

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

World trade success stories



Women entrepreneurs process dried mango in Burkina Faso.

BURKINA FASO

Mango sector provides export opportunities for women entrepreneurs

The Association Burkinabé Action Solidarité Femmes/Enfants (ABASF/E) specializes in the processing and export of dried mango, an important agricultural product in Burkina Faso. Close to 80 per cent of the country's population relies on agriculture, making it a key element of the country's livelihood. The mango sector alone provides around 64,000 direct and indirect jobs.

"The dried mango industry in Burkina Faso has incredible potential. This is about more than trade – it is about improving livelihoods, promoting women's empowerment and achieving sustainable economic growth," said marketing manager Olia Ouedraogo. With strong demand, particularly from Europe, the global dried fruit market is expected to reach US\$ 10 billion by 2027.

Despite this potential, dried mango producers in Burkina Faso face multiple challenges, ranging from market access, limited trade infrastructure and difficulties in accessing finance. "Meeting sanitary and phytosanitary standards, for

example, can be extremely costly. Just to get certified, we have to bring in foreign auditors, which adds to the expense. For small-scale producers, this is a major barrier," says Olia.

With support from key international partners – including the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing economies, the Global Trade Helpdesk and the Standards and Trade Development Facility (see page 102) – the association has overcome some of these challenges. Through training and coaching, as well as support to participate in trade fairs, the association has helped entrepreneurs strengthen their export capacity and tap into new export destinations such as the European Union.

"The WTO has an important role to play in creating a level playing field in which small exporters, particularly women entrepreneurs, have a genuine opportunity to succeed," says Olia.

Source: WTO Secretariat.



BHUTAN

Modernizing cotton production unlocks international markets

The Thongsa Common Facility Centre, established in 2022 with Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) support, provides farmers and weavers with a place to process their yarns. It has become a driver of Bhutan's cotton based weaving and rural economic development.

Located in Pemagatshel, in south-east Bhutan, it was created to modernize cotton processing, strengthen the weaving value chain and help artisans expand from small scale craft producers to competitive participants in higher value markets.

Production processes in Thongsa, such as ginning, were slow, fully manual and physically demanding. Ginning and carding required up to a month of labour. With limited product variety and almost no exposure to external buyers, local weavers were confined to low wages, unable to leverage the commercial potential of their traditional craft.

The EIF's project helped reshape production and export readiness. Modern ginning and carding machines dramatically increased efficiency while weavers received training in improved weaving and machine operation techniques, dye making and colour mixing.

Together, these changes enabled entrepreneurs to diversify into a broader and higher value

product range – including traditional jackets, skirts, blankets and baskets – produced to improved quality standards, allowing export of products to the European market.

Processing times fell dramatically, annual cotton production rose and women's incomes increased significantly.

Source: Enhanced Integrated Framework.

Artisans process local cotton for weaving in Pemagatshel District, south-east Bhutan.





BANGLADESH

Young entrepreneurs at the forefront of semiconductor boom

By plugging into Bangladesh's burgeoning semiconductor industry, Prime Silicon Bangladesh is creating high-value jobs for young engineers and putting Bangladeshi chip design on the global map.

Originally headquartered in California, Prime Silicon chose Bangladesh as its base for chip design operations – one of the most critical and knowledge-intensive segments of the semiconductor value chain. In just a few years, the local industry has taken off.

"Bangladeshi firms in this sector are growing at 40–50 per cent annually," says Prime Silicon CEO Tareq Khan. "Export orders reached US\$ 11 million last year and are projected to hit US\$ 17 million this year. Our ambition is US\$ 100 million in the near term and US\$ 1 billion in annual revenue within the next decade."

Rapid growth, however, has exposed a major constraint: a talent shortfall. To address the looming shortage of skilled engineers, Prime Silicon has partnered with the government to scale up training.

The momentum is growing. Young entrepreneurs – many recent university graduates – are launching start-ups to capture opportunities in the expanding semiconductor

Testing semiconductors in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

ecosystem with the help of trade support.

"Larger firms are mentoring these start-ups, providing training and outsourcing parts of their projects," says Tareq. "There is also a growing push to link up with universities for research and development of new design methodologies and intellectual property rights – following models that have worked in advanced economies," he adds.

Source: Aid for Trade initiative.



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Innovative food safety projects boost cocoa exports

A naturally occurring element in Andean soils once threatened the future of cocoa exports across Latin America and the Caribbean. Elevated cadmium levels in cocoa beans raised food safety concerns – because of a potential cancer risk and other disease risks – and triggered stricter international requirements, putting smallholder livelihoods and market access at risk.

With support from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), two complementary regional projects turned this challenge into an opportunity for collaboration and

innovation. Across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, with participation from Trinidad and Tobago, these projects strengthened scientific, technical and institutional capacity to manage cadmium in cocoa.

One of the most significant achievements was the upgrading of laboratory systems. More than 25 national and private laboratories improved quality assurance practices, while the piloting of portable X-ray fluorescence technology made cadmium testing faster, cheaper and feasible in the field.

The projects, one implemented by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and the other by Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, invested heavily in people. Through a train-the-trainer approach, thousands of farmers received practical guidance, ranging from soil

and fertiliser management to the use of low-cadmium practices.

An independent evaluation confirmed that the projects successfully reduced cadmium-related trade risks and strengthened regional cooperation. Evidence generated through the projects contributed to the development of the Codex Code of Practice for the Prevention and Reduction of Cadmium Contamination in Cocoa Beans, anchoring regional experience in global standard-setting and creating opportunities for scaling up these approaches worldwide.

Source: Standards and Trade Development Facility.

A farmer harvests cocoa pods on a plantation in Colombia.

