

MOSALI*Voices*

TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE OF AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

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the resources
for women
in agriculture ?

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About Mosali Voices

Mosali Voices is a quarterly magazine that offers a unique perspective on women's participation in the agricultural sector in Africa. Its name comes from Sesotho and means 'Women's Voices'. It offers a non-stereotypical discourse and stands as a transformative platform that focuses on sharing experiences, visibility of actions, and networking with professionals, organisations, movements, and feminist networks that are working every day to transform the agricultural ecosystem.

At this stage, Mosali Voices is the outcome of a co-foundation between the Groupement d'appui pour le développement durable and the feminist organisation Young social development actors. Through each issue of this magazine, these two organisations intend to share with you touching portraits, practical advice on improving working conditions in the agricultural sector, and information on public policies and local initiatives to promote gender equality.

In addition, to highlight the successes and struggles of women, the magazine also offers a range of in-depth analyses of the socio-economic and environmental issues faced by women. By reading it, you will have a more complete understanding of the challenges they face, as well as the opportunities and possible solutions for promoting their autonomy and development.

Much more than a magazine, Mosali Voices is a tool for sensitization, inspiration, and a plea for women's empowerment in the agricultural sector. Going through it will make you be inspired to think, commit, and act in support of these extraordinary women who are shaping the future of agriculture in Africa.

MOSALI *Voices*
TRANSFORMER LE VISAGE DES SYSTEMES AGROALIMENTAIRES EN AFRIQUE

// Editorial

vous faire découvrir, le déploiement de certaines organisations locales sur le terrain, qui au travers de leur activité s'engagent à créer un environnement sain où les femmes peuvent participer, bénéficier et agir librement pour redéfinir les contours des systèmes agricoles africains.

Carole Fopa



Dear reader

We are pleased to present the second issue of Mosali Voices, a space dedicated to the expression and highlighting of women's voices and expressions. As we continue to navigate a world of growing gender inequality, it is more essential than ever to make visible the stories of those who are fighting for their rights, for equality and for a future where every woman, regardless of race, identity or skin colour, can make free choices about her life. This issue is an ode to the resilience and creativity of women who, despite the challenges, find innovative ways to express themselves and inspire others.

Why transform existing social structures? This question is explored at length throughout this second issue, which examines in detail the reasons why it is more urgent than ever to campaign for the transformation of structural systems. It also puts into perspective the ways in which this transformation can be achieved, by presenting inspiring initiatives carried out in Tunisia, Congo and Cameroon by women for women.

This issue also looks at how current gender norms compromise access to productive resources. To give you a better idea of the reality, we have gone to meet women who, despite the existing structural constraints, have decided to put their resilience into action. Their stories illustrate not only the difficulties associated with access to financial services, but also the initiatives put in place to overcome them.

Finally, we offer a critical analysis of the marketing of organic products in Africa, using Cameroon as an example. While it is true that marketing is the driving force behind any production system, it is even truer that in Cameroon, as in most African countries, it represents the soft underbelly of organic agriculture (OA) and agroecology (AE). To give you an idea of what's at stake in this component of the organic value chain, we went to meet the first woman in Cameroon's central region to commit herself exclusively to marketing AB and AE products. The aim is to grasp the full complexity of the practice, the issues and challenges involved, and the steps being taken to move the sector forward.

We hope that this issue of Mosali Voices will touch you, inspire you and encourage you to join our movement for a fairer and more inclusive society. Don't hesitate to share your thoughts with us and contribute to this great collective adventure.

Happy reading!



Gender camp: Empowering women, transforming their future

By Carole Fopa

The Groupement d'appui pour le développement durable, with financial and technical support from GIZ, is organising the very first GenCamp. It's a space where women and girls can connect, talk to each other and share their experiences. GenCamp puts women and girls at the centre of a unique and inspiring experience. Imagine a place where passionate minds meet, where bold ideas come together and where each participant can become a true agent of change.

By deciding to participate in this immersive camp, you'll have the opportunity to take part in interactive workshops, engaging discussions and mentoring sessions led by experts in the field of gender equality. Whether you're a student, professional or activist, this camp is designed to strengthen your skills, broaden your network and sharpen your vision.

More than just an event, GenCamp is a movement. Join a community of champions, share your experiences and inspire each other to become the voice of equality. Register now and be part of this transformative adventure!

Registration link: <https://shorturl.at/jLVmN>

Transforming gender relations: an imperative for gender equality in the agricultural sector?

By Carole Fopa

The debate on gender equality in the agricultural sector is persistent. And despite the existing rhetoric on the need to enable women to benefit from the same opportunities as men in this sector, women's status remains precarious. Data published by the FAO on this subject show that, although 75% of agricultural policies in 68 countries recognize the role of women and their challenges in the agricultural sector, only 19% of these countries explicitly have gender equality as a policy objective. Gender equality in terms of "access to production resources" and "services in rural areas" is essential if African countries are to meet their commitments under Agenda 2063. Recent evidence suggests that reducing "gender disparities can generate significant social gains in the fight against food insecurity as well as for long-term development through multiplier effects that affect education, health and nutrition" (Villarreal, Marcela, 2014).

