

SUSTAINABLE CERTIFICATION FOR VEGETABLE OIL, A PATH TO ENHANCED LIVELIHOODS AND MARKET SHARE GHANA

For decades, farming of vegetable oil in Ghana was subsistent while its milling was artisanal. However, low fruit yields, poor standards and lack of sustainable production assurance have threatened the maintenance of the supply chain and the existence of medium-sized millers who have more recently joined the value chain.

The supply gap resulting from increased demand has been filled by smallholder farmers who now produce over 60% of the palm oil in Ghana. Yet palm tree farmers in Ghana have lacked exposure to quality standards and best practices that could increase yields and premiums for quality fruits. Sustainable certification is a powerful method of addressing the environmental and social dimensions of palm oil farming. UNIDO has worked to develop quality standards and integrate them into the industry. To help mitigate the potential negative impact of vegetable oil production in Ghana, key actors and experts in the value chain, including palm tree farmers and medium-sized companies, received training to understand and implement the requirements of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) standards—sustainability standards that conform to the ISEAL standard-setting codes.

The Golden Star Oil Palm Farmers Association—a group of 63 smallholder farmers—has received assistance to obtain certification to the RSPO – Independent Smallholder

Standard. This sustainable certification means the farmers are producing vegetable oil responsibly, contributing to safeguarding the environment. The certification involved the process of training the farmers to understand the requirements of the RSPO standards and to implement them as well as other standards.

In addition to producing palm oil safely and sustainably, with the implementation and certification to RSPO the group of farmers have increased their production yield. The group produces an average of 18 tonnes per hectare, three times above the national average yield for smallholders. The higher yields have translated into increased incomes and improved livelihoods for the smallholders and their dependents, while also helping them protect their natural environment. One quarter of the farmers are women, one of whom stated, “with the help of my group GSOPFA, my farm is being well taken care of and my money keeps going up”.

The Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP) is a global initiative to strengthen the export competitiveness of twelve partner countries, supported by Switzerland through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).



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