs activities is preparing agripreneurs for cross-border trade via the strategies below:

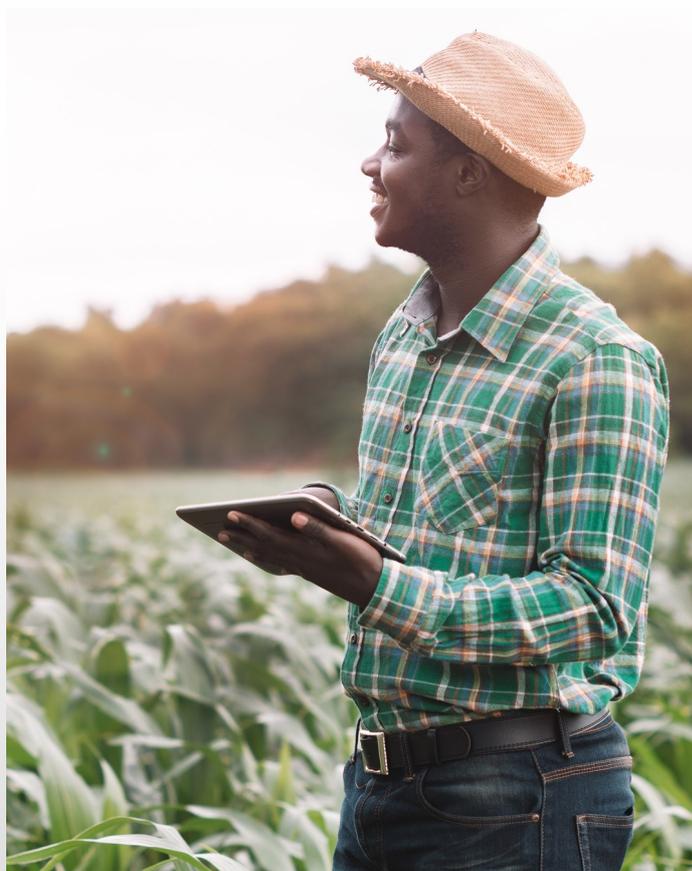
- **Promoting market linkages to ensure efficient and effective supply chains:** Designing and implementing successful business models start with accessing timely and accurate data on the landscape. Nourishing Africa provides information on market trends, actors, and opportunities to entrepreneurs in 37 African countries. In addition to this information, the hub hosts a virtual event on the first Thursday of every month. These events offer entrepreneurs and other critical stakeholders the opportunity to engage in a peer-to-peer exchange of insights, build knowledge and skills, and discover new solutions to shared challenges.

The AfCFTA secretariate should partner with hubs like Nourishing Africa to disseminate vital information on opportunities and regulations to promote trade between countries. These linkages would increase the chances of

SMEs connecting with credible and committed distributors, retailers, customers, and suppliers in neighboring countries.

- **Providing capacity building on critical entrepreneurial skills:** The role of capacity building and empowerment cannot be overemphasized. Youth-support programs must be co-created in an inclusive manner to comprehensively address the challenges facing SMEs for a cost-effective and impactful intervention.

Nourishing Africa conducts tailor-made capacity-building sessions and provides resources for entrepreneurs on export readiness, value chain analysis, and business modeling. These sessions also provide entrepreneurs with access to coaching and mentoring by industry experts.



17. International Labour Organization (2018) Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang--en/index.htm

Equipping young people with the appropriate skills: The Youth in Agrifood Export Development Program (YAEDP)

The Youth in Agrifood Export Development Program aims to develop the capacity of 5,000 Nigerian youth aged 25-40 who run agri-food SMEs to participate competitively in the export sector.

The program will provide training, market linkages, and digital support to entrepreneurs and cooperative leaders in the agri-food sector across the following critical food and cash crops value chains: Cocoa, Spices, Sesame, Shea butter, Cashew, Cassava, Soybean, Rubber, Ginger.

The training focuses on building participants' capacity in key business areas, including understanding the agribusiness export landscape, international marketing and sales, quality and standards, branding, business efficiency, finding financing, and building sustainability.

Through the intensive and interactive training program, participants will develop a thorough working understanding of their business operations and value chain activities to be able

For more information on the YAEDP program, visit <https://nourishingafrica.com/yaedp/application>

- **Promoting made-in-Africa agri-food products:** As a virtual membership-based platform, Nourishing Africa provides free advertising and media placements for its members to showcase their innovative products and services. It also showcases their entrepreneurial journey which is critical for knowledge sharing and driving local and international awareness for African agri-food products.
- SMEs should leverage platforms like Nourishing Africa to gain more visibility for their companies, products, and services and speak up towards creating a new narrative of Africa's agribusiness sector being driven by innovation, technology and profitability.