The reality of women in the agricultural sector is well known (poor access to productive resources, credit, knowledge, etc.). As highlighted above, more than 68 countries in the world recognise these challenges. But very little is being done to address them. And even when equality policies are put in place, they are mostly focused on responses that address the effects of these inequalities. That's why it seems essential to develop transformative and intersectional policies that can 'dig a little deeper' to 'unveil the power structures' that perpetuate patriarchal structures. These structures, as we know, are the crucible of norms and values that perpetuate gender inequalities.



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Crédit photo: YSDA

The distinctive feature of a transformative policy lies in its ability to challenge the norms and roles played by women and men. For example, it could make it possible to question the reasons why women play little part in the budget formulation process and in decision-making at family and community level. Is their low level of participation in the decision-making and budgeting process linked to their dependence on their husbands, or to their self-exclusion from the process? This approach can provide a concrete understanding of what women need to be addressed, how, why and to what extent. In such circumstances, the development of a transformative policy could encourage the emergence of positive norms and create a favourable environment in which women and marginalised groups can freely exercise their rights.

The Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa (KCOA) project is proof of this. Indeed, KCOA has chosen the transformative approach to frame its actions to promote gender equality. For this reason, its approach aims to enable activists to understand women's interests and needs, and to empower them to understand the crucial role played by women in the agricultural sector. Several transformative initiatives have been launched in many of the countries where the project is being implemented. In Cameroon, civil society organizations involved in the process are training men in positive masculinity through the "Being a boy differently" program. In East Africa, women living in rural areas have the opportunity to learn about their rights of access to land, education and financing opportunities through a knowledge exchange and advocacy campaign.

To find out more about KCOA's gender equality guidelines, click on the following

<https://kcoa-africa.org/our-gender-approach/>

Those who are denied happiness must win it for themselves

By Dr Armand Blaise Tagne



Crédit photo: YSDA

Many constraints prevent women from actively participating in development initiatives. As a result, it is unrealistic to expect them to enjoy the same benefits as men. This situation, regrettable as it is, can be transformed if everyone works together. Especially girls and women, who should be on the front line. This is the view of women leaders such as Élizabeth Atangana, Ndongo Sylvie, Ondoua Messono Laurentine and Marie Crescence Ngobo.

They are respectively leaders of the Concertation Nationale des Organisations Paysannes au Cameroun (CNOPCAM), the Coopérative des sécheurs des fruits et légumes du Cameroun (COSECAM) and the Réseau des Acteurs du Développement Durable (RADD). For them, even if the weight of ancestral traditions relegates women to the rank of beasts of burden, constant and permanent action guarantees their liberation. Women and girls must work towards their emancipation. Because, like freedom, it cannot be granted, it must be won.

To conquer their freedom, women must overcome the prejudices that portray them as the 'weaker sex'. For women and girls are, in the words of Thomas Sankara, 'the incredible force that inspires the paths that lead to honour'. She must also overcome those that make her out to be lazy, a passive consumer, a perpetual victim. Ondoua Messono is aware that 'when a woman sets to work, people always find it strange'. That's why 'it takes a lot of work and a lot of effort to be convincing in what we do', she asserts. To work well, you have to master the field.

Concerning the field, everyone can choose. Marie Crescence Ngobo believes that every woman and girl should concentrate on an area in which they have the most conviction. Secondly, it is imperative to distance oneself from immediacy.

The quest for immediate gain is undoubtedly an obstacle to women's emancipation. You can't be in a hurry to make a profit. She remembers that at the dawn of her commitment and that of her comrades in the struggle, the first difficulty was in relation to [themselves]. We imposed on ourselves,' she says, "a rhythm of life that allowed us to be much more at work than the quest of what comes after work".

The constant desire to participate in the resolution of difficulties linked to one's environment should make it fairly easy to identify the needs to which one can provide solutions oneself. In doing so, intelligent perseverance and endurance will no doubt be rewarded. However, the quality of training can be an obstacle or an asset. According to Ndongo Sylvie, parents must enable their children to receive training so that they can create income-generating activities (IGAs). These IGAs will enable them to be self-sufficient. Because 'women must not rely on men, young girls must not look at men's wallets. She must be autonomous', she insists.

Young people need to be able to learn the good and well from successful parents. If this is not possible, the girl must, like the boy, be able to use the new technologies wisely. She must train herself and seek perfection herself. Above all, she must 'fight for herself, defend her own interests, and seek her own life'. (Marie Crescence Ngobo)

Of course, access to the factors of production is regularly complex. That's why women and girls need to be vigilant. They must avoid a wait-and-see attitude. There is always something they can do for themselves and for others. For Elizabeth Atangana, they must make theirs a certain number of efforts. In particular, they must inform themselves, learn and educate themselves. They also need to make an effort to save. Savings don't necessarily have to be what you couldn't spend during the month or the week, but what you wanted to put aside during the month or the week.

Getting informed, getting ongoing training, and working methodically, joining forces with people who are pursuing the same goals are cardinal recommendations for winning the emancipation of girls and women by themselves and for themselves, together with others. It is first and foremost up to them to mobilise so that, as well as being 'the vital knot that binds all the members of the family together, guaranteeing by her presence and attention the fundamental unity' (Sankara), they are also the main beneficiaries. In this way, the woman who is denied a voice will be in the process of winning it for herself.



