



SUCCESS STORY

Regional Crop Outlook Conferences spark seasonal trade deals

Participation in the regional 'Crop Outlook Conference on Agricultural, Food & Trade Opportunities in the Sahel & West Africa' resulted in a significant trade deal.



Photo: Regine Dupuy / MISTOWA

Gertrude Adu-Yebo, GAPTO Chairperson, plans for a site visit to Togo to discuss future trade deals with ROESAO members.

At the 'Crop Outlook Conference', ROESAO members can meet to arrange future trade deals.

"If I had not attended the MISTOWA Crop Outlook Conference, last Christmas' festivities would have been impossible for my family," said Gertrude Adu-Yebo, Chairperson of GAPTO (Ghana Agricultural Producers and Traders Organization) and a member of the Grains and Gari Association. Instead, her family had reason to celebrate because in early December, through a contact she had made at the September 2005 Crop Outlook Conference in Accra, she was able to purchase a truckload of *gari* worth \$8,457 and resell it within two weeks, at a profit of \$1,779.

Adu-Yebo was one of 150 delegates who attended the MISTOWA conference that brought together producers, traders and agricultural experts from all over West Africa. She learned about policies, agreements and seasonal factors affecting trade in the region. "It amazed me that while Accra markets were overflowing with one crop, it could be so scarce in others parts of West Africa," she comments.

At the conference, Adu-Yebo encountered a fellow ROESAO (Network of Economic Operators in the Food Industry) member, Adzessi Kokou Delali, a trader from Kpalime, Togo. They discussed potential trade commodities and their seasonal availability, and then exchanged mobile phone numbers for future contact.

Two months later, *gari* became very scarce in Ghana. "Farmers do not want to harvest cassava during the dry season, because the soil is hard," explained Adu-Yebo. When the Accra price for *gari* skyrocketed to 12,000 cedis a kilo, Adu-Yebo remembered her discussions with Delali and immediately contacted him. To her surprise, he proposed a sale at 9,000 cedis a kilo, including all transport cost. Adu-Yebo knew that if she could obtain the cassava, the merchandise would sell quickly. Her only concern was that she did not have sufficient cash to buy the commodity outright, so she negotiated a three-week credit agreement. "Giving Gertrude credit was not a problem because she is also a ROESAO member and after spending a week with her at the Crop Outlook Conference, I knew she could be trusted," said Delali.

On December 1st, 2005 she received the promised 65, 120 kilo, bags of *gari*. She sold almost half of the bags of *gari* on the first day. "I could have sold everything within the first week, but I distributed some of the *gari* to my fellow association members on credit; I wanted to share the same benefit I had received from MISTOWA," she said.

Adu-Yebo observed that many traders were inspired by the deal she had made. "That month, twenty new members signed up to join GAPTO. My experience showed [other traders] the benefits of organizational membership."