

# GSB makes moves to set standards for cashew industry

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**T**HE Ghana Standards Board (GSB) is working with the Cashew Processors and Exporters Association of Ghana and other government agencies to establish national standards for cashew nuts and processed cashew.

The standards are expected to conform to international norms to create avenues for cashew nuts from Ghana on the world market without difficulty.

The Minister of Trade and Industry (MoTI), Ms Hannah Teiteh, made this known at the launch of the Africa Cashew initiative (ACI) in Ghana.

Among the objectives of the ACI are, increasing the income of 150,000 cashew farmers, including 25,000 from Ghana annually and the creation of employment avenues for 5,500 people, mainly women, in the cashew processing sector in Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Mozambique.

It hopes to achieve this through the improvement of cashew quality and production increases, dissemination of information on cashew of African origin on the global market, increase sustainable cashew processing, identification and analysis of learning areas and implementation of innovative projects on a pilot basis, among other strategies.

In Ghana, it is expected that by the end of the project implementation period in 2013, six medium to large scale cashew processing factories will be in operation, creating 1,800 new jobs with 70 per cent of the employees being women. Operating at installed capacity, Ghana will process 18,000 metric tonnes (mt) of raw cashew nut annually and export 3,600mt of cashew kernels valued at \$18 million.

Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoFA) showed that raw cashew nut production in Ghana had increased from 7,212mt in 2003 to an estimated

27,000mt in 2008

However, the cashew industry is centred more on the export of the produce than local processing, which is said to be growing steadily over the years. Only two per cent of the raw cashew nuts produced in Ghana are processed while 98 per cent was exported unprocessed.

Records from the MoTI indicate that the cashew sector in the country currently has an installed processing capacity of 2,000mt of raw cashew nut per annum. However, only 17 per cent of the installed capacity is utilised.

Ms Teiteh said setting standards for the production in the country would lead to the creation of a stronger cashew brand.

She stated that the government was also in the process of converting the Export Development and Investment Fund (EDIF) into the Export Development and Agriculture Investment Fund to facilitate access to funds for agricultural produce that may not necessarily be for export.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture in-charge of crops, Mr Yaw Effah-Baafi, said although cashew contributed enormously to the economy of Ghana through the provision of significant sources of income for many peasant farmers and those involved in the marketing, transportation and processing of the produce, there were major constraints militating against the rapid development of the industry.

The Executive Director of the ACI, Mrs Rita Weidinger, said the initiative would go a long way towards "sustainable production and the establishment of a production which can be competitive on the global market," adding that it would also help in the fight against poverty production.