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Crédit photo: GADD

Good changes rely on the knowledge of the situation, reason why the KHCA is committed to uncovering the specific needs of women in agroecology to drive change.

By Sylvie Malla

Development policies have evolved over time, moving from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. Underlying these changes is the desire to create policies that are aligned with the needs of beneficiaries. In this context, understanding needs becomes a prerequisite for any change initiative. This is probably the rationale behind the initiative undertaken by the Groupement d'appui pour le développement durable (GADD), which has embarked on a national mapping of the needs for knowledge products among agroecology and organic farming stakeholders, as part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic agriculture and Agroecology in Africa (KCOA).

The relevance of GADD's action can be appreciated in the context in which agricultural programmes are developed and implemented in Cameroon. According to Cameroon Data, "64.3% of agricultural programmes and projects implemented in the ten regions do not take women's concerns into account. On more than 100 agricultural projects and programmes developed in Cameroon between 2010 and 2020, more than half of them were designed without taking into account the social constraints faced by women". In the light of these statistics, it is easy to understand GADD's desire to change the paradigm and propose an approach based on the needs of the players it supports, specifically women.

To carry out this mapping, individual interviews were conducted with resource persons selected for this purpose. Group discussions and individual interviews were held with farmers supervised by the KHCA (Knowledge Hub for Central Africa) organisations.

A questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of multipliers to identify their needs and challenges in terms of accessing and using knowledge products. Individual interviews were conducted to gather qualitative information on the experiences and perspectives of multipliers. Local specificities were taken into account by adapting the data collection tools. In all, 11 focus groups and 10 individual interviews were conducted, involving 110 people, 65 women and 45 men.

Data collection took place from March to June 2024 in the 10 regions of Cameroon. It enabled us to highlight the key themes or needs common to all women, whatever their region. These include marketing, organic fertilisation, organic livestock farming and adaptation to climate change. These needs are presented in more detail below:

- Information sheets on soil conservation and erosion control techniques: These sheets will include practices like mulching, terracing, and water management.

- Agro-ecological practices adapted to drought: technical sheets and videos on the diversification of drought-resistant crops (millet, cowpea, and sesame) are needed, with practical advice on how to improve climate resilience.

- Training in local processing of agricultural products: this training should cover small-scale and semi-industrial techniques for processing cocoa, palm oil and bananas, with a focus on organic certification.

- Training on economic resilience: knowledge products that cover income diversification strategies, setting up cooperatives and alternative marketing systems would be essential.

- Technical fact sheets on sustainable management: these knowledge products should include information on sustainable harvesting, processing and marketing of forest products.

- Knowledge needs on organic livestock farming: in-depth knowledge on the prophylaxis and prevention of diseases affecting pigs and hens. How can these animals be offered healthy feed?

These different needs in terms of knowledge products should guide the KHCA's action in terms of collecting, validating and disseminating knowledge products in AE.OA so that the KCOA's objectives in terms of reducing the gender gap in terms of access to knowledge can be achieved.

To find out more about GADD's work, click on the following link:

<https://www.ong-gadd.org/>



In Congo, the SOS Femmes association adopts an intersectional approach to strengthen women's participation and resilience

By Footinno Tsueghap Roel clivert

Women with disabilities face a double burden of discrimination based on both gender and disability. They experience intersectional discrimination based on sex and disability, as well as other related forms of discrimination. According to UN Women, “compared to other women, women with disabilities are at least two to three times more likely to experience violence, twice as unlikely to have a job, and three times more likely to have unmet needs.” Throughout their lives, they face social and cultural isolation and certain constraints dictated by global socioeconomic conditions, particularly poverty.

According to the International Labour Organization, “disability can both cause and be a consequence of poverty.” People living in poverty are more likely to have a disability due to their living conditions, and disability, whether natural or socially constructed, can lead to poverty by limiting opportunities to develop skills and find employment. In light of this situation, it is crucial to implement initiatives that take into

account the needs and priorities of women, and more specifically those with disabilities. It is within this context that the SOS Femmes Congo association, created in 2019 by Victorine Mougali and Nasthia Ekiama, has been actively engaged since January 2024 in implementing an intersectional policy to better understand the intersecting discriminations that can affect women with disabilities, and to ensure that the proposed program for their empowerment is aligned with their needs and priorities.

With the support of the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), the SOS Femmes Congo association has moved from a simple collaboration with persons with disabilities to the implementation of concrete actions for their empowerment. In particular, thanks to the intervention of its partners, it has launched the project “Support for the financial empowerment of displaced women with disabilities in Bouenza” with the aim of making them financially independent and equipping them with the skills necessary to contribute effectively to the development of sustainable agricultural systems.

As part of the implementation of this two-year project, the SOS Femmes Congo association has carried out, in the locality of Bouenza, the identification, assessment of needs, and training of 200 women with disabilities (WWD) in agricultural professions to enable them to understand the actions they must take in their activities, as well as to raise their awareness of fund management and profitability techniques for their activities. In the same vein, the SOS Femmes Congo association plans, in September 2024, in addition to training and awareness-raising, to expand its actions by supporting 162 WWD in the implementation of income-generating activities (IGAs), through the distribution of appropriate kits for production and marketing.

