

Title Developing a fresh mango export value chain with West-African smallholder mango farmers

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Citation ISHS Acta Horticulturae 895:283-291.2011.

Keywords farmers' organization; cooperatives; export; organizational model; fair-trade; middle man; trader

Abstract

Many small farmers with mixed farming systems in the West African countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, have small mango (*Mangifera indica*) orchards. Starting initially with air cargo shipments, the development of reefer logistics in West Africa enabled the development of a fresh mango export industry. However, smallholder mango farmers in the more remote areas have benefited only marginally. On the initiative of a development organization, a farmers' union was established, aimed at directly exporting Fairtrade certified mangoes, bypassing existing traders and exporters. The trial was not successful as the right contractual agreements between farmers as principals and farmer union staff as agents were not present, leading to uneconomic behaviour by the agents. It became clear that traders and the way their contracts were arranged, played an essential role in quality control, organization of harvesters, transport and risk management, as well as the provision of credit. Based on this experience, an export company was established, working in close cooperation with farmers' groups, with access to its own packing house and able to contract efficient refrigerated logistics services. By involving the value chain actors in a triangular organization model including farmers, harvesting traders and exporters, it was possible to build on the strong points of each actor and to make the value chain more profitable and attractive for all actors. Moreover, the triangular organization was conducive in obtaining GlobalGAP, organic and Fairtrade certification. The experience with the triangular export organisation demonstrates some important lessons for the development of value chains in the transitional economies. It is important to study the way in which contractual relationships between value chain actors are regulated and to plan interventions with appropriate incentives stimulating behaviour that profits all actors.