The Nourishing Africa Made-in-Africa hamper showcases healthy, nutritious food products made by African agribusinesses:

<https://nourishingafrica.com/gifthampers>

- **Facilitating financing for agrifood SMEs:** Although there are several initiatives across the continent designed to enhance farmer access to financial services, financing is still a major challenge for agribusinesses. Commercial bank lending to agriculture in Africa ranges from a meager 3% to 12%¹⁸. In order to successfully access funding, SMEs must be investment ready with transparent financial accounts, a profitable business model, clear documentation, and record of operations.



18. Making Finance Work 4 Africa. Agricultural Finance. Available at: <https://www.mfw4a.org/our-work/agricultural-finance#:~:text=The%20share%20of%20commercial%20bank,to%20GDP%20across%20the%20continent.>

AFcFTA: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN-LED SME PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPORT MARKETS

BY TOLULOPE BABAJIDE

Women will continue to be integral to the growth and development of the African agricultural sector. Millions of women agripreneurs are actively transforming the food and nutrition landscape as producers, processors, traders, and policymakers. However, this enormous contribution does not translate to equal value for most women farmers. Access to finance is one of the major constraints farmers face and even more so for women farmers. The World Bank estimates that Africa's agricultural and agribusiness markets will reach USD 1 trillion by 2030. Strategies must be put in place to enable female farmers to tap into this growing industry to develop and scale their businesses.

AFcFTA presents an opportunity to boost intra-African trade by integrating women agripreneurs into the regional value chain whilst considering challenges that are unique to women.



Sahel Consulting interviewed Marieme Esther Dassanou, the manager of the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) a pan-African initiative funded by the African Development Bank working to reduce the financial challenges faced by women entrepreneurs to the tune of \$42 billion. She outlines the challenges

faced by women agripreneurs and highlights recommendations and actions needed for a more inclusive and equitable food system.

Q. As an expert in women's inclusion and access to finance, what are the challenges faced by African women in business today?

R. The challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are mostly in four areas: limited access to knowledge, information, and skills, limited access to inclusive finance, limited access to global and regional markets, and non-availability of enabling environment that promotes their development and growth.

Q. What challenges would you say women-led agribusinesses particularly face?

R. I strongly believe women-led agribusinesses face stiffer challenges before their products eventually reach the market. Access to land in most countries for women remains a major barrier to improved productivity. According to the

World Bank, fewer than 13% of African women aged 20 to 49 own their land outright, compared to 36% of African men. This heavily biased land distribution plays a critical role in hindering Africa's push for food and nutrition security because it makes it difficult for women to grow crops in large quantities, which invariably affects their participation and competitiveness in the market.

Access to markets (local, regional and global) is largely dependent on the ease of transport and storage. Most women-led agribusinesses struggle with the logistics of storage- particularly those in the fresh produce sub-sector. Rural women farmers seldom have access to cold chain logistics infrastructure, such as on-farm pre-cooling systems, refrigerated trucks, refrigerated cargo containers, and cold storage warehouses. In the whole supply chain, there aren't any special considerations for women-owned agribusinesses. This makes it more difficult for them to compete in cross-border markets.

In addition, access to information is also a barrier for women-led agribusinesses. Many do not have information about the export quality standards of the value chains they are in; making their products unfit for regional and global markets.

Q. What are the policy environments and coordinating mechanisms needed to catalyze African women in businesses and ensure scalability?

- It is important that the financial policies be inclusive in all aspects and take women's realities into account. For example, allowing movable collateral registries will help women who do not have access to immovable collateral. Requiring that financial institutions leverage their data that would lead to actions to accelerate women's participation and access to financial services. It is also important for financial institutions not to categorize women-led businesses as a monolith- there are multiple layers to women's businesses that would lead to the contextualized design of financial products.
- Enhancing the structures in place to assist women entrepreneurs will aid in the growth of their businesses and, as a result, will have an impact on the types of financing they are able to obtain.
- Increasing the number and visibility of women entrepreneurs who emerge from the informal sector will also strengthen the business case for investing in

women entrepreneurs. Most economic activity in Africa is currently conducted by the informal sector of which women make up nearly 90% of the workforce. More than 60 percent of the region's informal cross-border trade is carried out by female entrepreneurs who run micro, small, and medium agribusinesses. This represents a significant portion of the region's total intraregional trade. (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization)

Q. How is AFAWA supporting women-led agribusinesses to benefit from pan-African trade? Specific examples of AFAWA's recorded success in getting these Agri-SMEs export-ready.