These activities and initiatives, which follow a series of actions already carried out by the SOS Femmes du Congo association, thus contribute to reducing the economic dependence of women, specifically those with disabilities, enabling them to take an active part in the economic life of their community and to fight against poverty. These initial initiatives are already producing satisfactory results. They have enabled, for example, Georgette Mpassy, one of the beneficiaries of this program, to set up a quarter of a hectare of cassava and Josephine Loufouma to put into practice the livestock farming techniques learned during the training in her sheepfold.

To learn more about the work of S.OS Femmes Congo, click on the following link:
[https://sosfemmesducongo /](https://sosfemmesducongo/)



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Women's Access to Financial Services in Cameroon: The Need for Systemic Transformation?

by carole Fopa

"How can an economy reach its full potential if it ignores, marginalizes, or fails to invest in half of its population?" Robert Zoellick, former President of the World Bank.

Women's contribution to agricultural development is understood as the sum of all the efforts they make to ensure food security. In 2014, women's contribution to food production in Cameroon was estimated at over 55.8% (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2014), and according to the World Bank (2021), the proportion of women engaged in agricultural, hunting, forestry, and fishing activities in Cameroon was estimated at 47.7% of the female population.

However, even though their contribution is recognized, they continue to suffer from systemic discrimination that prevents them from accessing productive resources (finance, land, knowledge, etc.). According to the National Institute of Statistics (2021), women's access to credit increased from 3% in the early 2010s to 6% in 2019. During the same period, the proportion of women who gained access to land ownership increased from 3% to 10%. While this progress is significant, it remains insufficient to achieve the development goals set out in the National Development Strategy (SND30).

Numerous studies have explored in depth the causes of women's limited access to financial services in Cameroon. The most recent is that of GIZ. Conducted in 2022 as part of the «Promotion of Agricultural Finance (GP AgFin)» project, it highlights the multitude of constraints faced by women: from the rigidity and complexity of financial systems (requiring guarantees of tangible assets, high interest rates, etc.) to financial incentives poorly adapted to women's needs and realities. A set of constraints that reinforces the gender gap in access to financial resources.



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The 2019 report of the National Institute of Statistics highlights the impact of these constraints by noting a 13% increase between 2001 and 2019 in terms of access to movable assets between women and men in Cameroon. Moreover, according to the Ministry of Domains, Cadastre and Land Affairs (MINDCAF, 2019), only 10% of women own land compared to 22% for men. In urban areas, nearly 95% of land is owned by men compared to 5% by women.

In this context of glaring inequality where access to credit is conditioned by the possession of assets (movable and immovable), how can women's full empowerment be envisaged?

In addition to these "exogenous" constraints, there are "endogenous" constraints related to women. They can be grouped under what Hanan Morsy, director of the Macroeconomic Policy, Forecasting and Research Department at the African Development Bank, calls "demand factors" which refer to all the conditions to be met to request a financial service.

In Cameroon, as in most African countries, the low level of financial education combined with their low interest in financial services significantly conditions women's financial behavior. This could explain their tendency to always want to resort to solutions closer to their realities (soliciting credit in rotating savings and credit associations) or to self-exclude from the system.

Even if the debate on financing has gained momentum in recent years, it is obvious in view of these statistics that a transformation of social structures and even policies must emerge to respect women's fundamental rights and indirectly to make visible their full contribution to Cameroon's economic development. And therefore, a paradigm shift would involve political reforms so that women and girls can see their rights to access land respected. This must necessarily go through the revision of land law, the strengthening of the education of women and girls on financial issues, and the revision of financial policies on financial services so that they can take into account the needs of women.



