



A JOURNEY OF LESSONS

Else-Marie Fogtmann

A diligent woman who lives and loves the cashew sector since 1995, Ms. Else-Marie Fogtmann's story is one of passion and dedication.



An educator by profession

Born in Denmark in the year 1956, she is an educator by profession but only worked as a school teacher until 1988. From 1989 to 1993, she coached volunteers of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called ADPP and went with them to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, respectively, for periods of 6 to 9 months. Later, she completed her post-graduate degree in rural development in London. Fluent in Danish, English, Portuguese, and German, she is a well versed woman.



Working with a vision

Ms. Else-Marie came to Mozambique in 1993 as an employee of ADPP-Mozambique with the task of starting-up commercial agricultural activities in Nampula Province in the North of Mozambique. The vision of ADPP was to plough back surplus from farm production into social activities and share lessons learnt in production with local communities.

Her journey to discovering the essence of cashew

During her time with ADPP in 1994, she started a farm in Itoculo, Monapo district. Initially, the intention was to grow annual commercial crops. She had no interest in cashew production at that time, not seeing cashew as a profitable venture to go into. However, discussions and an introductory training on cashew production in 1995 by the Cashew Rehabilitation Project in Nampula made her realize the potential of the crop and its importance for the small-scale farmers in the Province of Nampula.

A challenging first step

At that time, Mozambique had just come out of a long civil war and the initial steps to starting the ADPP cashew from scratch were challenging in terms of cashew information about good yielding trees. The information was then collected visiting local cashew farmers. However, the access to planting materials has greatly improved in the present time and the production of a variety of improved seedlings by the Cashew Promotion Institute – INCAJU is much valued.

A time consuming procedure

Initially, cashew farming was an isolated activity. This changed when results started to be visible. Speaking of her experience, Ms. Else-Marie stated, “It takes time to get acceptance in any society as a newcomer.” For a woman, this period might even take longer, she said, “Especially because in rural northern Mozambique, in those years, hardly any women were involved in business enterprises. Their role was to take care of the family and produce staple crops for the consumption. Under those circumstances and surely with lack of capital it is difficult for women to enter into business; and you must be able to deal with a multitude of tasks.”

Providing trainings to impart cashew related knowledge

While extending the ADPP cashew farm up to 110 hectares, trainings of young cashew farmers also started on the premises with a regular intake of 40 participants per year from 1997 to 2005. Later, new trainings started on request by African Cashew Initiative (ACI)-GIZ and Fair Match Support, when they started working with cashew production in Mozambique in 2010.



Expanding her skills

Her learning and involvement in cashew processing initiated in 2004 when the ADPP Cashew Centre got involved with a project supporting the establishment of 10 small-scale processing units. She learned and gathered experience through factory visits in India and Sri Lanka as well as by participating in the initial training of the owners and managers of the 10 small-scale factories.

She said, “We also took this up at the ADPP Cashew Centre that now processes their own cashews for local sale as well as produces a variety of



products from cashew apples during the season. "ADPP was able to enter cashew apple processing after a support from UNIDO that provided basic equipment and training on the Cashew Centre in 2006.

A number of products

Besides cashew apple juice, cajuina and molasses, she enjoys a dish called 'cashew beef' made from the leftovers of the cashew apple after the juice extraction, slicing, frying, and adding spices such as garlic and chili.

Establishing a consultancy

In 2013, Ms. Else-Marie established a consultancy Emalink, and worked with a team of 6 people. Through Emalink, they work on the ComCashew's Matching Fund activities and training of cashew farmers in the Nampula Province, where she lives.



Learning through personal experience

She obtained her skills and learnt mostly from gathering experience on her own. Various consultancies with GIZ including trainings on economics and management of a training center helped her to deepen her skills.

An educative process

Speaking of her dealings in the cashew sector, she said that working with public and private sector partners has been fulfilling and educative. Through the interactions with actors in the entire value chain as well as policy makers, she has come to understand the complexity of development at large, and, especially, the concrete implications of all policy changes on field level.

"I have grown to understand better the multi-faceted picture of an export-oriented agricultural sector," she said. Also, a 7-month-cashew master training program with 70 participants from 12 countries, organized by ComCashew and ACA, has helped her to deepen her broad understanding of the sector, and built a broad network amongst other experts in the sector.

"Since 2013 we trained thousands of cashew farmers and it is a big gift to see farm families prosper because they are using good agricultural practices and apply simple management tools in their daily life," she stated.

Equipping workers

The ACi program has prepared promoters to train cashew farmers in their communities in specific topics and most of her work is to ensure they are well prepared and equipped for the sessions.

She likes to experiment and try new practices in the field. The hands-on experience helps in making her a better and qualified consultant.

Making the best use of her time

Since the consultancy work didn't occupy all her time, she started farming in 2014-15 after establishing a 50 hectares cashew farm, which is managed and taken care of by a team of 7 people. The plantings on her farm are still quite young with 3.800 cashew trees between 0 to 3 years.



Her daily activities

Besides her farm, she started micro-scale cashew processing in July this year in hired premises. There is only one other woman in the region who is running a similar business. Ms. Else-Marie employs a total of 16 people in her factory, out of which 9 are women. She visits the factory for quality checks regularly where she collects data, provides feedback for her team, and helps to ensure the equipment is in good condition.

Maintaining a good relationship

So far, she has not faced any problems while dealing with male workers neither in her factory, nor outside, where she maintains a good relationship with neighbors and district officers.

Challenges she currently faces are related to general economic difficulties and high inflation in Mozambique. People have less buying power and simultaneously, the bank interest rate is on rise as well as the price of the primary material for raw cashew nuts. She believes it is time to revise her marketing strategy.

Installing new equipment

The TechnoServe project, 'Mozacaju' has been supportive in developing her agri-business by providing a grant that made it possible to buy a tractor, install running water at the factory and equip the peeling section with appropriate tables.

According to her, there is still need to improve the infrastructures and increase in size and she considers this to be an on-going process. Facing challenges is not a new thing for her.

A peek into her thoughts

Giving us an insight into her thoughts, she says, "Stimulating female entrepreneurship in the cashew sector with inclusive policies covering various elements in the value chain can enhance social changes. In general, women have a high sense of responsibility that can prosper in business and extra efforts in supporting access to education, trainings, advices, credits will pay off. With increased local consumption of cashew nuts, it is easier to take the initial steps in the cashew business as, for example, less capital is required. Gradually, the experience and the potential to grow can be build-up."

A challenging mindset

From her point of view, the main challenge for women to become leaders in the cashew sector is their limited access to capital to invest. Also, in her opinion, less attention is given to what women say, compared to men. This refers to her own experiences and such a mindset poses a challenge, for example, in meetings where women have to be very explicit in order to give weight to their words.

A structured plan for the future

As for the future, she hopes her consultancy work will continue to make her happy and maintain her basic financial stability. When asked about her dreams, she says in five years' time, she sees herself with a processing factory of around 150 tons which would be well supplied from her own farm and form a network around the farm that is in its early phase.

We wish her all the best to reach her goals!

