

PROMISING POLISHED LEVELS OF PROFESSIONALISM

Sanatha Berthe

The ultimate aim of all mankind is to succeed. However, if one can ensure the success of people around them while working towards self-development, it is sure to guarantee immense benefits.

Valuing the cashew chain

As the Managing director of ICAF, Mrs Sanatha BERTHE of Ivory Coast has been able to ensure that her services reach the people in her neighborhood. She has succeeded in forming a collaborative network by focusing on creating a supportive cashew value chain. She has achieved this by helping farmers and producers to control good practices. Her enterprise also provides aid in setting up a traceability system in farms and industries as well as establishes quality standards along with health security that will allow the employees to have an easier access to international market.

The overall aim is to value the chain in order to showcase a better social responsibility while performing their activities.

A well-read woman with abundant experience

With over a decade's worth of experience in the cashew sector, Mrs Sanatha, without a doubt, has abundant knowledge. She also has a rich educational background, with various diplomas and trainings including a University diploma in the processing of agricultural products and Engineering diploma in quality management.

She isn't new to the market

As we look back, we're informed that this wasn't a new market that she discovered. She has known about the cashew business since 1992, when her father started planting. However, back then, she didn't really know purpose its. Hence, she started gathering information on cashew production and when the opportunity arose for her to help in implementing standards, she didn't hesitate to take it up as a challenge. Thus, with the aim to propose Ivory Coast and the region with well-processed products meeting the sanitary requirements in the market, she embarked on the journey in the vast cashew market.

While her father was the main source through which she got in touch with the market because he owned a plantation, she herself went through a lot of researches that were conducted on cashew destination countries, while studying its use and the sanitary requirements of the export market. She already had done a basic training in food industry and specialized in processing, but to gather more knowledge, she attended trainings in Europe and Ivory Coast under food security experts.





Promising polished levels of professionalism

The enterprise currently has eleven employees and when asked, Mrs Sanatha discloses that due to lack of training, qualified labor is rarely available in the cashew enterprise. As for the unique characteristic of the company that makes them stand out among the rest, she informs they help the companies to value their products through quality certification and sanitary security.

They are focused in food industries support, while the other enterprises working in quality management sector are usually multi-field. The fact that they are specialized in this sector allows them to have a greater level of professionalism.

Assuming innumerable responsibilities

When asked to give a brief layout of the day to day activities, she says, she doesn't have a typical working day. Each day differs with its organization.

There are some days when she has typical training sessions with processors or producers. This involves activities like welcoming the participants, presentation of the theme of the day and displaying the slides while promoting valuable exchange of information around the topic. This is then followed by visit to the workshops to put into practice what has been previously discussed. They have a brief recap at the end and form resolutions for the days ahead.

During the audit days with processors or producers, she is in charge of conducting meetings to present the goals and expectations. She also interviews the persons concerned and gathers the needed information. She engages in discussions with each audited person and looks after compliance monitoring.

When she is working at office, her activities revolve around checking her mails, responding to them and adjusting the agenda to review the daily actions. On ordinary days, she has non-formal debriefing with colleagues around a coffee or directly at their desks. She converses with them on their daily work progress, and gives a hand to those in need. Generally, she does not have a formal end-of-the-day hour. She goes home depending on the work progress and her son's classes.

Her priorities are clearly set

Thus, by adjusting some time at the end of the day and during the weekends for her children and family, she tries to strike a work life balance. Mrs Sanatha also lets us know that after each mission of approximately 3 to 5 days on the field, she and other workers try to spend a full day with family. They believe in having clear conversations and therefore explain to the children the kind of work they're engaged in and its impact on the community. Since seeds sown at young age are more likely to bore fruit in the later years, she and other employees also teach their children about the cashew sector. This, they hope, will arise their interest in the market and help them analyze the by-products that could be used for daily consumption.



Grateful for the support

She is happy to have been blessed with a supportive family that encourages her to be engaged in work. They're interested in the sector and wish to lend a helping hand, directly or indirectly. In fact, the enterprise's family members also insisted to come to SIETTA 2016 and were impressed seeing the full-size processing units exhibited and the demos made by the equipment manufacturers.



Considering that her father owns a family cashew plantation of 10 ha and her husband works in the Cotton and Cashew Council for two years now, she is supported all the more. Her husband also encourages the promotion of industrial sector and motivates the population of the north to invest themselves in cashew farming.

Developing a brilliant level of understanding with the male counterparts

Speaking of gender equality, she smiles that when it comes to working alongside men, she has no complaints. It is such that they almost forget they are persons of different gender for they establish that level of understanding. The men are passionate about their work and respect their lady coworkers.

However, she is of the opinion that the position of women in the industry can be further improved by providing trainings on management in general and business management, including accountancy and finance. The lack of training level and the understanding of the agricultural and industrial sectors is what, in her opinion, prevents women from becoming leaders.

Keeping everyone happy

When asked about the challenges she faces, to make sure each employee feels good is quite a task. Considering that at the end of the day, she wants everyone to succeed and be satisfied, it requires her to put in extra efforts. Although difficult, she also ensures that the clients, at the end of each intervention, will be able to offer high quality and faultless products to their customers.

Also, making sure that there will be more resources in terms of their job in Ivory Coast and in the region continues to be a challenge.

As a strategy, she says adopting a meticulous attention to work is the way to go.

Additional trainings

They also offer training courses to students studying agro-industrial specialties while conducting classes, seminars and awareness animation in Graduate schools. She says that if there are some finances opportunities, she would like to orientate them towards the acquisition of necessary equipment for cashew nuts and kernels quality control. She would also make sure to provide support to small producers and processors in order to allow them to set up the necessary minimum requirements to be recognized by the GFSI.

A perfect combo

When asked about her work, she gushes that it gives her the platform to combine pleasure and business. In the years to come, she hopes to run a company with the task to be an inescapable support for high quality products in the whole region, both West and Central Africa.