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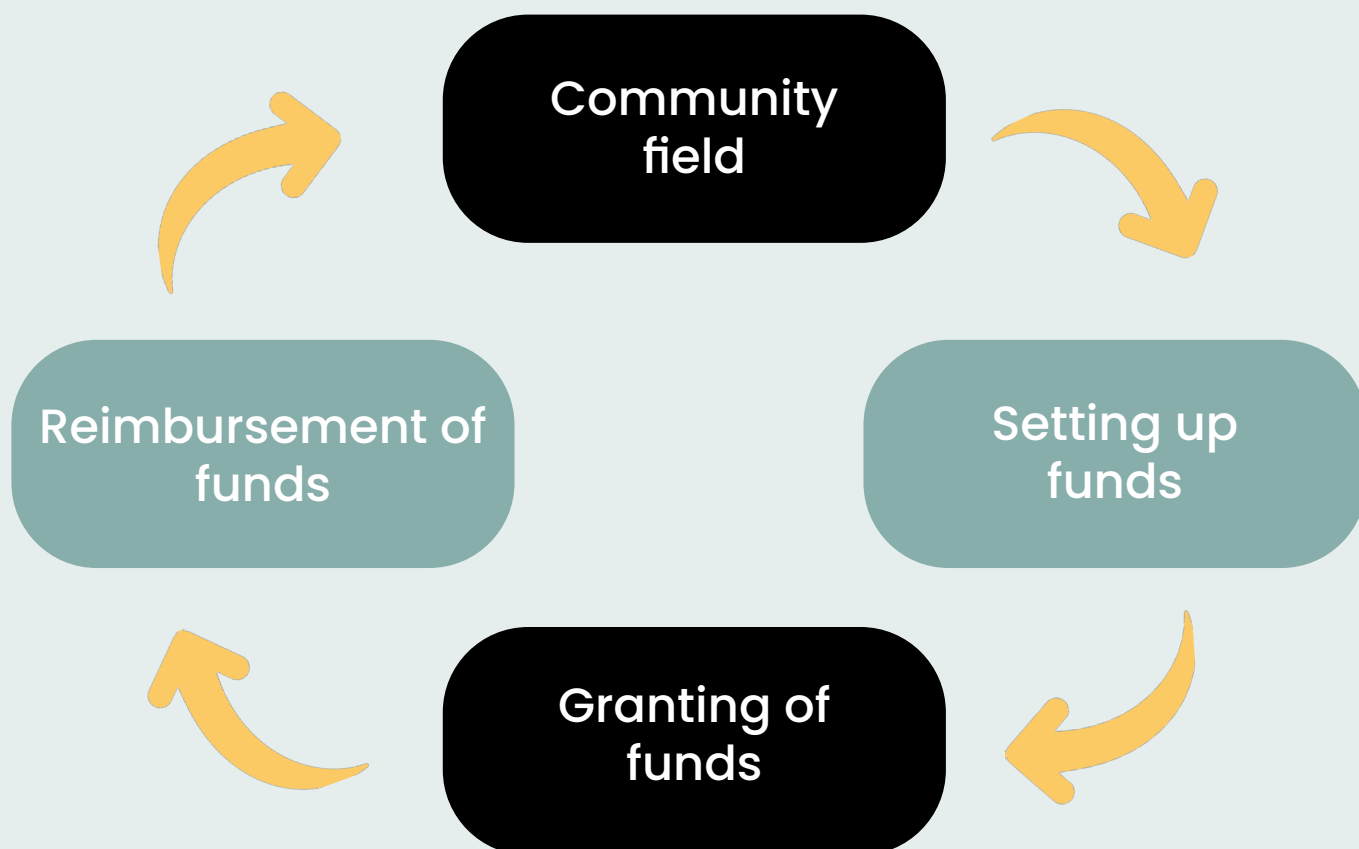
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Agricultural financing: Women's alternative pathways to financial inclusion

By carole Fopa

Financing agriculture is a key issue, especially when it comes to women. Their contribution to the development of this sector makes them key players in food security in Africa. FAO data shows that in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 80% of the food reaching households comes from women. But women continue to be defined by their femininity. Excluded from many opportunities and important issues, women have been left behind for many years. Yet the FAO recognises that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, agricultural production could increase by 20-30%.

Faced with these permanent deprivations and frustrations, women will organise themselves differently to meet their financing needs. This is why, in Cameroon for example, we are seeing the emergence of alternative financing models created by women for women. These models are based on an informal approach and aim to 'feed women's demand for financial services and products'. The first model described here is that proposed by the SOCOOCUVIMK cooperative (MBAM and KIN food growers' cooperative), whose operations are illustrated below.



Model for the Village Savings and Loan Association

Indeed, the leaders of the SOCOOCUVIMK cooperative, founded in 2018 and led by Chantal Bikata, realized that in their community, it was impossible for their members, primarily women, to access agricultural financing. Financial institutions consistently rejected their loan applications, citing a lack of “bankability”. This meant that the proposed projects were deemed too risky or lacked sufficient collateral to justify lending. Frustrated by these limitations, the cooperative decided to create a Village Savings and Loan Association in 2020, offering women and young people in Ntui, Cameroon, an alternative source of credit.

Members’ contributions and savings were pooled to establish this internal financing mechanism for agricultural activities. These funds were invested in a 5-hectare communal field where members cultivate cassava and sell it on the local market. The revenue from these sales was then made available to members who wished to expand their plots or support their production. At the end of the production cycle, the funds are returned to the cooperative with a 15% interest rate. According to members, although the interest rates may seem high, they fulfill their financing needs, enabling them to finance their production and send their children to school.

The second model is that of the Legouh Nzong CIG, located in the village of Nzong in the Dschang commune. It operates on a similar model to SOCOOCUVIMK. The only difference is that funds are provided in the form of inputs: fertilizers and seeds. More specifically, producers can purchase agricultural inputs at the beginning of each agricultural season. These inputs are granted to producers at an interest rate of 2%, and each credit must be repaid at the end of each agricultural season. In Cameroon, since there are two agricultural seasons, credits are granted after each season. Since 2014, when the fund was established with the support of the Memorial Flavia organization, more than 870 women have benefited from the credit to develop their farms.

For Donfack Christinne, a beneficiary of this fund since 2015, “this fund has completely transformed my life.” Previously, she had to have money available to finance her agricultural production when needed, and generally, there were additional constraints (such as paying for children’s schooling) that prevented her from investing on larger areas. Today, thanks to this fund, she has increased her production area from 1000 m² to more than 5000 m² and the money from the sale of agricultural products has allowed her to set up a pig farming unit.

These two financing models developed by women seem to suit women who find them more in line with their own reality.



