

## **C15. Mini-dairies in West Africa: How to combine economic and social objectives in inclusive value chains?**

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In West Africa, after the failure of industrial experiences in local milk collection and processing, small dairy companies started to develop in the beginning of the 1990s. Two decades after the beginning of this wave of creation of mini-dairies, we conducted a census in 2012 in 4 west-African countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) in order to assess the diversity of the situations. The census identified 167 mini-dairies in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal of which 129 were still active in 2012. Combining economic and social goals, these companies were able to collect milk from a globally fragmented, remote and seasonal production. They played a crucial role in offering market access for small family farms in the region, and in supplying local milk products to rural towns and small secondary cities.

In a second step, we conducted several detailed case-studies in order to identify sustainability factors and recurrent obstacles to their development. The analysis shows that there is not only one model to ensure the viability of a mini-dairies, but rather different arrangements depending on the local context (characteristics of the production, market and existing systems of transformation). Manager's profile, social network and ability to expand by creating trust and linkages in the business are crucial. The management of a progressive growth in the activity, starting with limited volumes (in order to test collection procedures, internal organization methods, distribution and marketing networks), and the ability to cope with various crises are other crucial elements for the sustainability of mini-dairies. The decision to create an enterprise, and the choice of the legal status of the mini-dairy must take into account the economic and social environment. Collective structures (GIE or cooperatives, for example) must set up professional procedures to be able to remain on the market. Support projects appear to be determinant for accessing equipment and inputs, training, business advisory, and to promote improvement of practices and product quality.