

# 2SCALE

## Stories from the Field

### Cassava: now a cash crop

**F**or centuries, farmers in the village of Tondi Hinza have grown cassava for food, not for sale. Today, the community hosts a thriving agribusiness cluster. And as neighboring communities follow their example, cassava is becoming a major cash crop in parts of Niger.

Tondi Hinza is a smallholder farming community 300 kilometers from Niamey, the capital of Niger. Cassava is the most important crop. But farmers have little incentive to expand into market-oriented production because prices are too low. The reason? Cassava is highly perishable; the roots spoil 48-72 hours after harvest. Farmers have to sell quickly, at whatever price they can get, and buyers know this.

In 1990, farmers in the village set up a cassava cooperative, primarily as a means to financially support each other. They continued to use traditional varieties and crop management methods. They began processing cassava, but only in very small quantities and using inefficient processing methods.

Support from 2SCALE partners, beginning in 2008 under a previous Netherlands-funded project, helped transform the cooperative into a profitable enterprise. Farmers received cuttings of new high-yielding cassava varieties, and training on crop and soil fertility management. Simple but efficient processing methods were introduced. The cooperative was also linked to a bank that granted a loan to buy a cassava processing machine.

2SCALE consortium



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*Women from the Tondi Hinza cooperative process fresh cassava roots into a range of traditional food products.*

*The cassava producers' group can now earn €16.76 from each bag of cassava after processing – compared to only €7.62 if the cassava were sold fresh.*

“We learned a great deal through the training sessions,” farmer Adama Seydou explains. “We thought because cassava plants are tall and strong, weeds would not affect them. Then we tried a new variety and began weeding our fields regularly. Now we produce six tons per hectare – double the previous yield.”

The biggest change was the introduction of new processing methods. Using simple, low-cost equipment, the cooperative converts fresh cassava roots (shelf life 2-3 days) into products that can be stored for several months. A few farmers from the community attended workshops in Benin and Togo (sponsored by 2SCALE partners). They learnt how to use and maintain the processing machine, and then trained others in the village. For its pioneering efforts in cassava processing, the cooperative received a certificate of recognition from the Government of Niger.

The cooperative now involves 150 producers and 32 processors. The harvest is processed into *gari* (dried granulated cassava), tapioca, cakes, *kokonte* (powdered cassava, a major ingredient in soup), biscuits, couscous, *atieke* (fresh granulated cassava eaten with sauce or stew) and starch. The cooperative processes ten 150-kg bags of fresh cassava per week. From each bag they produce 10 kg of *gari*, which they sell for €12.19, plus 1 kg of starch (sold for €1.52) and 5 kg of *kokonte* (€3.05). Thus, each bag generates €16.76 when processed – compared to €7.62 if sold fresh.

“In 2008 we made a profit of €1,200. In 2012, our profits were €3,600,” says Mariama Moumouni, one of the earliest member of the cooperative. “We were a self-help group – but now we are a business.”



The 2 SCALE project is funded by the Netherlands government and implemented jointly by IFDC, ICRA and BoP Inc. 2SCALE was launched in June 2012. In the next 5 years we aim to develop 500 viable, sustainable agribusiness clusters in nine countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, reaching 1.1 million farmers.