Credit photo: GADD



Credit photo: Emna Abdellatif

Empowering Tunisian female farmers through agricultural knowledge to drive the green transition

By Clivert Roel and Carole FOPA

In Tunisia, as in most African countries, women hold a significant position in society, particularly in the agricultural sector. They account for up to 80% of the agricultural workforce and feed the population with their sweat and labor (Olfa Belhassine, *Tunisia: Women, Land and Power Issues*, 2022). However, despite their strong involvement in this sector, they continue to face harmful stereotypes that prevent them from accessing productive resources, such as knowledge.

Access to agricultural knowledge is essential for women to make informed decisions about their farming practices. This includes training in cultivation techniques, resource management, product marketing, and the use of modern technologies. However, agricultural training programs do not always take into account the specific needs of women, due to an often male-centered approach. The lack of support networks and mentorship for women farmers also complicates their access to information and resources.

According to the Tunisian National Agricultural Observatory, 60% of the country's assets come from women farmers. Women could therefore significantly increase Tunisia's agricultural production if they had access to productive resources as much as men (FAO, 2013).

To contribute to this paradigm shift, Dr. Emna Abdellatif, a multiplier within the framework of Knowledge Centre on Organic Agriculture and Agroecology (KCOA) project, benefited from a micro-grant to strengthen women's knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices. Her approach is based on a dual approach: research and dissemination.

Specifically, Dr. Emna Abdellatif, together with Dr. Wafa Rouissi, made a significant contribution to the study of citrus and pistachio pathogenic fungi through isolation, identification, and biological control trials. The objective was to highlight the role of micro-organisms and plant extracts in the control of fungal and bacterial agents in citrus and pistachio production. All of this work was carried out at the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Tunisia and the results were disseminated to 49 producers and 18 researchers, and then published in the Journal of Plant Pathology.

For dissemination, Dr. Emna Abdellatif developed a training program adapted to the needs of women, taking into account their time constraints and family responsibilities. These trainings aimed to provide women with the tools necessary to manage their farms independently.

The three-day training sessions allowed women to learn about biological control of fungal and bacterial diseases, citrus production techniques according to organic methods, and the application of compost in orchards. Following these training sessions, the 49 beneficiaries were satisfied with the knowledge acquired and the practical demonstrations carried out during the training. With this exercise, they can now make informed decisions about managing their resources, controlling pests, and fertilizing soils, thus strengthening their self-confidence and autonomy.

Click on the following link to learn more about this study:

(DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42161-022-01133-y>)



Crédit photo: Emna Abdellatif



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The ideal organic market of the PGS in Cameroon: a garden to edenize.

By Dr Armand Tagne

Developing organic product distribution spaces in Cameroon is like creating an organic garden. Once the major groundwork has been laid, more effort is needed to ensure that the direct effects and impacts become increasingly significant. This is the case with the organic market desired by the PGS in Cameroon.

In local markets, there is not always a dedicated space for organic products. These products, produced according to strict specifications, often share the same stalls with conventionally produced ones. Some corners of a few stores offer products labeled as organic even though they are not certified by any trustworthy body. Others, on the other hand, are third-party certified. And right next to them, the allure of non-organic products tries to divert the attention of the uninformed consumer.

This is unfair to organic farmers. To address this, a series of actions by NGOs provide lifelines like the flowers of an organic garden. Above all, these actions allow, among other things, for consumers to participate in the control process while reducing the costs related to certification. This is the very expression of Participatory Guarantee Systems. However, the hoped-for greenery is weighed down by burdens that must be eliminated or reduced.

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In local markets, there is not always a dedicated space for organic products.

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The awakening of organic consciousness

Producing without synthetic chemical fertilizers predates the use of the latter as well as GMOs and hybrid seeds. Over time, it has become not only a matter of producing without synthetic chemical fertilizers but of producing in accordance with a set of specifications. These systems continue to feed the world's population, albeit with difficulty. The fact that they share the same market spaces or are regularly found side by side indicates the lack of legitimate recognition that organic agriculture deserves. This merit is due to its four fundamental principles: health, ecology, equity, and precaution.

It was therefore incongruous that local organic products shared the same spaces as non-organic products. The fact that organic producers continued to suffer from a lack of recognition and from selling their products in a way that was not sufficiently profitable, not to mention the almost absent link between the consumer and the organic product, was also another mark of incongruity. It was therefore necessary to create spaces of their own.

The establishment of PGS-certified organic markets

The creation of specific market spaces for organic products is a lifeline for economic actors engaged in the sector. It values organic activity in several ways. First, the agreement of the organic label. Indeed, the products that arrive in these spaces are certified organic by a PGS, which is a second-party certification. Second, producers meet in these spaces consumers who are aware and concerned about their well-being and health. These are consumers who are constantly looking for organic products. Eating qualitatively and quantitatively. Above all, the fact of breaking away from indifference is worthy of providing motivation. The same is true of strengthening the link between the consumer and the product.

In Cameroon, the availability of these advantages is the result of certain

non-governmental organizations that have developed Participatory Guarantee Systems.

In August 2024, there are two main categories. The first is that of organic shops that consumers can visit on any working day. These include, for example, the Etso Mbong organic shop in Dschang, the CIPCRE organic shop in Bafoussam, and the Ta'a ANKH shop in Dschang.

The second is that of periodic markets. These include fairs and other occasional markets such as the "green market" of the Mbouo Multipurpose Training Center.

