



PAFO-COLEACP INNOVATION SERIES: Innovations and successes of African farmer-led businesses and SMEs

Session N°1 Increased market opportunities through added-value and branded products

19th November 2020, 12h00-14h00 (GMT)

English-French interpretation available

1. Promoting uptake of knowledge and innovation in the agrifood sector

While many challenges affect Africa's food and agricultural systems, sustainable agricultural development is a powerful tool to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, promote inclusive growth and create jobs across the value chain.

Measures to raise agricultural productivity at the farm level can yield significant development gains; improved processing techniques can increase incomes, improve competitiveness and support the circular economy; the dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies can optimize efficiency along the chain; a better knowledge of how food is produced and processed can help consumers to take more informed decisions.

To meet the aspiration of establishing inclusive, efficient, sustainable, nutritious and healthy food systems capable of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, a comprehensive transformation will be needed. We will have to fundamentally change the way food is produced and consumed. A more holistic and multisectoral approach to sustainability in the global food system must be adopted, along with support for innovative approaches and practices involving all players in the supply chain.

More than ever, Covid-19 has reminded us that it is critical to identify, share and upscale the use of innovations across the value chain, from farm to fork, in order to build more resilience to respond to future shocks, and also to address consumers' concerns and expectations of safe food. As a driving force in transforming food systems, innovation¹ is central to sustainable agriculture, ranging from production, access to markets, credit or extension services, machinery, digital tools.

¹ Agricultural innovation is the process whereby individuals or organizations bring new or existing products, processes or ways of organization into use for the first time in a specific context in order to increase effectiveness, competitiveness, resilience to shocks or environmental sustainability and thereby contribute to food security and nutrition, economic development or sustainable natural resource management. (FAO)

Innovation involves multi-stakeholder approaches with governments alongside farmers' organisations, civil society organisations, research institutions and the private sector – all have a role to play in creating an environment that enables innovation in agriculture to flourish and supports its development.

2. The private sector and innovative businesses are key to the future of food systems

Despite numerous challenges, smallholder farmers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have unprecedented opportunities to supply local, regional and export markets. Innovation is a driving force in transforming food systems, promoting sustainable agriculture and leveraging investment.

The private sector has a key role to play in shaping more sustainable, inclusive and profitable food systems, driven by innovation, knowledge co-creation, and support for a green transition. In the context of implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), and of booming African markets, many trade opportunities exist and will increase at local, regional and continental levels. These opportunities will have to be captured by the local private sector to increase employment, especially for youth and women. It will be important to identify the drivers of success for farmers and SMEs, which could help others to start or consolidate their businesses.

With this background, and aware of the many challenges in getting existing successful businesses to scale, COLEACP and PAFO collaborate to support farmers' organisations, cooperatives and SMEs to seize opportunities in new markets and to establish key partnerships to strengthen their competitiveness. PAFO and COLEACP are launching a series of sessions on **Innovations and successes of African farmer-led businesses and SMEs** which will share best practices from entrepreneurs, farmers and agripreneurs across the world, with a focus on innovations in production methods, markets development, digital solutions, technologies and circular economy. They will also feature views on the supporting policy, research, finance and investment environment.

PAFO and COLEACP will hold a series of 2-hour sessions, every 2 months, aiming to:

- Increase awareness and use of existing innovations, led by farmers' organisations and SMEs across value chains
- Highlight forthcoming innovative technologies and practices with potential for farmers' organisations and SMEs
- Exchange best practices and successes across regions in the continent and with the EU
- Provide tailored support services (training, technical assistance, extension services, access to finance and documented case studies).

This first session will focus on successes and innovations that supply added-value and develop more sophisticated products for local and regional markets.

3. Key points for discussion

- What are the key drivers to capture more added-value for African businesses: technology, finance, know-how, business relations? Has Covid-19 accelerated adoption of innovations?
- Value-addition and branding are key in very competitive markets. What skills do development entrepreneurs need to acquire and upgrade to reach more sophisticated high-value markets?
- What are the most urgent areas in value-addition and processing which need policy-makers and investors attention and action to support entrepreneurship and employment in Africa?
- Do the entrepreneurs see opportunities in the implementation of the AfCFTA to expand processing facilities and trade within the continent?

Programme

Introduction & Welcome: *Fatma Ben Rejeb, CEO, PAFO*

Moderator: *Isolina Boto, Head of Networks and Alliances, COLEACP*

12h00-12h15 - Launch of the Innovation Series

- Stephen Mintah, Chairman, COLEACP
- Elizabeth Nsimadala, President, PAFO

12h15-12h50 - Panel: Successes of businesses

- Halatou Dem, Director General, Les Céréales de TATAM SARL, Mali
- Eric Muthomi, CEO, Stawi Foods and Fruits Limited, Kenya
- Alex Mutua, Managing Director, Goshen Farm Exporters, Kenya
- Alice Riouall, Founder and CEO, Mango So, Burkina Faso

12h50-13h15 - Discussants

- Wim Olthof, Deputy Head, Rural Development, Food Security, Nutrition, EC
- Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063 and Member of Mamo Panel
- Emanuele Santi, Fund Manager at Bamboo Capital Partners

13h15-13h45 - Debate

13h45-14h00 - Conclusions and takeaways

