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ITC AND DONORS HELP LANDLOCKED MALI BOOST EXPORTS

Mango Sales Quadruple In Four Years

Mali, a landlocked African state, has more than quadrupled exports of mangoes in just four years and may quintuple them in 2009 thanks to a project supported by the International Trade Centre (ITC), working with donor parties.

“This is an excellent example of how we can help countries to trade their way out of poverty by working closely on export promotion with development partners, in this case the Netherlands’ Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI)” ITC Executive Director Patricia R. Francis said today.

In 2005 when the ITC project started, Mali was exporting just 2,915 tonnes of mangoes, with France the only destination. In 2008 the country sent 12,677 tonnes to five European countries, several Arab countries and also neighbours in the region. In 2009 the total is expected to reach some 15,000 tonnes with a further increase in the number of countries exported to.

Franck Bonzemba of ITC’s Office for Africa explained: “Horticultural exports from Mali face several constraints related to production, infrastructure (both physical and institutional), and marketing. Exporting from a landlocked state in Africa is a major challenge.”

The ITC project has focused in particular on bringing producers into contact with potential importers at international trade fairs. ITC, a joint initiative of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations, has a mandate to help developing countries reduce poverty through trade and promote the private sector perspective in Aid for Trade reviews. The CBI partner focused on compliance with EurepGAP in collaboration with USAID. Furthermore CBI trained the exporters to become familiar with the market demands by organizing meetings with the different actors and potential buyers in the distribution chain on the European side. The Netherlands embassy financed the construction of a pack house with cool facilities to enable sea transport of mangoes. Also the private sector contributed by providing management and quality support.

The Mali project has also helped producers identify market requirements and obtain accurate market information. ITC has assisted exporters in trade negotiations with international partners aimed at diversifying markets and also worked to improve packaging and meet international markets requirements.



Last month ITC signed a new four-year partnership agreement with CBI. Under this agreement support to Africa's export sector will continue, with assistance in products development, trade promotion and capacity building for producers.

"The ITC horticultural export promotion programme in Mali is being implemented with technical assistance from our development partners, USAID, the Netherlands and the World Bank, on supply-side constraints such as phytosanitary treatment of mangoes, certification of exporters and construction of a cold storage facility," Franck Bonzemba said.

"ITC focuses on its areas of comparative advantage and directly links Malian exporters with importers. Since 2006, both ITC and CBI have facilitated the participation of Malian exporters to Fruit Logistica, the world's largest fruit and vegetable trade fair, in Berlin. During the event, we focus on matchmaking between exporters and importers and monitor the follow-up. The results speak for themselves," he continued.

"The fact that the Government of Mali itself contributed 50,000 Euros towards the cost of Malian exporters participation in Fruit Logistica 2009 is a good indication of the country's perception of the potential return in investment in export promotion."

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