This second category suffers particularly from the spontaneity with which these markets appear and disappear. If this limit is specific to it, the other is common to it with the spaces of the first category. This is the fact that the products are not always available. The shelves are often almost empty, much to the dismay of consumers. This could be due to the sometimes unfavorable pricing practices. In fact, organic products often cost less in these spaces than within certain closed circuits (producer-consumer). Also, there are days when some products cost more at the local market than in the shop. A producer can therefore say: "I sell my products better elsewhere than in the shop" (Beaudelaire K.). Also, producers from Santchou say they sell better on site than at the organic shop in Dschang. Fair remuneration for producers and other actors in the organic value chain at the local level seems like a mirage.

In addition to this practice of unfavorable prices, there is the supply process. Very often, producers deposit their products to be paid after the sale of said products. This sometimes takes days or even weeks. Similarly, only processed products are most often available. This means that a consumer who wants to consume plantain in the form of kondrè or as a complement to koki may not always be able to get it when they want. In other words, fresh products straight from the fields are not always available. All this causes the Cameroonian organic market desired by the PGS to lack the hoped-for greenery and splendor. It is necessary to make it more Eden-like.



Making the Cameroonian organic market more Eden-like

The Cameroonian organic market can be made more attractive in order to better meet the expectations of both producers and consumers. To do this, a number of actions would be necessary. For example, the availability of mini cold rooms will favor the availability of fresh products. The systematization of contractual agriculture within a cooperative, as the Menoua Organic Operators Cooperative (COBIOME COOP-CA) intends to do, will contribute to the availability of products. To these, it would be necessary to add the establishment of a price grid that varies seasonally in order to reassure producers and consumers. These prices should take into account the enormous sacrifices made by producers and many other actors in the local organic value chain. To this assurance can be added the pleasure of tasting moments. Consumers will be more eager to acquire what they have tasted on site instead of only discovering it at home. By doing all this, in addition to the current efforts, the organic market in Cameroon can have a good presentation, like a garden that takes on the appearance of Eden.

Interview

Discussion with Madame Marie ABISSENGUE, promoter of the first organic store in the city of Yaoundé.

Collected by Footinno Tsueghap Roel clivert

The commercialization of organic products in Cameroon still faces numerous obstacles. At the national level, initiatives are emerging to propose alternative solutions to address this issue. To better understand the challenges, Clivert Roel met with Madame Marie ABISSENGUE, a leader in the commercialization of organic products in Cameroon and the promoter of the very first organic food store, “AnnOhh marché frais bio,” located at the Etoug-ébè crossroads. The discussions were centered around the establishment of this store, the challenges it faces, and the prospects for improving the commercialization of organic products in Cameroon.

We are honored to meet the woman leader behind “AnnOhh marché frais bio.” Our readers would certainly like to know more about it.

● **Madame ABISSENGUE :** Founded two years ago, AnnOhh marché frais bio is an organization working to promote organic agriculture in Cameroon. Initially focused on non-food products when it was created, the store has expanded its offer to include food, more specifically the commercialization of organic products, in response to the needs of a wider audience.

Why such a store when there are already many points of sale for agricultural products from conventional agriculture almost everywhere?

● **Madame ABISSENGUE :** First of all, innovation is essential when entering a new sector. More seriously, there are multiple motivations. Indeed, there are many producers trained by accredited centers such as the Mbouo Bandjoun Polyvalent Training Center (CPF of Bandjoun) who are self-employed but do not always have access to certain markets, such as the urban market. It was therefore necessary to give them access to these markets and to add value to their products. Also, as a consumer of organic products, I thought that there would certainly be many people like me who would be looking for a fixed point where they could shop regularly in the city of Yaoundé. I wanted to share with them my reasons for consuming organic food. I am passionate about eating healthy and feeding my family healthily. Moreover, I don't just want to be a distributor, but also a producer. I simply started where it was most accessible for me.

“ I wanted to share with them my reasons for consuming organic food “



Crédit photo: AFNOR

And how is the supply done?

- **Madame ABISSENGUE** : One of the major strengths of Annohh is the quality of its supply. Indeed, the store consists essentially of organic products, supplied mainly by producers trained in organic agriculture (80%) in accredited training centers such as the CPF of Bandjoun, which also supports them in their organic activities. Similarly, we source from certain peasant farmers (20%) whom we know and visit their production sites.



Hearing you, Madame ABISSENGUE, we are curious to know what your marketing strategy is and what your average monthly sales are. Are you managing to make a profit?

● **Madame ABISSENGUE** : The store mainly sells at retail. The goal is to make organic products accessible to the general public and to build trust in these products. However, the novelty of the project does not yet allow us to reach the target and achieve the set objectives. But since we are still at the beginning, some questions cannot yet have exact answers. It is at the end of this year that I will be able to answer these types of questions. First, before reporting the profit, we must first break even. Which is not obvious, because these are fresh products, and if they are not sold immediately, they are lost.

There are certainly enormous challenges both in terms of supply and marketing. And if you share them with us?

