

OACPS Webinar-Based Knowledge Sharing Cycle - **THIRD SESSION**

THEME: Driving Agricultural Development in OACPS Countries: Learnings from ACP-EU Private Sector Development Programmes.

⇒ The session took place on Tuesday, 9 July 2024.

Webinar organised by: **OACPS Secretariat, with the support of Business ACP.**

⇒ **Watch the Video Recording of the session [by clicking here](#).**

Moderated by: **Mrs. Yvonne CHILESHE, Expert Value Chains, Department of Structural Economic Transformation and Trade, OACPS.**



Introduction:

The OACPS Secretariat, with the support of Business ACP, developed a [Knowledge Sharing Cycle \(KSC\)](#) on successful initiatives implemented by **the Intra-ACP Private Sector Development (PSD)** programmes. The **KSC** consists of five webinar-based sessions each focused on strategic PSD key areas: (1) [Digitalisation](#), (2) [Women Economic Empowerment](#), (3) [Agri-business](#), (4) **Green and Blue Economy**, (5) **Knowledge Management and Sustainability**.



The initiative responds to the needs of OACPS regions that wish to **strengthen** their **knowledge** on **key thematic areas affecting PSD**. The OACPS Secretariat has prepared a first screening of activities, projects and success stories developed by intra-ACP PSD programmes, implementing partners and PSD actors on these key issues, publishing [Thematic Knowledge Bases](#) that gather relevant information on PSD in ACP countries. Check the [Thematic Knowledge Base on Agriculture](#).

Webinar Attendance: About 75 participants joined the event online. The webinar brought together representatives of the PSD, public bodies, representatives of OACPS countries based in Brussels, as well as technical and financial partners who shared experiences and best practices with regard to Agriculture in ACP countries.

Opening Remarks:



Mr. Regis Meritan, Head of Sector, DG INTPA, Agricultural Growth, European Commission

Mr. Meritan expressed his honour in supporting the private sector in agriculture, a focus initiated nearly a decade ago. Initially, there were concerns that agricultural funding might decrease due to a shift towards private sector involvement. However, **significant demand from ACP partners highlighted agriculture's crucial role in sustainable development and improving livelihoods.** The shift to supporting the private sector aimed to more directly assist those on the ground, moving beyond government-centric cooperation. Meritan highlighted the success of collaborative efforts with ACP countries, including **building capacities and supporting farmers' organisations.** These organisations now have greater influence on public policies and provide essential services, reflecting substantial progress compared to the past.



Meritan also mentioned successful collaborations with COLEAD, which has helped ACP exporters meet EU regulations. **Access to finance was emphasised as a critical challenge,** with tools developed to support cooperatives, farmers, and MSMEs in the agricultural value chain. He acknowledged that private investment alone is insufficient, necessitating continued support for public policies and development banks.

Lastly, Meritan stressed the **importance of climate-smart practices,** such as **agro-ecology** and agro-forestry, which are being integrated into all operations. He reaffirmed the **EU's commitment to supporting agricultural development in ACP countries,** focusing on evolving partnerships and ongoing support for farmers' organisations.

H.E. Mr. Georges Singana M. Maniuri, Chairperson of the OACPS Subcommittee on Trade & Commodities, Ambassador of Vanuatu



The Ambassador is honoured to address the OACPS Webinar-Based Knowledge Sharing Cycle, emphasising that this session goes beyond merely discussing agriculture, focusing on its **transformative potential for ACP countries** amidst challenges and opportunities. **Agriculture is highlighted as the backbone of the economies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific,** significantly contributing to GDP, employment, and food security, particularly in rural areas. However, the agricultural sector faces significant challenges, including climate change, limited access to markets, technology, and finance, as well as institutional capacity issues.



Despite these challenges, the **OACPS is committed to resilience and innovation through strategies like the Revised Private Sector Development Strategy (2023).** Key initiatives, such as the **Intra-ACP Private Sector Development Programmes** in partnership with the EU, are

highlighted for their success in promoting climate-smart agriculture and improving agricultural value chains.

The Ambassador urges **continued collaboration and dialogue to harness agriculture's transformative power for sustainable development** and prosperity in the OACPS regions.

PANEL DISCUSSION 1 – The Experiences of Intra-ACP PSD Programmes in advancing agricultural development in ACP countries:



Moderator: The first programme presented is Fit For Market (FFM), implemented by COLEAD. The programme plays a key role in empowering MSMEs in ACP countries, enhancing their competitiveness and market access. FFM helped SMEs to improve product quality and meet international standards. The follow-up, FFM-SPS, focused on compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary measures, ensuring safer and pest-free exports. Today, FFM+ offers advanced support, including market intelligence and innovative practices, to drive further success.

