



SHARING HER MOTHER'S DREAMS

Afi Sylvie Sagbo Gommard

Every little girl looks up to her mother as a role model. She follows her footsteps and draws motivation and inspiration from her mother. A mother is the first friend and the first teacher, she is the one who teaches the first lessons and sows seed to strengthen her daughter's roots. However, as we proceed in life, finish our higher studies, many a times we tend to move out and create our own little world with new people in it. But blessed are the ones who still get to have their mothers in the world they build and continue to have her guidance and diverse experience to learn from.



And one such blessed lady is Ms Afi Sylvie SAGBO GOMMARD.

An asset to the firm

Helping her mother as the Deputy Director of SENAR Les Délices Lysa, cashew and peanut processing company, was probably one of the best decisions Ms Afi Sylvie SAGBO GOMMARD ever made. With a Master's degree in Finance and Capital Markets, Ms Sylvie is a great asset to the firm.



Her mother is her role model

Coming from a Senegalese background and growing up in a family where cashew processing was very important, it is not very hard to understand the reason for Ms Sylvie SAGBO's choice of profession. She has grown up idolizing her mother, who succeeded with a lot of rigor, exigency and work. Her mother, Mrs Lydia SAGBO, is the kind of woman who believes in her products and continues to struggle in order to make them available in all the supermarkets in Dakar.

Thus, being a witness to her mother's hard work and seeing the company grow and improve over the years as they advanced the quality and taste of the products, she was inspired to join the sector as well and lend a helping hand.

An added advantage

Although she does not have any special training, being the daughter of the cashew processor who has over 35 years of experience, has its own perks. Her mother has been her guide throughout her journey in the cashew enterprise and her visits to numerous cashew nuts processing units have given her the added advantage to understand the market. Besides, since this is a family owned company, she has been blessed to receive tremendous support throughout.

Passionate about the cashew sector

It would be wrong to say that Ms Sylvie SAGBO joined the business only because it was a family initiative. This is because, apart from her mother's involvement being one of the reasons, she herself was passionate about working in a sector of this kind. Given the fact that cashew is a valuable nut with a lot of potential, she wanted to do her bit in exploring it and bringing out her variations.

Developing strategies to excel

In order to expand the business and reach a positive growth curve with a leap, she even visited many processing units to learn about the various steps involved. Since this is a competitive business where everyone wishes to excel, along with her mother, she tested their competitors' products in order to enhance the taste and quality of their own.

She has also taken up various trainings in cost accounting for production monitoring. This vast scale of knowledge is required as she is involved in taking a number of business decisions which includes purchase of RCN/Kernel, processing and operation monitoring, marketing and negotiation with kernel buyers, technology selection and financial transaction with banks.

An organized routine

In particular, her typical day at work involves sorting and grading of the white whole kernels collected in the processing units. Based on the customer's choice, the nuts may be roasted or processed which is then followed by the packaging. The final task in her daily routine involves the labelling and delivery in supermarkets to promote the products. While that is definitely a lot of work, since she loves her job, she doesn't mind the hard work.

Interested, but not constantly involved

Moving on, when questioned about the availability of labor in her region, she replied that while a number of people are interested in the sector, their involvement is not constant. They offer accommodation to the workers and ensure their best treatment and benefits in order to attract them towards the job.



Quest for brilliance

When asked about her products, Ms Sylvie SAGBO takes pride in the fact that they are all designed under the guidance of her mother who has such a vast experience. Besides, at the enterprise, their quest for experimentation and excellence to reach the best possible standards makes them stand out among their competitors. They have a rigorous management along with innovative products and are not afraid of trying out different methods to reach a greater taste quality.

When questioned about the male counterparts in the sector, she is quick to say that she does not encounter any problem as such nor is she of the opinion that she is denied rewards when compared to them.

Overcoming the challenges

While she admits that proper funding, managing her workers and meeting deadlines of the customers are serious challenges, she is quick to add that she tries to overcome them to the best of her ability by planning out her schedule before time and putting her heart and soul into her job.

While this is a family based enterprise, due to the unavailability of labor, it sometimes becomes difficult to strike a work life balance but at the end of the hectic day, priorities have their place and no matter what, she manages to spare some quality time for her family.

A dream she hopes to achieve

Given the time and commitment she has put into the company, in the coming years she hopes to see it grow many folds and it is her dream to see her products in the African sub-region and abroad where they are valued and appreciated. She also hopes that women will receive better support and funding to take part and continue in the cashew sector, as the lack of resources serves as an inhibiting factor in the participation of women.

Not one to be put down

Also, like many other women in different professions, she is also of the opinion that they are not recognized in the generally male dominated sector. However, this does not bring her energy down but instead makes her want to aim higher by following the company's standard mantra which is to believe in their products and value them.

Given her positive attitude and endless efforts, we wish Ms Sylvie SAGBO and her mother all the best as they strive to fulfill all their aspirations!

