



# BENEFITTING THE WORLD

*Ouattara Adjata*

---

*When asked to choose between working hard or working smart, a lot may choose the former. However, if a task is done smartly, it may require the same levels of hard work but the yield it brings with it would be much higher.*

## ***The flag bearer of change***

In the year 2005, when Madame Ouattara Adjata realized that most of the farmers were selling their production individually and therefore were not able to negotiate a better price, she became the flag bearer of change. She took the first step by gathering several small middle men and farmers operating in Dabakala area and created COOPAD (Cooperative des producteurs d'Anacarde de Dabakala).

As the founder and President of this organization, she started the journey with the registration process of individual farmers. One hundred and sixty farmers joined the cooperative and they got their official registration document on 18th March, 2015. The organization and their plans were executed to such great standards that today, 314 farmers from 13 villages are part of the cooperative, supplying close to 1500Mt of dried raw cashew nuts to Olam Bouake factory.

## ***A mighty achievement***

Moreover, as the statistics state, COOPAD ranks as the second largest cooperative in the zone of Dabakala-Boniéré, which is an achievement that deserves applause! Their work involves the collection of cashew with the farmers, followed by its transfer to one of their 5 warehouses. Once the stock is offloaded, the cashew is then dried before being loaded and sent to the processing unit in Bouake.

## ***A smart partnership***

In 2010, the organization decided to go a step ahead and in order to maximize the return; they tied the bond of partnership with Olam. It was also during this period that Madame Diallo Adjata used to deliver to Olam depending on the opportunities that she was able to seek. She used to negotiate prices on a day to day basis and based on the comfort of cooperative members, the decision of delivery was taken. Due to this structure of deal, they were not receiving any training or funding from Olam.

After 3 years of working with Olam under the opportunity buying model, in 2013, the two organizations mutually decided to move to another level.

## ***The initiation of the sustainable cashew growers' program***

In 2012, Olam opened a new semi mechanical processing unit in the Bouake region. The cashew sector, as is the case, is characterized by small growers, low yields, poor agricultural practices and a multitude of intermediaries. Thus, there was a need for a large processor like Olam to directly engage with growers and secure the supply through an innovative and sustainable supply chain, aiming at improving the livelihoods of the growers as well as their communities. Keeping this logic in mind, the sustainable cashew growers' program was initiated with the objective of connecting 40.000 farmers to the cashew factory in Bouake.

## ***Receiving trainings to top the scale of brilliance***

Madame Adjata's cooperative has shown interest in this program and it has been accepted in their sustainable procurement network since 2013. Along with their partners, GIZ and IDH, Olam has provided numerous trainings to COOPAD farmers. They have imparted valuable information on good agricultural practices, including the pre and post harvesting techniques; covered topics like child labor, democratic management of the cooperatives and conducted sessions on traceability system and tools.



### ***Surviving the tests***

Throughout the years of their partnership, COOPAD has continued to prove itself time and again. In 2013, they were provided with a mere USD 50,000, and while that was a small amount compared to the potential of the cooperative, Madame Adjata was still able to collect 730 Mt of fully traceable cashew from her network of farmers, establishing the fact that they were an organization to look out for!

### ***Overcoming the storms***

2014 was a particularly strenuous year as the entire cashew sector went through a reform. As the government introduced a minimum price system and started registration of people operating the cashew value chain, new strategies were in demand. In order to withstand the multitude of changes, Madame Adjata organized a couple of meetings with her cooperative members in order to explain the different changes and potential benefit of the reform.

They also managed to convince Olam and obtained a funding of about USD 60,000. In return, they received 907 Mt of cashew from COOPAD, yet another marvelous accomplishment.

### ***Rising in an expected downfall***

The next year, 2015, proved to be a game changing year in the Cote d'Ivoire cashew sector. High price fluctuations were observed in the market. By the end of the season, even the farmers quoted a price much higher than they used to initially receive. In this difficult environment, while one may have expected a downfall and a decrease in the growth rate, COOPAD surprised everyone.

The cooperative produced 1477 Mt, increasing its volume by more than 60% as compared to 2014. This was an outstanding performance and COOPAD was rewarded as one of the best cooperatives in the company's sustainable procurement network. It was in the same year that Madame Adjata made some donations of school kits and cashew plantation maintenance equipment worth 3 million. These were distributed in two villages and were given to each and every farmer who was a member of the cooperative.

### ***Maintaining a balance***

While 2016 was another difficult year because of the high price volatility and high increase in the number of players, COOPAD managed 1317 Mt of raw cashew nuts. Although this is 10% lower than the volume obtained in 2015, given the context, it's still a good number.

### ***Taking up other projects***

With the success of the business and strong partnership with Olam, Madame Ouattara Adjata has been able to invest in other businesses. She has opened 2 oil stations in the area- one in Boniérou and a second one in Dabakala, which is in partnership with TOTAL. The cooperative also bought three vehicles to collect more cashew from the plantation and villages to transport them to the warehouses. They have also expanded their network and along with cashew, cover more commodities like peanuts.

As a goal for the next season, Madame Adjata hopes to supply 2000 Mt of fully traceable and dried raw cashew nuts to the Olam Bouake factory. She would also like to get her cooperative certified as organic and fair trade. Besides this, COOPAD is registered in the 3S- Sustainable Supply System, which is a procurement model providing full traceability to the customers. It brings together the traders, processors, roasters and retailers to provide completely transparent, traceable supply chain of cashews.

### ***Reaching excellence***

Thus, as we see, Madame Ouattara Adjata is a magnificent blessing to the cashew sector whose contributions have helped innumerable people. What started as a small idea to build a collaborative network has succeeded towards becoming a brilliant cashew chain.