→ **QUESTION - Value Chain Development and Market Access:** Could you elaborate on the key strategies employed by the FFM Programmes to enhance value chain development and market linkages for ACP farmers? How has FFM supported smallholder farmers to gain market access?

Mr. Jeremy Knops, General Delegate, COLEAD, Fit For Market Programme



Mr. Knops provided an overview of the FFM and FFM-SPS programmes initiated in 2016. They aim to **support producer groups and MSMEs in the horticultural sector across OACPS member states** by helping them meet market and regulatory requirements within a sustainable framework.



Knops emphasised several key principles that have contributed to the success of these programmes:

- **Demand-Driven Support:** Assistance is tailored to the specific needs and demands of local partners, ensuring relevance and effectiveness.
- **Non-Substitution:** The programmes act as enhancers and facilitators, empowering stakeholders to make informed decisions rather than substituting their roles.
- **Flexibility:** The ability to adapt to local contexts, especially during disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, has been crucial.

The programmes have shown positive results, including **increased sales and employment within supported MSMEs**, even in challenging environments. They have also succeeded in increasing the market share of ACP produce in the EU and UK markets.

The most recent programme, **FFM+**, launched in 2022, is the most holistic intervention managed by COLEAD to date. It focuses on both regulatory compliance and helping stakeholders seize new market opportunities within a sustainable framework. FFM+ has received a record number of applications, particularly from smaller economic operators, underscoring its relevance and impact.

Knops concluded by introducing Patrick, a representative of one of the companies that has benefited from these programmes, as an example of successful implementation in the field.



Mr. Patrick Deegbe, CEO, Weija Agricultural Development (WAD), Ghana



Patrick provided an overview of the company's journey since its founding in 2000 with the mission to combat poverty in Ghana's rural agricultural areas. WAD supports smallholder farmers in organic agriculture, adding value through processing and promoting their products internationally. His company has been a pioneer in organic fruit drying in Ghana and is certified for organic production under EU, NOP (USA), and Japan Agricultural Standards.



Patrick emphasised the **impact of the FFM programmes** on the company, highlighting the following key benefits:

- **Capacity Building:** The demand-driven nature of the programmes allowed the company to receive targeted support, including technical assistance for implementing HACCP, essential for food safety.
- **Support to Smallholders:** Through training initiatives, WAD has enhanced its engagement with smallholder farmers, ensuring continuous improvement in organic practices.
- **Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool:** Initially sceptical, the company found the tool invaluable in identifying strengths and addressing weaknesses, contributing to their sustainability efforts.
- **FFM+:** The ongoing programme is helping the company adapt to new EU organic regulations and explore innovative solutions like cover crops to manage weeds and improve soil fertility, reducing reliance on expensive external consultants.

Patrick concluded by expressing gratitude for the support provided by COLEAD, which has enabled WAD to save costs and reinvest in the company's growth.



Moderator: Continuing our discussion on investments, we now turn to the second programme of this opening panel: **AgriFI**, implemented by EdFI. This initiative aims to raise capital and attract investments to bolster agricultural value chain actors in ACP countries, with a special focus on family farmers, smallholders, and MSMEs. The programme targets private sector enterprises that partner with smallholder farmers

and youth, enhancing food security, value-added production, and income growth in low and lower-middle-income countries. AgriFI is dedicated to mobilising substantial local and foreign investments in ACP agriculture, with a particular emphasis on low-emission, climate-resilient agri-value chains.

→ **QUESTION - Investment Mobilisation**: What strategies have proven effective in mobilising local and foreign investments into low-emission and climate-resilient agri-value chains? How does AgriFI specifically support family farmers and smallholders in increasing their incomes?

Mr. Lionel Dieu, Fund Manager, Agriculture Financing initiative (AgriFi)

Mr. Dieu provided an overview of the work in sustainable agriculture through blending facilities like AgriFi. Established in 2016, EdFI provides **instruments such as guarantees, co-financing schemes, and market development solutions** to impact investors and DFIs, aiming to catalyse co-investors in sustainable projects across emerging markets. AgriFi, with €150 million in assets under management, operates through country, regional, and global facilities,



AgriFI

including significant projects in ACP countries. Since 2021, **AgriFi has invested over €12.5 million across five projects in Uganda, Burkina Faso, and Kenya.**

Dieu highlighted three key projects:

- **In Burkina Faso:** This investment in a cashew nut and dried mango processing plant in Bobo-Dioulasso supports local value creation by creating 1,200 jobs and assisting 6,000 small farmers, contributing to stability in a fragile region.
- **In Zambia:** A social enterprise focusing on soil quality and crop rotation, supporting 30,000 smallholder farmers to improve resilience and food security amid severe drought conditions.
- **In Kenya:** An ag-tech company providing 200,000 smallholder farmers with a digital platform to access markets and agricultural inputs, expected to significantly increase cultivation areas.

