

**Bag Repairer around Turn-Table or Brusubi in the Gambia**

We have made great efforts in getting contacts of any bag or shoe repairers around Turn-Table or Brusubi in the Gambia. But, we could not get through online research, and our efforts to get local contact also proved abortive.

Hence, we apologize for not being able to carry out this particular task.

The subsequent task has been conducted and report as herewith.

**Information about Palm-Oil Value Chain in West Africa**

The palm oil value chain in West Africa is an important part of the region's agricultural economy, with major opportunities and challenges. West Africa, the native home of the oil palm, has seen growth in palm oil production, especially in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Liberia. The industry involves a diverse group of stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, processing companies, and international markets.

1. **Production & Supply Chain**: In West Africa, smallholder farmers play a crucial role in palm oil production. However, they often face barriers such as limited access to high-quality seeds, outdated farming techniques, and challenges in meeting global sustainability standards. Investments like those from USAID's West Africa Trade & Investment Hub aim to help smallholders improve their productivity and access to global markets by addressing issues like organic certification and processing upgrades​ (Prosper Africa, RSPO).
2. **Economic Opportunities**: Palm oil remains a major source of income for millions of people in West Africa, contributing significantly to rural economies. Projects like 8 Degrees North have created partnerships with U.S. buyers, enabling West African palm oil to penetrate the organic and sustainable oil markets ​(Prosper Africa).
3. **Sustainability Challenges**: The region faces environmental and social challenges, particularly regarding land use and deforestation. Efforts from organizations like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) aim to address these concerns by promoting sustainable production practices. However, smallholders often struggle with the high costs associated with certification​ (RSPO, FAOHome).
4. **Market Dynamics**: While global demand for palm oil is growing, competition with producers in Southeast Asia poses a challenge. However, West Africa has potential to tap into niche markets such as organic and sustainable palm oil, which have growing demand in Europe and the U.S. ​(IISD, RSPO).

Overall, the palm oil value chain in West Africa is characterized by both growth potential and the need for greater sustainability and market access initiatives.

Meanwhile, there are multiple stages involved in the value chain from cultivation to processing and distribution. Below is an overview of the key stages and players in the value chain.

**Cultivation of Oil Palm**

* **Smallholder Farmers:** A large percentage of palm oil is produced by smallholder farmers, often using traditional methods. In countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, palm oil is a significant agricultural product.
* **Commercial Plantations:** In addition to smallholders, there are commercial plantations that operate on a larger scale. These plantations often have more advanced methods and are connected to global markets.
* **Land Use:** Palm oil cultivation requires large areas of land and is often a source of deforestation and biodiversity loss. However, it remains a critical source of income for many rural communities.

**Harvesting**

* **Manual Harvesting:** The oil palm fruits are harvested manually, often using traditional tools. This is labor-intensive, especially for smallholders.
* **Plantation Harvesting:** In larger plantations, mechanized equipment is sometimes used, but manual labor is still predominant.

**Processing**

* **Primary Processing (Milling):** After harvesting, the fruits are processed into crude palm oil (CPO) through a milling process. Mills extract the oil from the fruit’s pulp. The quality of the oil depends on how quickly the fruits are processed after harvesting.
* **Small-Scale Mills:** In many parts of West Africa, small-scale mills are common, especially in rural areas where smallholders produce palm oil for local consumption or local markets.
* **Industrial Mills:** Larger companies have industrial-scale processing plants that produce palm oil for domestic and international markets. These mills tend to have more efficient extraction processes and produce higher-quality oil.

**Refining**

* **Crude Palm Oil (CPO) to Refined Oil:** The crude palm oil is refined to remove impurities. This step is usually carried out by medium or large companies.
* **Downstream Products:** Refined palm oil can be further processed into various products, including cooking oil, margarine, soaps, and cosmetics.

**Distribution**

* **Domestic Markets:** Much of the palm oil produced in West Africa is consumed locally. It is a staple cooking oil in many countries, and there is high demand for it in local markets.
* **Export Markets:** West Africa also exports palm oil, although it faces competition from Southeast Asia, which dominates the global market. Countries like Nigeria and Ghana export palm oil to Europe, Asia, and North America.

**Retail and Consumption**

* **Local Consumption:** In countries like Nigeria and Ghana, palm oil is a key ingredient in many traditional dishes, making it a vital product in daily life.
* **Industrial Use:** Palm oil is also used in the production of a variety of consumer goods, including processed foods, cosmetics, and cleaning products.

**Challenges in the Value Chain**

* **Inefficient Processing Methods:** Many smallholder farmers rely on inefficient methods, leading to lower yields and lower-quality oil.
* **Sustainability Issues:** Deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and carbon emissions are critical environmental concerns associated with palm oil cultivation.
* **Access to Markets:** Smallholders often face challenges in accessing both local and international markets due to poor infrastructure and limited bargaining power.
* **Competition:** West Africa faces competition from Indonesia and Malaysia, which dominate the global palm oil market with more efficient production systems.

**Opportunities for Growth**

* **Technological Improvements:** Introducing more efficient farming and processing technologies can significantly increase yields and improve the quality of palm oil.
* **Sustainability Initiatives:** There is growing pressure to make the palm oil sector more sustainable through initiatives like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which could create new market opportunities for West African producers.
* **Government Policies:** Governments in West Africa have been exploring policies to boost the palm oil sector, including subsidies for smallholders, tax incentives, and improved access to finance.

**Key Countries in West Africa**

* **Nigeria:** The largest palm oil producer in the region, though much of its production is for local consumption.
* **Ghana:** A growing player in the regional market with a mix of smallholders and larger commercial operations.
* **Côte d'Ivoire:** Another key producer, with a well-established industry focused on both local and export markets.

The palm oil value chain in West Africa is evolving, and while there are challenges, there are also opportunities for improving efficiency, sustainability, and profitability.

**References**

1. USAID West Africa Trade & Investment Hub: Initiatives supporting smallholder farmers, organic certification, and market access improvements. <https://westafricatradehub.com>
2. RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil): Efforts to promote sustainable palm oil practices and address challenges for smallholders in Africa. <https://www.rspo.org>
3. IISD Global Market Report on Palm Oil (2023): Overview of market dynamics, sustainability challenges, and opportunities in the palm oil industry. <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2023-06/2023-global-market-report-palm-oil.pdf>
4. Proforest: Proforest's report on sustainable palm oil production in West Africa, especially in countries like Ghana and Nigeria, provides valuable insights into environmental and social issues within the palm oil supply chain. [www.proforest.net](http://www.proforest.net)
5. GIZ (German Corporation for International Cooperation): GIZ provides valuable information on the support of sustainable agriculture in West Africa, including projects related to the palm oil industry. GIZ Agriculture Reports: [www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)