● **Madame ABISSENGUE** : Madame ABISSENGUE: The challenges are numerous and each has a significant impact on the activity. For example, there is the non-respect of delivery deadlines by suppliers, leading to repercussions on sales. The perishability of fresh products means that if they are delivered on Friday instead of Monday, for example, the low usual weekend sales lead to significant losses. There is also the lack of conservation and processing equipment to prevent the deterioration of unsold products. In addition to these challenges, there is the lack of structured marketing as well as the high costs associated with taxes. More particularly, there is the lack of national organic certification, which reduces the credibility of organic products. A barrier to large-scale marketing is that consumers doubt whether the products sold are truly organic. When we say we do organic, we must be able to prove it with a certificate. Similarly, if we support people a lot in production as is currently being done, we must also be able to support those who ensure marketing and who bear the significant costs, particularly investment costs, in order to create a complete production and distribution circuit for organic products.

In your opinion, what would be the effects of the unstructured marketing sector for organic products?

● **Madame ABISSENGUE** : We mainly need an organized market for marketing. It is in everyone's interest. A store like this one clearly shows that there is a need for this type of market and that there is a need to structure it. The consequence of not doing so is that the state, producers, and consumers miss out on a market. Especially the producers because the reality is that a producer cannot be a marketing actor at the same time. It's very complicated.

Do you think that women are more affected by all this?

- **Madame ABISSENGUE** : Perhaps at the production level due to the difficulties they have with land. The rest, men and women alike, we endure.

How do you think we can best overcome all these difficulties?

- **Madame ABISSENGUE** :In Cameroon, to enhance the marketing of organic products, both state and private actors, each in their own way, must support marketing. First, we need a national certification, we need to support marketing actors to enable them to acquire the necessary equipment for the conservation and processing of unsold products, we need tax breaks, and finally, we need to finance marketing actors to save their expenses in sourcing. Indeed, each time the public authorities are interested in the production aspect, they must also ask themselves, when we have finished producing, how are we going to organize the sale.

Madame Marie ABISSENGUE, leader in the commercialization of organic products in Cameroon and promoter of the very first organic food store
“AnnOhh marché frais bio,” THANK YOU.

- **Madame ABISSENGUE** : It is I who thank you.



Crédit photo:YSDA

Expanding access to organic food in Cameroon: a commitment from mums bios

By Annonciale MAKAM

Women play a crucial role in household nutrition in Africa, acting not only as the primary preparers of meals but also as guardians of food traditions and nutritional knowledge. Their contribution is essential for promoting healthy and sustainable diets, especially in a context where food security and sustainability are major concerns. It is certainly within this desire to support women as agents of change that the International Circle for the Promotion of Creation (CIPCRE) has developed and operationalized the concept of mums bios.

The idea is to train women leaders who will influence the purchasing behavior of consumers in their communities. In other words, through this program, dynamic women are identified and trained to raise awareness among groups and households about the benefits of consuming organic food. The mums' bio program has expanded thanks to the Knowledge Center for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology project in Africa (KCOA), which has given it greater importance. This has been done by identifying and capacitating 63 women leaders worthy of being called mums bios. They are now key players in promoting the consumption of organic products in the West, Littoral, and Adamaoua regions. It is important to specify that a "mum bio" is a woman leader at the head of a group, network, or association. She is first and foremost a dynamic woman, capable of bringing people together, expressing herself orally and in writing. She is not necessarily a specialist but is passionate about organic agriculture or agroecology.

All of them have the mission to list and provide information on potential points of sale for organic products, to raise awareness among the population about the importance of producing and consuming organic products, to facilitate the marketing of organic products, and to bring consumers closer to organic sales points.

Having taken on greater importance since 2023, these mums bios have sensitized more than 5,380 people, thus impacting the change in consumption habits in households, for the preservation of the health of consumers and families. In addition, they have been able to identify 47 functional organic sales points in the aforementioned regions. These encouraging results nourish the ambitions of strengthening and expanding the mums bios network that has been initiated. To this end, new women leaders have been identified based on their dynamism and their ability to mobilize with the institutional support of the regional delegations of the MINPROFF (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family) in Adamaoua, West, and East Cameroon. These new "mums bios" will join the others in the dynamic already launched and they will all contribute together to set up and support a national network for advocacy in favor of organic agriculture that they will carry to decision-makers and populations.





Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology Central Africa (KHCA)

The Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology (KHCA) is one of the five hubs set up under the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology project in Africa (KCOA). This project is part of the special initiative 'Transformation of agri-food systems SI AGER' implemented by the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). These five hubs are spread across the 05 regions of Africa, namely North, Central, East, West and Southern Africa.

The KHCA was the last hub to be implemented. It is directed in Cameroon by CIPCRE based in Bafoussam. CIPCRE is working with 04 local organisations to implement the KHCA including SAILD, GADD, CPF and INADES - Formation. Through these organisations, activities to promote organic farming and agro-ecology are being implemented in the 10 regions of Cameroon.

The KHCA's ambition is to popularize the debate on organic farming and agroecology in Cameroon. For this reason, it works with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly with farming organisations and associations, the media and government bodies, to advance practices, research and policies in the agricultural sector. The KHCA also intends to provide multipliers with all the information they need to promote the adoption of agro-ecological practices by farmers in Cameroon. The knowledge disseminated to multipliers is developed according to their needs and in a format that suits them

For more information on the KHCA, visit the website:

<https://pcac-khca.org/>

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