R. Before I go into AFAWA's achievements with women, it's important to explain why we chose to focus on empowering African women-led businesses. Women are vital to Africa's economy; Africa has the highest percentage of female entrepreneurs in the world. This means that in Sub-Saharan Africa, one out of every four women starts or runs a business.

AFAWA's main goal is to help many women entrepreneurs emerge from the informal sector, which would help financial institutions build a strong business case. To help women-led businesses scale their operations and strengthen their business structures, we use a variety of financial instruments such as the Guarantee for Growth program, lines of credit, trade finance lines, and equity funds.

We provide policymakers (governments, apex banks) with technical assistance to financial institutions to help them better serve women-owned businesses, as well as capacity building for female entrepreneurs to help them increase their profitability and bankability.

Q. How does AfCFTA aid more regional inroads for women-led agribusinesses in Africa?

R. The work of the African Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is to facilitate trading and transfers across borders as well as address security challenges. Women can benefit from the AfCFTA in a variety of ways, including moving up the value

chain, leveraging the networks of women's associations, modernizing their businesses, and gaining access to new markets and investments. Approximately 70 percent of Africa's informal cross-border trade is done by women, who can take advantage of regional export destinations and use them as starting points to expand into international markets. Regional markets are important platforms that women-led agribusinesses can participate in to grow their expertise in export business as well as scale their operations. AfCFTA could support these businesses by reducing tariffs and simplifying trade procedures.

In addition, AfCFTA could leverage strategic partnerships to provide creative financing focused on aiding seamless logistics as well as training the women on how to make use of the markets.

Q. Having worked with women-led businesses in the past decade - what insight thereof would you want women and financial institutions to know today?

R. For financial institutions- women entrepreneurs provide a great new opportunity but tapping into it requires understanding their differences with other segments and accounting for their strategies and financial and non-financial products

For women-led businesses- It is important for women entrepreneurs to understand the financial sector and the right financial product for their businesses (particularly the stage of their businesses).

Q. What are your perspectives/ vision of how this (increase in women-led agribusinesses) would change the market landscape in Africa in terms of food and nutrition security?

R. Women oversee the nutrition and food security of the continent. Enhancing their ability to grow can only further help the development and growth of our continent: there is no development if people are going hungry and are malnourished.



BUILDING BRIDGES VIA KNOWLEDGE SHARING & TRANSFER IN THE ROOTS & TUBER VALUE CHAINS ACROSS AFRICAN COUNTRIES

BY AISHA HADEJIA & IFEOLUWA OLORUNNIPA

Root and tuber crops play a vital role in the food security, nutrition, socio-cultural practices, and climate adaptation of developing nations. In addition to being a key diet component for 2.2 billion people¹⁹, these crops provide an important source of income through direct sales and processing for food and non-food uses.

There are multiple entry points to catalyze growth and development in the African root and tuber value chains, but investment in research and development of seed systems presents an opportunity for enhanced collaboration, skills, and technology transfer across countries.

A developed seed system is one that utilizes a combination of formal and informal market channels to stimulate and efficiently meet farmers' demand for quality seeds. While the informal channel which is based on farmers' saved and reused seeds from previous harvests supplies more than 80% of seeds used in developing African countries²⁰, there is a deliberate effort to strengthen the African root and tuber seed industry via a formal constructed system that leads to genetically improved products.

Below are case studies of two cross-border initiatives that act as bridges between countries, research institutes, public and private sector entities to encourage collaboration, knowledge transfer, and the commercialization of research for a more resilient and productive food ecosystem.



Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa II (YIIFSWA II) (2017 -2021)

The YIIFSWA II project, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was implemented to develop and prove a functional, commercial seed yam seed system in Nigeria and Ghana to benefit smallholder farmers through timely

and affordable access to improved high-quality seed yam.

Led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the project introduced the use of rapid multiplication technologies such as Aeroponics and Hydroponics to support the rapid multiplication of seed yam by private seed companies and improve the livelihoods of people who depend directly on the yam value chain such as seed and ware yam producers, processors, marketers, transporters, and consumers. Eight private seed companies participated in the YIIFSWA-II in Nigeria and Ghana.