Dieu also shared **key learnings from these projects**:

- The necessity of higher equity buffers and contingency planning to manage risks in fragile contexts.
- The importance of integrating climate risk into risk assessments.
- The impact of investments in increasing clients' creditworthiness and attracting co-investors, although less tangible, is crucial for the long-term success of these projects.



Moderator: The third programme of this opening panel is the **Agri Business Capital (ABC) Fund**, implemented by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The programme is a blended-finance impact fund providing catalytic financing to profitable but underserved agribusiness value chains in developing countries. The

ABC Fund targets smallholder farmers and projects that create employment for rural youth and support SMEs led by men and women.

- **QUESTION - Financial Access:** Can you share examples of how the ABC Fund has successfully bridged the financing gap for small-scale farmers and rural SMEs, in particular rural women and youth in ACP countries?



Mr. Didier Tago, Credit Portfolio Manager, Injaro, Côte d'Ivoire, ABC Fund

Mr. Tago highlighted the **critical role of agri-SMEs in strengthening food systems** across sub-Saharan Africa and ACP countries, despite the significant funding gap they face, estimated at over \$100 billion annually. To address this, the **ABC Fund** was established, supported by the EU, ACP, and other public institutions, with the aim of **providing catalytic funding to agri-SMEs and cooperatives**. The ABC Fund primarily offers loans and quasi-equity to financial intermediaries, farmer cooperatives, and agri-SMEs, with a focus on benefiting smallholder farmers.



Since its inception five years ago, the fund has mobilised €60 million and invested €58 million across 10 ACP countries, supporting 18 SMEs and cooperatives, 15 financial intermediaries, and impacting over 200,000 smallholder farmers.

Tago provided specific examples of investments, including:

- **Pineapple Processing in Benin:** Funding extended the network of out growers, benefiting over 2,500 smallholder farmers.
- **Shea Butter Processing in Côte d'Ivoire:** Support for a company in a fragile region, impacting over 5,000 women and enabling the company to expand production and access liquidity.
- **Microfinance Institution in Mali:** First institutional funding provided to an MFI supporting small-scale farmers involved in food crop production, enhancing food security.

Looking ahead, the ABC Fund aims to continue fundraising to increase capital available for supporting smallholder farmers and to expand its geographic reach beyond the current 10 countries.

Exchange between panellists and participants

ACP Business-Friendly Project Coordinator: How to apply for investment for beneficiaries of the ACP project, particularly in the coffee value chain?

- **Didier Tago (ABC Fund):** Didier will share his contact details to facilitate the submission of proposals. He noted that the management infrastructure is being set up to be active beyond Africa, in other ACP countries.

Moderator: How can synergies be improved between FFM, AgriFi, and ABC Fund to better support agri-SMEs?

- **Lionel Dieu (AgriFi):** Lionel emphasised the importance of collaboration, noting that early-stage companies often require a mix of technical assistance. He highlighted the significance of partnerships with impact investors to support companies.
- **Jeremy Knops (FFM):** Jeremy highlighted the need for clear communication and collaboration within the ecosystem, especially considering the scale of needs. He stressed the long-term nature of transformative processes and the challenges of supporting extremely small operators, particularly in fresh production.
- **Patrick Deegbe (WAD):** Patrick expressed that he was not previously aware of AgriFi or ABC Fund and stressed the importance of making such funding opportunities more accessible to small-scale farmers.



Representative from Botswana: Several Botswana companies applied for FFM support. How can they follow up on the progress?

- **Jeremy Knops (FFM):** Jeremy mentioned that the FFM+ had an initial mission to Botswana and suggested setting up a meeting to follow up on the implementation. He provided his email in the chat for further communication.

Francois Rossier (Business ACP): Should funds like those provided by ABC and AgriFi take on more risk to reach more SMEs, and if so, how can the costs be covered (e.g., loan loss provisions)?

