

From Cashew Trees to Honeycombs: How URCPA-BA Is Building a Healthier Future for Farmers

Traditional Farming, Limited Returns

In the region of Borgou-Alibori in Benin, many cashew farmers practiced monoculture farming, relying heavily on chemical fertilizers.

This approach led to poor soil fertility, high production costs, and limited long-term benefits. Beekeeping, where known, was carried out using methods that were dangerous, environmentally harmful, and often involved burning trees, practices that destroyed bee colonies and offered little return.

As a result, farmers were trapped in a cycle of low productivity and environmental degradation, with few opportunities to diversify their income or adopt more sustainable practices.



Promoting Agroecology and Beekeeping

To address these challenges, the Union Régionale des Coopératives de Producteurs d'Anacarde de Borgou-Alibori (URCPA-BA) launched a project in August 2024, with support from the Matching Grant Fund under the Business Support Facility for Resilient Agricultural Value Chains.

The goal of the project is to promote an integrated Beekeeping-Cashew production system that enhances cashew yields and generates valuable by-products such as honey, beeswax, and propolis.

Ultimately, these measures will boost the income and well-being of cashew farmers in four Districts: Tchaourou, N'Dali, Kalalé, and Ségbana.

Though still in progress, the integrated system is already showing significant potential to improve yields, provide additional income and transform rural livelihoods.

By organizing comprehensive training sessions for 120 farmers, including 34 women and 34 young people, farmers gained knowledge in the fields of modern beekeeping, agroecology, compost production and cluster farming.

These training courses lay the foundation for a more resilient, profitable and environmentally friendly cashew farming system.

In the beekeeping module, farmers learnt the best practices for harvesting honey and the multiple benefits of beekeeping, from the economic value of honey and its by-products to its role in improving cashew yields through natural pollination.

For many farmers, this was the first time they had realised the full potential of bees, which extends far beyond honey production. Kuko Saka Koto Biba, one surprised farmer said:

“ I didn't know that aside from honey, we could make syrup, candles and even alcohol from the hive. This opened my eyes to a whole new source of income. ”

The training courses also introduced biochar, made from cashew shells, as an alternative to chemical inputs. Farmers were encouraged to use bio-insecticides to protect their crops while preserving on-farm biodiversity.

Another highlight was the hands-on session on compost making. Farmers learnt how to transform farm waste into natural compost, a long-lasting, environmentally friendly alternative to chemical fertilizers.

This practice is now helping farmers to increase their yields without draining their pockets. “Before, our costs were high,” one farmer explained. “Now, with compost and the improved fertility of our soils, we are harvesting more and spending less.”



Furthermore, the concept of cluster farming was introduced. Farmers discovered the importance of working together across the value chain from production to processing to marketing. Clusters offer better access to markets, fairer prices, and stronger negotiating power.

A new form of Beekeeping, Health and Hope

“I used to practice traditional beekeeping. It was dangerous and harmful to the environment,” said Go Koon Go Kanmeri, “Now, I understand how to keep bees safely and sustainably. I only asked for the materials the project has promised to help us with.”

Looking Forward: Scaling Success

To offer further support, 400 beehives are currently being constructed, with plans to distribute four beehives to each farmer that participated in the training. The integrated system now promises multiple harvests: cashew nuts from improved yields, honey and its derivatives from the bees, as well as fertile soils from organic compost. Farmers are excited for the next season to see the results of this holistic approach.

For Alassane Yacoubou, a beneficiary, the benefits go beyond income. “This honey will help reduce our sugar intake, which is good for our health,” he said.

“We can’t wait to apply everything we’ve learned,” concluded Bokor Sime Idrissu. “Next season, we expect better yields and better lives.”

Led by URCPA-BA, the project demonstrates that transformation is possible when knowledge is shared and communities are supported, even in the face of limited resources.



The Matching Grant Fund is implemented as part of the Joint Action “Business Support Facility for Resilient Agricultural Value Chains” co-funded by the European Union under the Samoa agreement with OACPS and by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ.

