

Looking Beyond the Hurdles

Kone Kanate Namaro

Owner and managing director of a cashew processing unit named CAJU Industry in Kolia, Ivory Coast, Mrs KONE KANATE Namaro has an encouraging story to share!

A nut that could be valued

When she was married, her husband was the mayor of Kolia, the village where they lived for 27 years. He later went on to work with the FirCA which was engaged in researching funds for agriculture. It was in the midst of this work that he realized cashew could be greatly valued and the couple thus joined the sector together.

In the light of this perspective, Mrs KONE undertook a training from TECHNOSERVE and visited many processing units. When she had gathered enough knowledge, she chose to build a stronger tryst with the cashew industry by starting her own industry. Being into processing from the past three years, now, she is involved full time in her industry of 130 members, her working hours being from 7.00 am to 1.00 pm and 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm.



Her professionalism keeps her going

She is in charge of all major activities related to the buying of raw cashew, the processing methods, marketing and the trading. While this is a huge responsibility on her shoulders considering the strength of the company is also in large numbers, given her professionalism and love for her work, she manages it with ease.

A labor intensive job

Commenting on the labor activity in her region, she says, labor is available but when the prospective employees visit the industry and see how difficult it is to work in a cashew processing unit, they leave. So, labor is available in the region but not for cashew activity.

An empathetic partner

Speaking of striking a work life balance, she beams that her husband is chairman of the board of directors of the industry and thus, understands the nature of the cashew system and the commitment it requires. He is considerate and supportive and as for the children, they are all grown-ups and don't live with her due to which she manages her time well.

Delivering products of quality

When asked about the uniqueness of the industry and its products, she is of the opinion that the quality of her products stand out amongst others. It is very important for her to deliver a high-quality product.



Trying to make it big

Also, as a promising venture, they provide trainings and financial help to their women employees. When it comes to dealing with her male colleagues, she does not think they stand as path blocks nor does she feel like she is denied rewards in their comparison. She doesn't look at herself in the place to advice on strategies to improve the position of women in the cashew sector because projecting the larger picture, she envisions herself as a person trying to make it big in the industry.



Hurdles in the path

When she speaks of the challenges she faces, for anyone in the cashew industry, there are innumerable lessons to learn. Initially, when they had just started, funding was a problem along personnel training, equipment issues, and power supply issues. Besides, Kolia is a village situated at 700 km of the city Abidjan, making it all the more difficult to convey equipment and machines from Abidjan to their destination.

Not one to stop

However, given the success of the industry, we can guess that she had the vision to look beyond the challenges. In order to make reach her goal, she contacted a number of banks for the funding, but finally only one accepted to finance the project and that's how she was able to buy the machines and start the business.

The rejections from the banks she had contacted and their discouragement did not stop her from trying and putting her plans into action. This leads us to the conclusion that Mrs KONE is a wonderful leader, one that doesn't stop with the tides but who, instead, is willing to work against it.

A milestone to cross

Her work means everything to her and in the years to come, she foresees her company turning into a big processing unit, producing more than the current annual capacity of 3,000 tons.

She does not see this as an impossible dream, but thinks it to be a milestone that they are capable of crossing. We couldn't agree any less with her when she signs off quoting her favorite ideology to live one's life by, which is - 'If you can dream it, you can do it!'