- **Didier Tago (ABC Fund):** Didier confirmed that the ABC Fund is designed to take on more risk, supported by catalytic funding. He acknowledged that loss provisions are part of the process, managed with the understanding of patient investors.
- **Lionel Dieu (AgriFi):** Lionel noted that over 50% of their investments target SMEs. They explained that AgriFi balances smaller SMEs, which require intensive monitoring, with larger ones, and also finances microfinance institutions to reach smaller farmers and organisations.



PANEL DISCUSSION 1 – Strengthening synergies between the Intra-ACP programmes and other agricultural endeavours across OACPS regions: Strategies, prospects and opportunities:



Moderator: The first panellist is Mr. Larry Gardiner, the founder and CEO of BabyLove's C-G Foods Ltd. As the innovator and creator of all of the products, he is an award winning chef with more than thirty years of experience in this field with tried, tested and proven products. Through the Alliances for Coconuts II project, Baby Love's C-G Foods has formed commercial alliances to source coconuts from local farmers in Jamaica, added value at origin and forged market linkages for his premium coconut ice cream, now boasting over 100 flavours, alongside the International Trade Centre and Coconut Industry Board of Jamaica.

→ **QUESTION - Innovation in Agribusiness:** Could you share your journey in developing and marketing premium coconut ice cream in Jamaica, and what role have local farmer alliances played in this success?

Mr. Larry Gardiner, CEO, BabyLove's C-G Foods, Jamaica



Mr. Gardiner shared the remarkable journey of his company, which began as a small retirement project making ice cream from coconut milk and has since grown into a thriving business. Initially focused on producing ice cream using locally sourced fruits, the **company's growth was significantly influenced by a partnership with the Coconut Industry Board in 2022 and participation in the ITC's coconut resilience programme in the Caribbean.**



Gardiner highlighted how this partnership transformed the business from simply making ice cream to becoming a key player in coconut processing. **The company now engages in a circular economy**, producing a variety of products from coconut shells, and desiccated coconut, including activated charcoal and virgin coconut oil. **This evolution was driven by the knowledge and resources gained through collaborations with ITC, the Scientific Research Centre in Jamaica, the Coconut Board, and the EU.** As a result of these alliances, the company has expanded its production capacity significantly, from 60 gallons of coconut milk per day to 2,400 liters, representing a tenfold growth. Gardiner emphasised the importance of education and forums like this in facilitating such growth and underscored the need for continued support from funding programmes like ABC Fund and AgriFi as the company scales up. The company's efforts have also focused on sustainability, moving towards zero waste and reducing its carbon footprint.

Gardiner proudly noted that the **company has become the largest manufacturer of plant-based ice cream in Jamaica and the region, and has received multiple awards**, including third place for Best New Product in Jamaica. Gardiner concluded by highlighting the company's impact on youth employment, **having hired 16 full-time employees aged 18-22**, providing them with career opportunities in the industry. He expressed gratitude for the support received through

various programmes and emphasised the importance of these partnerships in the company's success.



Moderator: The second panellist is Mr. Daniel Njiwa. Daniel is Director of Inclusive Markets, Trade and Finance at AGRA, he has over 20 years' experience in Agriculture development with a particular focus in agriculture food trade aimed at building inclusive and resilience food supply chains for income growth and food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

→ **QUESTION - Inclusive Markets:** How does AGRA work to build inclusive and resilient food supply chains, and what are some notable successes in this area?

Mr. Daniel Njiwa, Inclusive Markets, Trade and Finance Director, AGRA



Mr. Njiwa, representing AGRA, highlighted the ongoing challenges and opportunities in transforming Africa's agricultural sector. He noted that while **AGRA has been active in promoting agriculture transformation across 12 African countries**, the continent still faces significant issues, including food insecurity, low productivity, and inadequate infrastructure. Njiwa emphasised that **Africa imports over \$100 billion in food annually**, much of which could be produced locally.

Despite these challenges, **AGRA has made considerable progress, reaching over 11 million farmers and leveraging significant investments from both the private sector and governments.** AGRA's

approach focuses on creating resilient and inclusive food systems by investing across the entire agricultural value chain—from production to market access. This includes supporting policies that open up markets, fostering partnerships, and promoting youth and women's participation in agriculture. **Njiwa highlighted the importance of addressing the specific needs of different regions through targeted interventions**, such as the development of regional value chains and market-focused initiatives like the SEHA Horticulture Accelerator in Southern and Eastern Africa and the ECOWAS Rice Observatory in West Africa.



