



FLASH NEWS ISSUE N.5  
AFRICAN  
ROOTS AND TUBERS

This newsletter provides information on the FAO project: “Strengthening Linkages between Buyers and Small Actors in the Roots and Tubers Sector in Africa” (ART) Project, which may be of interest to you. The newsletter is a core tool for knowledge sharing among members of the project.

## Welcome

Welcome to the fifth issue of ART Flash News, a quarterly newsletter to keep you updated on the ART project.

Check out the previous issue at:

<http://www.fao.org/3/I8569EN/i8569en.pdf>

In this issue you will find:

- Results from the field from the project’s countries
- News
- TEK MECH cassava harvester: a case study from the roots and tubers industry
- Spotlight on Patricia Nsiime
- Upcoming events

Enjoy your reading!

*ART Team*

## Results from the field

### Improving access to climate information and climate risk management tools

To tackle the recurrence and increasing severity of unfavourable climatic events in the African countries – negatively affecting production and prices of roots and tubers – the ART project is focusing on two key areas: developing climate information services and climate risk management tools in collaboration with meteorological institutes.

In November 2017, representatives from the ministries of agriculture and the National Meteorological Services (NMAs), and experts from Benin, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda and Uganda participated in the Project’s regional training and workshop “Climatic Risk Management Instruments for the Roots and Tubers Sector in Africa” in Kigali, Rwanda. Representatives from the European Union (EU) delegation and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States also took part in the event, which shared lessons learned and introduced available climate risk management tools for the roots and tubers sector.

During the event, the results of four country studies regarding the impact of climate variability on production and prices of Irish potato and cassava were discussed, together with the status and challenges related to climate information services in all the project countries.

The workshop served to promote coordination and communication between NMAs and the governments.

In addition, representatives from each country developed yearly work plans for climate risk management.

The EU delegate to Rwanda, head of section rural development, Arnaud de Vanssay, stated, “Increasing the availability of improved climatic information for



*Moussa Djagoudi, Regional Project Coordinator, speaking at the workshop in Kigali.*



farmers is a key to tackle unfavorable climatic events, and the ART project is promoting access to climate services for farmers in the different countries.”

### Supporting cassava production and protection

To promote sustainable and intensified market-led production of cassava in the different countries, the ART project organized the regional workshop **“Experience-sharing on Cassava Production and Protection”** in Kumasi, Ghana in December 2017. Representatives of farmer organizations and public institutes, including research institutions, joined from the countries where the project is supporting cassava value chains – Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and Malawi.



*Project’s beneficiaries during the field-training at the Crop Research Institute, Ghana*

The workshop included a technical training on how to produce a catalogue of varieties, and field visits. The trainings on production and protection were delivered in collaboration with the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development. Field visits to the Crops Research Institute and Kwame Nkrumah University of Sciences and Technologies (KNUST) were organized to learn about cassava-breeding activities, including the in-vitro (rapid) multiplication of the planting material used to renew material with virus-free planting tools. During the visits, innovations in cassava mechanization were also demonstrated. These trainings and knowledge-sharing spaces will enable beneficiary countries to

develop new or improve existing varietal catalogues and strengthen the overall system of cassava production. The project produced a video during the event, which can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcJSmXSoG1I>

### The cassava market in Ghana

Despite the importance of cassava production in Ghana and the encouraging results achieved so far, a number of constraints are undermining the sector. Some of them are related to linkages between producers, processors and buyers for a smooth and profitable business operation. In this context, the ART project conducted market research to help improve the coordination and business relationships between cassava value chain actors, by characterizing or describing the demand for cassava and its derived products in the country.

The assessment included buyers’ mapping of cassava products and business models, as well as national and international constraints and opportunities.

The main constraints identified for the demand and supply of cassava and processed cassava-based products are: limited capacity (technical, managerial and infrastructural) of the buyers to meet growing demand, quality requirements and consistency in supply; lack of proper weighing methods, and obsolete milling and processing equipment; and absence of regular market information among small buyers of raw cassava roots. Recommendations include: building the capacity of small cassava actors and buyers on topics such as good agricultural practices, record-keeping, inclusive business models, standards and quality requirements, grading, packaging and branding; and supporting access to finance for small processors and women’s associations to invest in improved processing equipment.

As result of these findings and recommendations, in March 2018 the project organized not only trainings on inclusive business models, processing and marketing, but also a series of Business to Business (B2B) meetings in Winneba to create a market platform for both producers and buyers at different levels and to enhance knowledge sharing and negotiations for the marketing of cassava products.