As part of its engagement under the project, Sahel Consulting in collaboration with Context Global Development (CDG) provided tailored business advisory support to private seed companies and research institutes to support the development and scaling of business models for the production of high-quality seed yam, and implementation of sales and marketing plans to ensure the distribution of seed yam tubers. The seed companies were supported across the following areas:

- Technical and business advisory services to support the development and scaling of business models focused on the production of high-quality seed yam.
- Capacity building support via training and recruitment support, to develop strong sales and marketing strategies and build teams that can support the sales of their products, ensuring the availability of certified seed yam to customers.
- Training for yam farmers and out-growers of seed companies on Good Agronomic Practices to support the production of high-quality seed yam.

Sahel Consulting and CGD further supported Early Generation Seed (EGS) vehicles in the form of research institutes and seed companies focused on the production of EGS across Nigeria and Ghana, to develop business plans and financial models to guide their seed production operations in a manner that ensure sustainability.

19. Natural Resources Institute. Root and tuber crops in development. Available at: <https://www.nri.org/development-programmes/root-and-tuber-crops-in-development/overview/>;

20. World Economic Forum (2015) How to improve Africa's seed system. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/09/how-to-improve-africas-seed-industry/>

Based on learnings from the project, Sahel Consulting and CGD jointly developed an open-source knowledge resource – the Seed Yam Playbook (<https://yamtoolkit.global>) – to serve as a business guide for seed companies or individuals who wish to venture into seed yam production. This tool was launched in April 2022.

Against the backdrop of AfCFTA, below are some recommendations for stakeholders to strengthen cross-border initiatives like YIFSWA-II.



- **Develop a coordinated system to generate demand for improved varieties across countries:** Due to the farmer and consumer preference for certain yam varieties, it is time-consuming and costly for private seed companies to generate demand and awareness for new yam varieties. Companies tend to depend on projects like YIFSWA-II to create demand.

Research institutions in AfCFTA countries should collaborate, and ensure new varieties developed in one country are showcased and promoted by other seed projects across the continent. This collective action will significantly raise awareness and drive demand for improved seeds, making it more attractive for private seed companies to invest.

- **Encourage cross-border collaboration and trade between organized farmer groups in Africa:** To fully benefit from the dividends of AfCFTA, private seed companies across Africa should cultivate relationships with farmer groups in neighboring countries to extend their reach. Identifying and partnering with clusters would provide a faster and more coordinated export system within Africa, with less stringent testing requirements in certain African countries.
- **Design and implement more cross-border projects:** Cross-border projects play a crucial role in ensuring knowledge sharing and transfer across neighboring countries in Africa. Through cross border projects, stakeholders in the agriculture sector are able to benefit from shared learning and access resources from several think tanks across the continent.

Building an Economically Sustainable and Integrated Cassava Seed System II (BASICS-II) (2020 -2024)



Nigeria and Tanzania are forging bonds due to cassava, a crop that can unlock the export potential of both countries and improve livelihoods for millions of actors in the value chain. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is funding a unique project targeted at developing the local cassava industry by strengthening the cassava seed system in both countries.

For more information on the cassava value chain, visit the 28th edition of the Sahel Quarterly titled The Cassava Value Chain

The BASICS-II project in Nigeria is led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in partnership with several public and private organizations including Sahel Consulting. The BASICS-II team is working to provide farmers with access to affordable, quality-assured cassava seed varieties through the establishment of a commercially viable seed value chain.

As Tanzania is about to kick off the implementation of the BASICS-II project, a learning forum was convened in Dodoma, Tanzania on 17th February 2022. The session was comprised of BASICS-II implementing project leads who shared ideas on how best to leverage the learnings from the BASICS-II model to further develop the Tanzanian cassava industry.

This successful effort at collaborating across borders must be scaled and adopted by more countries in Africa to foster a cascade effect of knowledge sharing by Africans for Africa. Below are some steps governments and other stakeholders must consider to encourage knowledge transfer across AfCFTA countries.

- **Identify the right country to partner with and a crop of focus:** Tanzania and Nigeria have similar visions and goals for their cassava industries, which is to promote farmers' access to improved varieties through a coordinated effort from research institutes and private sector partners to increase productivity. This type of collaboration will enhance capacity-building support for crop-specific interventions and create a beneficial platform for continental trade.
- **Lay the foundation for continuous knowledge sharing:** For knowledge transfer to be successful, public, private and development partners must be aligned and actively involved. In addition to the knowledge-sharing session convened in Tanzania, the BASICS-II project

conducted a Cassava Business Summit aimed at showcasing the opportunities in the cassava system to attract interest and investment.

The Cassava Business Summit is not unique to Tanzania alone. In 2021, Sahel Consulting convened the first Cassava Seed Business Summit in Nigeria which brought together stakeholders at different levels to discuss ways forward to challenges facing private sector mobilization in the cassava value chain.

