

Capacities Enhanced in Cassava Transformation for South West Cassava Women Groups during Exchange Visit To CCAD- COOP

‘AIVDP DON CAM FOR HELEP WE, MAKE WE BE HAPPY EY’ Echoed through a bus carrying a coalition of cassava farmer representatives as it made its way towards Douala. The chant, concocted by the 12 cooperative delegates onboard, translates to, ‘AIVDP has come to help us, we should be happy’, would be the theme song of an exchange visit facilitated by AIVDP.

The two day mission, which took place on the 25th and 26th of January, aimed at augmenting the understanding, skills, capabilities and performance of SW based cassava cooperatives in managing their businesses through an open exchange of ideas, knowledge, and sound practices by visiting CCAD- Coop (Cameroon Cassava Association Development) located in Bonaberi Douala.

The first half of the two day session entailed theoretical presentations by both AIVDP and CCAD. Topics of discussions on behalf of AIVDP included activities and objectives of the SW based Project with an emphasis on the rationale for value chain as a mechanism for poverty reduction and improved livelihoods. The presentation would be followed by a detailed seminar by CCAD on the structure and functioning of their cooperative, transformation and handling procedures, product quality assurance and quality controls, marketing, accounting systems and internal controls. Despite the information rich session, participants would become engulfed in discussions and exchanges with animated inquiries ranging from best transformation techniques to suitable acquisition methods of marketing channels.



Above: (Left) Family Photo with the DG Dr. Besong Ntui Ogork, before departure to Douala (Right) Presentations and Plenary sessions in progress during exchange visit.

Farmer's expectation would only be superseded by an excursion to CCAD-Coop's factory which took place the following day. Lead by the CCAD President, Mme Sulamite Mogueum Kamgue, the mission was taken on a tour of the cooperative's facility. Once inside, participants were lead from station to station listening intently to explanations on the purpose and protocols behind each piece of machinery, while witnessing members of the CCAD operate said machinery.



Above: Visit to CCAD processing facility in Bonaberi as team witness transformation activities in action from grinding, drying baking and packaging of cassava finished products.

‘I never knew there was such a thing as flour made from cassava and I’m so happy because not only did I see the end product but I was able to see the processes and procedures that were being followed,’ states 28 year old Manyi Rose, a youth from Tinto Cassava Union, Mbio Basin.

Mme Mbolle Prudence Unique Farmers Tombel, Mungo Basin (UNIFACOOOP) Tombel, who attended a workshop in Tombel on the cassava value chain in 2021, states, ‘ It was my first time seeing and tasting cassava biscuits. I was shocked- but happy to consume cassava in a different form-it was delicious. I would like to tell my fellow women that there is a large market for cassava- so many products can be made with them. So we as women, need to learn as much as we can about the possibilities in this industry and how by producing these goods through our cooperatives, we will be able to help our communities.’



Above: (Left) Finished cassava goods produced by CCAD (cassava biscuits, water fufu and cassava flour (Right) Mme Sulamite Mogueu Kamgue, President of CCAD- Coop, sensitizing SW cooperative representatives on the necessity of record keeping.

The Project's Agronomist, Dr. Joseph Ako Oben commented on the high prospects of cassava, describing it as 'a millennium crop for Africa' due to its ability in surviving in numerous geological zones, high productivity and countless derivatives making it, important crop in Cameroon's food security strategy.

In reference to the significance of the mission which consisted of all female representatives, AIVDP's Gender Development Officer DR. Christine Ndie Abia commented, 'Cassava as we know, is a 'woman's crop', but it's becoming a cash or export crop due to its income generation potential. Women grow it, women process it and women use it to send their children to school, they use the income from cassava processing to even build houses.' The member of the Management Staff also commented on solutions in response to rising flour prices as a result of the Russian Ukraine conflict, 'We're seeing that wheat flour is becoming very expensive due to scarcity thus making bread expensive. If our women of the South West can produce the cassava flour, then it will help to supplement the wheat flour in baked goods.'

In reference to the objectives of the Project's Value Chain Strategy, the Value Chain and Cooperative Specialist Mr. Richard Molua stated, 'We're targeting about 1,200 farmers and up to 200 cooperatives. Our hopes is convert 100 of these cooperatives into fully functioning business entities by the end of the Project. We think that working with cooperatives could change the lives of farmers.'

The exchange visit would be the second mission conducted by the Project aimed at encouraging farmers to expand their knowledge by visiting similar institutions. With intel acquired during these visits, combined with the 300 distributed cassava graters and presses already distributed and 20 cassava processing units on the way, flour production in SWR is just around the corner.