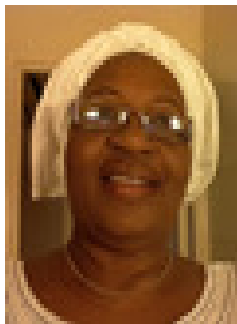


Face to Face at World Cashew Convention 2017

“The Cashew sector can bring a little hope to all of them, and the new ACA executive committee will begin to advocate with the governments of the producing countries in order to consider this sector as a stepping stone to reduce what we observe every day”

Ms Kone Minata, CEO, SOTRIA-B, Burkina Faso

An Exclusive Interview with Ms Kone Minata, CEO, SOTRIA-B, Burkina Faso, at the World Cashew Convention, 09-11 Feb, 2017, Singapore



Could please tell us more about your cashew processing plant as well as the various products you process?

SOTRIA-B was established in 2003 in Banfora, Burkina Faso, and its activities began in 2006; since 2006, the factory has been processing cashew nuts into white kernels, which we sell it to international markets. We went through several markets, starting with the sub-region like Benin, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and we also evolved towards the Maghreb, then the Middle East and we subsequently had a good market in the European Union. Today we export kernel to the United States.

What are the measures initiated by the Government of Burkina Faso to improve the yield of raw nuts?

In Burkina Faso, we can say that things have changed a little bit, producers are accompanied by several NGOs working in the field, projects and even government through the Ministry of Research to improve the yield at the plantations level. The quality has evolved in Burkina in recent years with the KOR ranging from 46 to 49, which was not the case few years ago; the moisture content is very low considering sunny weather in Burkina-Faso. Overall, the quality of Burkina Faso RCN has really improved in recent years.

The marketing year for 2017 will soon start and how it is going to unfold in Burkina Faso both in terms of quality and quantity? Is the climatic conditions are favorable?

The 2017 campaign was somewhat premature, the first nuts were available since the month of January, a great first. This can be very beneficial for Burkina Faso, because in January-February it is not yet hot, so this could have a positive impact on the production, flowers will not dry and production will be good. Regarding the measures taken by the government, this has evolved over the past two years; we work with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, which accompany all the links, as well as in processing. The government has made a commitment to accompany the players to regulate the cashew market in Burkina Faso during the campaign. Steps are being taken; a partnership agreement between the actors under the umbrella of the inter-branch allowed and will enable this year to secure supply at the level of the processing units. So we can say that in Burkina Faso, things are changing fast.

Among the various measures that the government is taking, are there subsidies/incentives given to processors according to the quantities of kernels they produce to encourage more processing?

For now, we are not there. First of all, we want to allow the various processing units that are on the market to be able to work, because over the last two years, we had very difficult situations. Units have closed; some have worked at idle, putting thousands of women out of work. I think we are currently solving this problem. The next step is to think about how to support these troubled units. Projects are already in place and in 2016 we had decided to provide support to these units, through equipment and investments to reduce their suffering. We hope that, as the actors are engaged, the government is also committed to being at the sides of the players in order to resolve these difficulties and make this sector a leading commodities chain in Burkina.

What are your expectations for this third edition of the World Cashew Convention?

I am here on two counts, representing ACA and also for Burkina Faso. As for the ACA, which is the African and continental cashew platform, we want to convey a strong message. We want to make it clear to all players in the cashew world that ACA's vision, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last year in a rather troubled cashew environment, has changed, the approach will change, the approach towards actors and governments will change; this is not a questioning, it is so that the ACA adapts to the new environment of cashew in the world. There is a new committee in place.

The President, who is from Guinea Bissau, has asked me to convey his greetings to all the participants in this conference and to invite all the players in the cashew world to the 11th conference of the ACA to be held in Cotonou, Benin during September 2017. We would like to tell all exporters and traders of raw nuts that Africa must reduce its poverty rate, Africa no longer wants to see its children and grandchildren die as they cross the Mediterranean to look for a better future in Europe. The Cashew sector can bring a little hope to all of them, and the new ACA executive committee will begin to advocate with the governments of the producing countries in order to consider this sector as a stepping stone to reduce what we observe every day. ACA invites all those who are in the export business of raw nuts throughout the world to come and invest in Africa. We know what is happening on the ground and the Executive Committee has decided to approach all governments to facilitate the work of partners who live far and invest in Africa so that these plants can function well and create jobs and wealth in all countries.