The BASICS II project has demonstrated that collaboration, cross-border knowledge sharing, and skills transfer are key components for the successful implementation of agricultural projects. Project teams and implementing partners must work across borders to disseminate learnings that will improve farmer productivity and contribute to the agricultural transformation of Africa as a whole.



REFERENCES

1. Grow Africa (2018) 60% of arable land is in Africa and it has billions in investment potential. Available at: <http://www.growafrica.com/news/60-arable-land-africa-and-it-has-billions-investment-potential>
2. Statista (2022) Africa's Major Reliance on Russian and Ukrainian Wheat. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/chart/27009/import-sources-of-wheat-in-africa/>
3. Food Security Portal. Available at: <https://www.foodsecurityportal.org/>
4. Bouët and Odjo(2019; AGRA, 2019). Africa agriculture trade monitor. Available at: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8020-8877>
5. World Economic Forum (2015). Why SMEs are key to growth in Africa Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/08/why-smes-are-key-to-growth-in-africa/>
6. AGRA News Center (2019). The hidden middle: Bringing SMEs into the light Available at: <https://agra.org/news/the-hidden-middle-bringing-africas-smes-into-the-light/>
7. The World Bank (2020). Doing business 2020. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/business-enabling-environment>
8. (Deloitte. (2015). Reducing Food Loss Along African Agricultural Value Chains. London. Available at www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/za/Documents/consumer
9. The World Bank (2020). The Africa Continental Free Trade Area. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area#findings>
10. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area Questions & Answers. Available at: <https://knowledge.uneca.org/ATPC/sites/default/files/PDFpublications/>
11. UNDP (2020). The futures report. Making AfCFTA work for Women and youth. Available at: <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/the-futures-report--making-the-afcfta-work-for-women-and-youth.html>
12. Tralac (2018) Independent study on the potential benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on Nigeria: Study report. Available at: <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/13229-independent-study-on-the-potential-benefits-of-the-african-continental-free-trade-area-afcfta-on-nigeria-study-report.html>
13. African Center for Economic Transformation (2020)The AfCFTA May Be the Last Opportunity for Africa's Economic Transformation. Available at: <https://acetforafrica.org/media/opinion/the-afcfta-may-be-the-last-opportunity-for-africas-economic-transformation/>
14. CGIAR, Research program on grain legumes and dryland cereals (2018). Improved varieties and quality seed boost yields and profits for Myanmar farmers. Available at: <http://gldc.cgiar.org/improved-varieties-and-quality-seed-boost-yields-and-profits-for-myanmar-farmers/>
15. Kuhlmann, et.al. Syngenta Foundation (2018). Seed policy harmonization in ECOWAS: A case for Nigeria. Available at: https://www.syngentafoundation.org/sites/g/files/zhg576/f/seed_policy_harmonization_in_ecowas_the_case_of_nigeria_2019.pdf
16. Katrin Kuhlmann. Syngenta Foundation (2015) Harmonizing Regional Seed Regulations in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Comparative Assessment Available at: https://www.syngentafoundation.org/sites/g/files/zhg576/f/seedpolicy_new_africa_regulation_comparative_analysis_september_2015.pdf
17. International Labour Organization (2018) Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang--en/index.htm
18. Making Finance Work 4 Africa. Agricultural Finance. Available at: <https://www.mfw4a.org/our-work/agricultural-finance#:~:text=The%20share%20of%20commercial%20bank,to%20GDP%20across%20the%20continent.>
19. Natural Resources Institute. Root and tuber crops in development. Available at: <https://www.nri.org/development-programmes/root-and-tuber-crops-in-development/overview;>
20. World Economic Forum (2015) How to improve Africa's seed system. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/09/how-to-improve-africas-seed-industry/>

SAHEL GOT TALENTS

Sahel Consulting Appoints New Managing Partner

Effective January 1st, 2022, Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli stepped into the Executive Chair role and Temi Adegroye was appointed the new Managing Partner of Sahel Consulting.

Temi is a respected expert in the agricultural landscape and has demonstrated his commitment to improving the livelihoods of farmers and key private sector actors through his work in seed systems and other critical areas of agriculture. He leads Sahel Consulting's efforts in the development of the seed systems of key crops such as cassava and yam. He is also the national team leader of the Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN) program, an initiative that aims to catalyze a vibrant and inclusive local dairy sector.

Temi is passionate about agriculture and he has a deep knowledge of the dynamics in formal and informal agricultural markets in West Africa. He is proficient in client engagement, project management, and the development and operationalization of innovative strategies that address complex business challenges.

