

Young greenery – grafted cashew seedling production in ACi

Directly at the road side of the Wenchi-Akrobi road glows a large green signboard: "Nursery" is written in white and "Yeboah Asuamah" in large yellow letters. Mr. Asuamah, a lively man in green rubber boots up to the knees, opens the small wooden gate to let some customers into his compound. In front of his house mango and citrus seedlings are enjoying the shade of tall palm trees. Hence Mr. Asuamah leads his customers around his living house to a large wooden structure, covered by black poly shade net. The structure provides room for about 50 sq meters ground and is the home of small cashew seedlings – they are standing one by one in their poly bags on the ground as far as the eyes can reach, interrupted by nothing but small footways. All of them still carry the small poly band which fixes the grafted twig to the stem. The customers enter the nursery through a narrow door: "I have heard from my neighbors and from the local radio that Yeboah sells improved planting material in his nursery. I came to see!" says one of the visitors.

Yeboah Asuamah laughs and explains: "Last year I started, encouraged by ACi, with grafting cashew seedlings to produce improved planting material for increased quality and quantity of raw cashew nuts (RCN).



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Yeboah Asuamah, owner of private nursery in Wenchi, Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana.

I got training from governmental extension staff who are partnering with ACi and started my work with two helpers. I gave some of the first seedlings to a friend of mine who has land directly at the roadside.

Half a year later the farmers up to the far away villages started to chase my friend and finally came to me: they could see how fast and nicely these new seedlings were growing!"



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Yeboah Asuamah with part of his cashew seed-ling production of 2011.

Soon after the first phase of farmers' trainings on Good Agricultural Practices in 2009/10 it became clear to the ACi experts that the adaption of good agricultural management might increase quality and quantity of raw cashew nuts only up to certain extent. In order to make the real difference, farmers need improved planting material to increase the yield potential of their plantations. Only when the vegetal material is of good quality, a farmer may increase his harvest from current 3 to 4 kilograms per cashew tree up to 15 kg of RCN per tree. Hence ACi, in close cooperation with the governmental partners – the Ghanaian Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) -, started the establishment of farmer based nurseries in Ghana. The research stations of MOFA in Wenchi and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) provided amongst others, improved planting material to the project. In Ghana the improved planting material is currently available in 23 nurseries which are located in three regions of the country.

The nurseries are privately owned or managed by Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs). 13 of the nurseries are managed by women. A total of 40,000 grafted seedlings are currently ready for sale at subsidized prices, some of them will be distributed for the establishment of clonal gardens. As the demand is so high 2,000 grafted cashew seedlings was purchased from the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) Bole for distribution in the neighboring country Côte d'Ivoire. Asuamah got requests from Burkina Faso and will try to produce for his French speaking neighbors.

During the ACi training Yeboah Asuamah as one of the very active private nursery owners learned how to select vegetal material in the plantations of the region as local material is more viable, robust and promising to the environment in West Africa than any imported materials. He got refresher training in grafting for tree crops and received material like the wooden structure, the shade nets and also garden tools and protection cloths from ACi.



Distribution of material from ACi Country Coordinator to Yeboah Asuamah in his nursery in Wenchi, Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana.

In August and September 2010 Mr. Asuamah produced 3,400 grafted seedlings which were distributed for free to the regions' cashew farmers for the establishment of clonal gardens. The objective is to bring high yield planting materials closer to cashew farmers in the cashew growing areas of Ghana. The distribution was accompanied by ACi trainings for the recipients on the establishment of new cashew plantations.

Now the subsidized selling of improved cashew planting material is starting until the seedlings will have gained their market and Asuamah will be able to sell the seedlings for a normal price.

"I am a responsible man" says Yeboah Asuamah – he has to take care of quite a number of people: two of his brother died, wives and children are living with Asuamah and his wife and 12 children. In the evening when all relatives return from work, school or the family owned cashew plantation, the compound of the small house is bustling with life. Over the open fire the women are cooking food for everybody in large pots while the tropical night falls in quickly.

"I see a bright future for me as a cashew seedling producer but also for the cashew farmers of the region. I heard that more and more people on our world want to eat cashew. When we continue what we have started with ACi we will have a very good income alone from the cashews in five to ten years.", says Yaboah Asuamah while he starts to eat his dinner.



©Laxman Dhakal Cashew seedling in Yeboah Asuamah's nursery.

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