



# PASSIONATE FOR CHANGE

*Mary Adzanyo*



Born in the beautiful city of Kumasi in Ghana and having spent most of her childhood in the Volta region of Ghana, on the alpine Kabakaba hill which looks across the neighboring towns and villages, Ms. Mary Adzanyo is passionate about nature from the word go!

***Her grandmother was one of her motivators***

She says that the greenery and natural surroundings in which she grew up under the guidance of her loving grandmother motivated her to later venture into the agricultural field. As a child, she followed her grandmother to her vegetable garden where annual crops such as yam and vegetables were grown for household use.

***She has spectacular degrees to her credit***

However, she only studied a bit of agriculture in school. She majored in science at the secondary school level studying physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. Today, Ms. Mary Adzanyo holds an M.Phil in Food Science from the University of Ghana, Legon and has certificates in marketing, export diversification and market analysis tools as well as Stakeholder Dialogues. From the Michigan State University (USA), she studied International Food Laws and Regulations.

Since 2013, she has been a Gestalt practitioner in organizational and institutional development, has graduated from the OSD-Center of Ghana in collaboration with Gestalt Organization and Systems Development Integrative Study Centre – Ohio, USA and the International Organization & Systems Development Program, Ohio, USA.

That is a tremendous list of degrees giving us an idea of the knowledgeable and intelligent woman she is!

### ***Her role as the Director of ComCashew***

Ms. Mary Adzanyo is currently the Director of Private Sector Development at the Competitive Cashew initiative/ GIZ ComCashew where she leads ComCashew's objective of increasing the competitiveness of cashew processing and private sector development in Africa. To add to her accolades, she has lived and worked in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Ghana, Gambia, Senegal, Kenya, and South Africa. Her expertise is in the area of international marketing, processing, food quality, food safety and sustainability. Her professional life has been connected with several value chains including fruits, vegetables, shea, fish, macadamia and cashew her current love!

### ***Her forte***

Her main area of focus is in private sector development. Prior to joining the Competitive Cashew initiative, Mary Adzanyo was the Trade Development Manager of the multinational retailer Koninklijke Ahold NV in West Africa and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Ghana.

### ***Playing a key role in development***

She indicated that while working with the giant supermarket chain, Koninklijke Ahold NV, an international retailing company with several stores in Europe and USA, one of her key roles was to look for and link up African suppliers to the Ahold stores. It was not an easy job as few suppliers could not meet the Food safety requirement of the supermarket chain. Ms. Mary therefore conducted trainings for new suppliers on quality, food safety and certification as well as requirements for exports into international markets and as pre-audit by international food safety and sustainability auditors.

Working with Ahold was very exciting and insightful as she played a key role in education of suppliers to ensure compliance to the Global Food Safety initiative standards, which are the main requirements of Ahold. She says that she enjoys linking value chain actors to market and promoting African products and suppliers.

### ***The challenges set her on a bigger journey***

However, she indicated that her biggest challenge while in Ahold was that it was extremely difficult to source cashew kernels from Africa due to the limited quantities. Cashews are one of the special nuts sourced by Ahold because many consumers love it, first as one of the healthiest snacks and secondly, due to its great taste. Ahold needed thousands of tons annually and this was not available on the continent in the form required by the supermarket chain. The lack of cashews was what inspired Mary Adzanyo to join the GIZ/Bill and Melinda Gates Funded project on cashews in 2010.

This project, then called the African Cashew initiative has had many strategic drivers that could make it succeed. It was a value chain project looking at all segments of the cashew value chain from farm to shelf (of Ahold and all other buyers); with multi-stakeholder experts providing both technical and financial backing.

### ***Leaving an impact***

Speaking about it, she said, "My main goal was to stimulate investment in cashew processing in Africa. I wanted to advocate advice and facilitate increased investment and profitability for the cashew sector. I wanted to contribute to the education and motivation of investment into local processing for the profit of Africa and the global cashew sector knowing very well that that would benefit all actors along the cashew supply chain. I wanted a change and market opportunities for the hard working cashew farmers, competitive African processing businesses and kernels for buyers and consumers."



It is with happiness she let us know that today, more than half of the world's cashews are produced on the continent. And it will be great to have more processed locally to meet the market demands of traceability and high quality and safe products which every consumer loves.

### ***A positive growth curve***

She has been active in the field of cashews since 2003. Looking back, she indicated that cashews remain promising with high potential for private sector investment and growth. The Competitive Cashew initiative and all its partners have done a great job. Cashew processing in Africa has increased more than 400% since Mary joined the project. Yet, a great lot needs to be done.

### ***Her ideas for a better sector***

Productivity/yield levels have room for increment to at least 1500kg/ha to ensure higher income for farmers, including the youth, men and women. This would directly ensure that the current gap in global production volumes closes further and assures a better supply and demand balance. Both local and international investors from experienced processing countries are welcome to start their processing businesses in Africa to feed the growing global consumer demands which stands today at 8-10% per annum.

### ***A close knit community***

Competitiveness of the processing sector requires a strong linkage between the processor and both its supply (farmers and banks) and demand (buyers) bases. Government also has a great role to play in creating suitable business environment for private sector businesses.

### ***Their efforts have paid off***

ComCashew (ACi) under GIZ lead is a price winning development program due to its approach. In March 2016, it received the OECD DAC prize for taking innovation to scale.

Congratulations to all the team and partners for such a wonderful achievement!

### ***Hoping for a bright future***

Ms. Adzanyo said that continuous capacity building, creation of enabling business environment; private-public dialogue and cooperation as well as regional integration of cashew producing countries would further ensure the growth of the cashew sector. She is looking forward to the future with hope! A future she says looks bright for the young African cashew sector.

As for the women in leadership, she has an inspiring advice. She says, "Continue to be yourself and best. Many great nations are built on efforts of women who took the lead and brought about positive changes and growth."