Temi currently sits on the board of Nourishing Africa, a digital platform focused on equipping and connecting agri-food entrepreneurs who are transforming the agriculture and food landscapes in Africa.

Sahel Consulting Welcomes a New Board of Directors

The new year saw the introduction of a new and diverse Board of Directors committed to providing guidance and direction towards achieving Sahel's goals.



BONNIE MCCLAFFERTY

Lead, Food Safety and
Director of USAID EatSafe.
Global Alliance for Improved
Nutrition



MEZUO NWUNELI
Managing Partner
Sahel Capital



CARLA DENIZARD
Regional Leader for West
Africa
World Vision International



SHACHI GURUMAYUM
Director
Agrimayum GMBH



NDIDI OKONKWO NWUNELI
(MFR)
Executive Chair
Sahel Consulting



TEMITOPE ADEGOROYE
Managing Partner
Sahel Consulting

New Managers at Sahel Consulting

Outstanding leaders within the Sahel team including Ifeoluwa Olorunnipa and Tolulope Babajide stepped into managerial roles on February 28th, 2022.



IFEOLUWA OLORUNNIPA
Manager
Sahel Consulting

Ifeoluwa's work is focused on market and industry research and analysis across multiple value chains, business planning for start-up seed companies in Nigeria, strategy development for both public and private sector initiatives, and the provision of tailored advisory services for private sector companies. She is also responsible for proposal development and the Sahel Corporate Shared Values (CSV) team at Sahel, ensuring the implementation of targeted programs that transform the lives of individuals in communities where Sahel operates.

Ifeoluwa holds a Master of Public Affairs (MPA), with concentrations in International Development and Policy Analysis from Indiana University, Bloomington, and an undergraduate degree in International Relations from Covenant University, Ota.



TOLULOPE BABAJIDE
Financial Inclusion and
Gender Manager
Sahel Consulting

Tolulope Babajide is a driven development professional with over 10 years of experience in livelihoods and gender programming, financial inclusion, and strategic partnerships. She currently serves as the Financial Inclusion and Gender Manager on the Advancing Local Dairy Development in Nigeria (ALDDN) Program where she leads the Farmers' Organization, Financial Inclusion & Income Diversification Support.

Tolulope holds a bachelor's degree in English and Literary Studies and is currently completing her MBA program at Nexford University. She is a consummate learner with courses on financial inclusion, partnerships, gender mainstreaming at Lagos Business School, World Bank.

SAHEL IN THE NEWS

- **International Women's Month 2022:** Gender Equality for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa: Sahel Consulting hosted a virtual event titled 'Gender Equality for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa' to commemorate International Women's Month featuring female speakers who are making a difference and breaking down barriers in Nigeria's agricultural sector on March 22nd, 2022. [International Womens' Day: Gender Eaulity for Sustainable Agriculture in Africa](#)
- **Opinion: Amid the Ukraine Invasion, We Must Avert the Next Food Crisis:** Our Executive Chair, Ndidi Nwuneli published an opinion piece themed "Amid the Ukraine invasion, we must avert the next food crisis" on March 22nd, 2022. The opinion piece highlighted actionable steps to be taken by stakeholders to mitigate against food crisis and ensure the most vulnerable in our communities survive through food shortages and price hikes. [Opinion amid the Ukraine invasion we must avert the next food crisis](#)
- **Nigeria's Spot on the Global Food System - Lessons from Expo 2020 Dubai:** Sahel Consulting in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Industry Trade and Investment and B2B Multi-Concept Solutions Provider facilitated the representation of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development at the Dubai Expo 2020 from 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022. [Nigeria's Spot on the Global Food System: Lessons from Expo 2020 Dubai](#)
- **Baseline Assessment of the Crop Variety Release and Registration System in Nigeria, Phase I:** Sahel Consulting Agriculture and Nutrition Limited led a study on Nigeria's Crop Variety Registration and Release Process, focusing on four crops – Maize, Rice, Cassava, Tomato, in collaboration with the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB) and the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCIDI) on March 3rd, 2022. [Baseline assessment of the crop variety release and registration system in Nigeria phase I](#)
- **The Collaborative Seed Programme (CSP) at Seed Connect Africa 2021:** Seed Connect Africa 2021 was themed "Partnership for a resilient and robust seed industry in Nigeria". It was the single largest gathering of seed sector stakeholders in West Africa organized by the National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC) and its partners between the 29th and 30th of November 2021. [The Collaborative Seed Programme CSP at Seed Connect Africa 2021](#)