## Increasing access to financial services in Cameroon

In February 2018, the ART project organized a national workshop in Yaoundé to present the study “*The evaluation of the agricultural financial market for the cassava sector in Cameroon*”.

The event included B2B meetings between actors in the cassava value chain and financial service providers. The meetings aimed to establish business links between financial institutions and value chain actors, and to increase access to market information by the different parties.

The study and the meetings are contributing to the realization of component 3 of the project, on facilitating access to financial services by cassava value chain actors.

The findings of the study show that the main bottlenecks which are limiting access to finance for the different actors engaged in the cassava value chain in Cameroon are the lack of: financial products suitable for agricultural financing; financial education for rural entrepreneurs; guarantee of rural entrepreneurs; engagement of financial institutions in agricultural finance.

During the event, the participants discussed and validated the study, which was enriched by their contributions. Relations between the heads of financial institutions and the actors in the sector were initiated and will be deepened in the coming months.

## How the ART project supports one cassava processor’s business in Malawi

Jeffrey Chikaonda is a cassava processor supported by the ART project in Malawi. He received trainings on processing techniques, business management and hygiene standards, which enabled him to increase considerably his productivity of High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) and fermented cassava. As result of the project’s support, he increased his production from 0.5 to 10 tonnes of HQCF per season.



*Mr. Chikaonda with a farmer purchasing cassava roots, Malawi.*

Mr. Chikaonda has been able to engage with other promising processors assisted by the project, in the District of Nkohotakota, and together they have established the Cassava Processors Association. The project also supported linkages with cassava farmers – who in turn were trained in sustainable production as well as business management. These farmers are now able to supply enough to satisfy the processors’ demand.

Mr. Chikaonda is accessing a number of local and urban markets and supermarkets, and increasing the number and monetary value of his business transactions.

The demand for his HCQF and fermented cassava is increasing also due to the project’s promotion of cassava products (bread, donuts, scones, biscuits and cakes) among producers’ organizations through end-user demonstrations.

## News

### Increasing project visibility: International Cassava Conference in Benin

From 2008, the Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century – an international alliance of 45 organizations, coordinated by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture – has been organizing the International Cassava Conference. This is a scientific and technical event covering all aspects and fields, from cassava genomics to cassava food and feed products, through production, transformation and use. This year the project will participate in the conference, which will take place in Cotonou, Benin in June.

### From the roots and tubers industry

#### TEK MECH cassava harvester: innovation in the cassava sector

The harvesting process is one of the major issues affecting the commercialization of cassava production in Sub-Saharan Africa. During the dry season, cassava is mainly harvested manually, a time- and labour-intensive activity that makes cassava farming unattractive to youth, resulting in poor yields with little export prospect.



To tackle this issue, Professor Emmanuel Y. H. Bobobee and his team from KNUST developed the TEK MECH, an efficient cassava mechanical harvester that harvests within a second, compared to the five to ten minutes by manual labour. This kind of innovation in agriculture can support the modernization and commercialization of cassava production in Ghana and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The project exposed its 39 participants operating in the cassava sector to demonstrations of this device at KNUST in December 2017.

## Spotlight on Patricia Nsiime

**Ms. Patricia Nsiime** is a value chain specialist currently working with the ART project in Uganda as Country Project Manager. She is facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the project's activities in the potato sub-sector. In addition, Ms. Nsiime is working to raise awareness throughout the country on the growing potato sector by sharing success stories of the project on such topics as: market linkages, Farmer Field Schools, farmer institution development, and value addition activities.



*Ms Patricia Nsiime*

## Upcoming events

- **Ghana:** Workshop and B2B meetings to increase access to financial services May 2018.
- **Benin:** International Cassava Conference, June 2018.
- **Rwanda:** Trainings on Climate Risk Financing, June 2018.
- **Uganda:** Validation Workshop and Training on Climate Risk Financing, June 2018.
- **Malawi:** Cassava Symposium, August 2018.
- **Ivory Coast:** Market fair for cassava products.

## CONTACT

For more information visit:  
[www.fao.org/in-action/african-roots-and-tubers](http://www.fao.org/in-action/african-roots-and-tubers)

Kindly send any contributions or requests to Margherita Bavagnoli at:  
[margherita.bavagnoli@fao.org](mailto:margherita.bavagnoli@fao.org)



This newsletter has been produced with the assistance of the European Union under the project "Strengthening linkages between small-scale actors and buyers in the roots and tubers sector in Africa". The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of FAO and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.