Njiwa concluded with a **call for greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders**, including the private sector, to address the persistent challenges of food security in Africa. He urged a rethinking of how African governments and institutions invest in agriculture to build resilience and reduce reliance on global supply chains, which have proven vulnerable during crises like COVID-19 and geopolitical conflicts.



Moderator: The third speaker is Mrs. Alisi P. Tuqa. Alisi is the Food Systems Programme Lead at the Pacific Community (SPC) based in Suva, Fiji. She is responsible for providing leadership and coordination of the Food Systems Integrated Programme. Alisi has worked in regional development for over 20 years covering infrastructure development, private sector and strategic planning. Her immediate past roles, prior to SPC, was working in regional private sector – serving as Team Leader Private Sector at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and as CEO of the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO)

→ **QUESTION - Private Sector Collaboration:** What strategies have proven most effective in fostering meaningful PPPs to drive agricultural development in Pacific Island nations? How can these strategies be adapted or scaled to benefit other ACP countries?

Mrs. Alisi P. Tuqa, Food Systems Programme Lead, Pacific Community (SPC)



Mrs. Tuqa provided insights into the organisation's work in supporting agricultural development across the Pacific Islands. SPC, a regional scientific organisation founded in 1947, serves 22 Pacific island countries and territories and operates in over 27 sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, public health, and energy. Tuqa highlighted the **unique challenges faced by the Pacific region**, such as geographic isolation, high transportation costs, and vulnerability to climate change, non-communicable diseases, and economic shocks. In response, **SPC has adopted a systems approach to address these challenges, integrating efforts across sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and water management.**



Key initiatives include the **2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent**, which focuses on leveraging the region's shared resources for economic growth and food system sustainability. SPC is also working on regional policies, such as the **Pacific Regional Agriculture and Forestry Strategy**, endorsed in May 2023, to guide agricultural development. Tuqa emphasised the importance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in accelerating growth in primary industries. Although PPPs have been more common in infrastructure development, their application in the agri-food sector remains limited due to challenges like financing and governance. **SPC supports the development of PPPs by providing technical advisory services, promoting business clustering**, and integrating private sector and civil society involvement. Additionally, SPC is working on resource mobilisation, including approaching philanthropic entities like the Bezos Earth Fund, to support early-stage pilots in agriculture and fisheries.

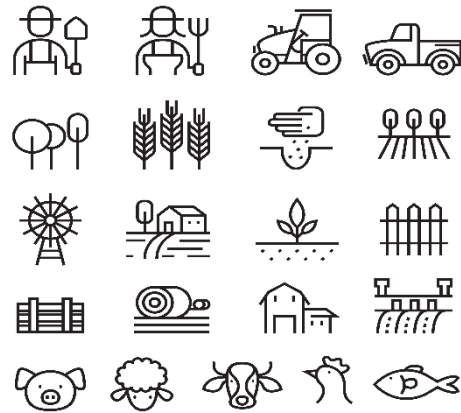
Tuqa also **underscored the importance of science and data in informed decision-making, highlighting SPC's interactive Pacific Food Database and Pacific Data Hub** as valuable tools for planning and investment. In conclusion, Mrs. Tuqa called for continued collaboration and

innovation to address the region's challenges and capitalise on opportunities for sustainable agricultural development.

Exchange between panellists and participants

Moderator: Mentioned the lack of projects from the Pacific region and the need for collaboration. She also announced a call for proposals for value chains launched by GIZ, offering grants up to €100,000 for cocoa, maize, livestock, and cashew value chains.

Larry Gardiner: Expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to participate and highlighted the importance of access to information, especially for smaller companies like his. He noted that while many resources are available in the OACPS regions in Africa, the Caribbean often lacks access to this information. He emphasised the need for better information sharing to ensure equal opportunities across all regions.



Valérie de Oliveira (Business ACP): She provided information about the Business ACP website, where participants could find details about the presentations, replays, and additional resources. She also encouraged continued conversations on the Business ACP LinkedIn page.

Closing Remarks: The moderator thanked all panellists and participants for their contributions and emphasised the **need for continued collaboration to facilitate access to finance for agri-SMEs**. She summarised the key takeaways from the session and she highlighted the **potential of agriculture for sustainable development in OACPS countries**, the importance of inclusive policies, robust governance structures, and the need to involve women and youth in agricultural initiatives.



Mrs. Chileshe reaffirmed the **OACPS commitment to supporting member states** in overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities. She concluded by announcing that the **next session of the OACPS KSC is scheduled for November 2024 and will focus on the green and blue economy**.