- **Sahel Consulting and Syngenta Foundation collaborate to drive agricultural research and development:** Sahel Consulting and the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture (SFSA) hosted a convening on Reorienting Future Public Agriculture and Food Research and Development in Nigeria for Achieving Sustainable, Nutritious, and Climate-Resilient Food Systems on October 27th, 2021. [Reorienting public agriculture research and development in Nigeria](#)

SAHEL CONSULTING SPEAKS

- **Financial Inclusion Africa International Women's Day 2022:** Tolulope Babajide spoke as a panelist in the event themed Financial Inclusion: Breaking the Gender Bias in Africa on March 30th 2022.
- **Social Innovation in Africa:** Our Executive Chair, Ndidi Nwuneli delivered a webinar as part of Mossavar-Rahmani Centre for Business and Government's weekly Seminar series on March 24th 2022.
- **Zedcrest Investment Managers Economic Conversations Series:** Tolulope Babajide spoke on the importance of women being financially secure on a panel discussion-themed Women & Investing on March 24th, 2022.
- **Inauguration of the Community of Practice for State Honorable Commissioners of Agriculture by the FMARD:** Our Managing Partner, Temitope Adegoye spoke at the inauguration of the Community of Practice for State Honorable Commissioners of Agriculture by the FMARD on March 24th, 2022.
- **13th Multi Disciplinary Team Meeting (MDT) for FAO in West Africa:** Ndidi Nwuneli participated in the hybrid event to discuss ways and means to "build resilient agri-food systems in West Africa and Sahel", conducted from 15 to 17 March 2022.
- **Accelerating Women's Leadership for Climate Action, Resilient Food Systems, and Family Nutrition:** Ndidi Nwuneli spoke at the International Women's Day webinar to celebrate women's contributions and achievements as agents of change. The event was co-organized by the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment (ARBE), H.E. Josefa Sacko, The Environment Minister, and Egypt's Cop27 "Ministerial Coordinator and Envoy" - H. E Yasmine Fouad, and AGRA on March 8th 2022.
- **Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG):** Our Managing Partner, Temi Adegoye, served as a panelist at the recent in-country dissemination of the research findings on "Sectoral Development: Assessing the Conditions that drive Youth Employment in Key Sectors of the Nigerian Economy" Workshop, organized by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) in collaboration with African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) on March 8th, 2022.
- **Dubai 2022 Expo:** Our Executive Chair, Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli moderated a panel discussion with Nigerian agri-food businesses, investors, food tech pioneers, and vested government officials. The conversation focused on building security and sustainability in Nigeria's agri-food system on February 23rd, 2022.
- **Agricultural Technical and Vocational Education & Training (ATVET):** Our Manager, Aisha Hadejia spoke at the Agricultural Technical and Vocational Education & Training (ATVET) conference organized by the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Nigeria (AHK Nigeria) on February 1st, 2022.
- **National Dairy Policy Workshop:** Our Managing Partner, Temi Adegoye, served as a special guest and gave a goodwill message at the National Dairy Policy Workshop organized by FMARD and the Federal Ministry of Industry Trade and Investment (FMITI) with support from Sahel Consulting and Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) on January 11th, 2022.
- **A food systems approach for better nutrition and planetary health:** A side event for the Nutrition for Growth Summit: Aisha Hadejia was a panelist to discuss how different stakeholders can work together to deliver nutritious food systems for people and the planet. Country perspectives and case studies will be shared on December 1st, 2021.
- **The Bulb Africa Webinar on Feeding African Cities:** Agritech in the Hands of Empowered Youths: Ayodeji Ojo spoke on the webinar and highlighted that the level of technology adoption could determine the economic outcome of businesses on November 26th, 2021.

SAHEL CAPITAL SPEAKS

- **AfDB Environmental and Social (E&S) Workshop for Financial Intermediaries in Nigeria:** Oladele Shekete spoke on "Strengthening the Agricultural Supply Chain Using the Ingrower/Outgrower Model" on March 30, 2022.
- **Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Nigeria (DGIC) Agricultural TVET conference:** Tosin Ojo spoke, as a panelist, on "How SMEs can tap into investment opportunities in Agribusiness" on February 3rd, 2022
- **AGRF Podcast:** Tosin Ojo spoke on "What needs to be done to accelerate progress and recovery towards inclusive agricultural transformation" on January 25th, 2022

NOURISHING AFRICA SPEAKS

- **ITCILO Financing Mechanics:** Ify Umunna spoke on "Financing Mechanics" at the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) webinar held on March 31, 2022.
- **Launch of Cashew-IN Platform & Cashew Market Outlook Report 2022 Confirmation:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo spoke at the "Launch of Cashew-IN Platform & Cashew Market Outlook Report 2022 Confirmation" which was held virtually on March 24, 2022.
- **Lagos Employment Summit:** Ify Umunna spoke on "Innovative and inclusive Job Creation Strategies Post the COVID-19 Pandemic" at the Lagos Employment Summit on March 4, 2022.
- **Social Media Week Lagos:** Obianuju Amaeshi spoke at the Social Media Week Lagos on March 3, 2022.
- **7th EU-Africa Business Forum (EABF):** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo spoke at the 7th EU-Africa Business Forum (EABF) on "Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Agri-Food System Transformation in Africa" held virtually on February 15, 2022.
- **SME Enterprise Support Organizations (ESOs) Launch:** Ify Umunna spoke at the launch of the Nourishing Africa report on "SME Enterprise Support Organizations (ESOs)" held virtually on February 10, 2022.
- **Nourishing Africa First Thursdays:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo and Oladunmade Otitoola spoke at the February and March editions of First Thursdays held virtually on February 3, 2022, and March 3, 2022, on "Setting Financial Goals for your Agribusiness" and "Converting Customers Into Your Biggest Sales Agents" respectively.
- **Afrocentric Innovation Series:** Ify Umunna spoke at the Afrocentric Innovation Series organized by Paulesi Incubation Center in a virtual event held on January 7, 2022.
- **Food Tank Publication:** Nourishing was featured in the Food Tank publication among the "122 Organizations Transforming Food Systems in 2022" on December 30, 2021.
- **Nourishing Africa Members' Year-End Gathering:** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo, Ify Umunna, and Oladunmade Otitoola spoke during the Nourishing Africa Members' Year-End Gathering held virtually on December 15, 2021.
- **African Startup Awards:** Ify Umunna spoke on "A New Funding Model For African Innovation" at the African Startup Awards held virtually on December 14, 2021.
- **African Entrepreneurship Forum Fireside Chat:** Ify Umunna participated in the African Entrepreneurship Forum Fireside Chat organized by the Shared Value Africa Initiative on November 30, 2021.
- **Feeding African Cities: Agritech In The Hands of Empowered Youth:** Ify Umunna spoke at the "Feeding African Cities: Agritech In The hands of Empowered Youth" webinar which was held on November 25, 2021.
- **Leveraging Private Sector and Multi-Stakeholder Investment:** Ify Umunna spoke at the "Leveraging Private Sector and Multi-Stakeholder Investment" webinar which was held on November 18, 2021.

- **8th Annual ReNAPRI Stakeholders' Conference:** Ify Umunna spoke at the 8th Annual ReNAPRI Stakeholders' Conference which was held virtually on November 18, 2021.
- **International Fertilizer Association (IFA) Strategic Forum:** Ify Umunna spoke on "The Role of Startups And Innovation Delivery In Africa's AgTech Transformation" at the International Fertilizer Association (IFA) Strategic Forum which was held virtually on November 17, 2021.
- **BizzTalk Africa:** Ify Umunna spoke on "Attracting Youth Into Agriculture and Food Space" at the BizzTalk Africa series which was held virtually on November 11, 2021.
- **YouthPower2 Symposium:** Victor Mugo spoke at the YouthPower2 Symposium which was held virtually on November 10, 2021.
- **Africa Summit on Entrepreneurship & Innovation (ASENTI 2021):** Rahmat Eyinfunjowo, Ify Umunna, and Victor Mugo spoke at the Africa Summit on Entrepreneurship & Innovation (ASENTI 2021) which was held virtually on November 5, 2021.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Management Consulting

Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Limited

Office Address:

Plot 817a Don P. Ojemen Close, Off Ebitu Ukiwe Street, Jabi District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria

Phone:

+234-705-652-9648, +234-705-652-9812

Website:

www.sahelconsult.com

Email:

research@sahelcp.com

Follow us on:

   [sahelconsulting](#)  [Sahel Consulting](#)

Private Equity

Sahel Capital Agribusiness Managers Limited

Office Address:

34b, Fola Osibo Road,
Lekki Phase I, Lagos, Nigeria

Phone:

+234-702-500-0992

Website:

www.sahelcapital.com

Email:

info@sahelcp.com, fafin@sahelcp.com

Follow us on:

  [sahelcapital](#)  [Sahel Capital](#)



Office Address:

34a, Fola Osibo Road, Lekki Phase I,
Lagos, Nigeria

Website:

www.nourishingafrica.com

Email:

info@nourishingafrica.com

Follow us on:



[nourishafrica1](#)



[nourish_africa](#)



[Nourishing Africa](#)