

Global Shea Alliance



GSA News Quarterly

the official newsletter of the Global Shea Alliance

6th Annual International Shea Industry Conference

Shea 2013: Global Perspectives

By Megan Guidrey, Communications Director



Shea 2013: Global Perspectives will be the sixth annual international industry conference organized by the Global Shea Alliance. The event is expected to be the largest shea conference ever in West Africa, attracting more than 500 industry stakeholders. This world class event will take place March 4-6 2013 at the Sheraton Hotel in Abuja, Nigeria, with a field trip to visit shea parklands in Minna on March 7, 2013.

"The annual conference is the most important shea industry event of the year," said Mark Davis, Director Community Fair Trade for The Body Shop, a natural and ethical beauty brand. "It brings everyone together to share information and ideas and gain insights on what shapes the shea business." Attendees will come from over 35 countries, including CEOs of major corporations, investors, financiers, transport and logistics service providers, as well as shea nut and shea butter producers, exporters, wholesalers and retailers. This year's conference will focus on how to build economic, social and environmental business networks for shea in the 21st century marketplace.

"Shea is critical to the livelihoods of millions of women in West Africa," said Eugenia Akuete, president of the Global Shea

Alliance. Shea exports have only grown over the last 10 years and more and more shea businesses have emerged as a result. The conference theme – "Global Perspectives" – reflects the need for companies to understand all of the market forces affecting the industry. The conference will feature experts and industry leaders facilitating a variety of workshops and training sessions on the following topics:

International Opportunities and Challenges

This theme will explore the global events, policies and economic environments that impact shea markets. Sessions will address price competitiveness, border issues, the value of the shea fruit, new uses or ingredients that have been developed, and tactics for accessing and competing in international markets. Attendees will learn about essential connections throughout the value chain that facilitate a better and more cost effective product that is promoted effectively to reach new markets.

Sustainability and Industry Marketing Strategies

Sessions will focus on the significance of sustainability to a variety of stakeholders including retailers, brands, shea nut processors, collectors, and consumers. Participants will

discover how sustainability is essential to the long term survival and growth of the industry, as well as how to integrate sustainability into a marketing campaign and reputable brand image.

Innovation and Research

This theme will survey the most current research and innovations impacting the shea industry. Sessions will consider climate change effects on shea, as well as innovations in parkland management and propagating and grafting trees for future success. Attendees will be introduced to the latest trends in transporting, packaging and labeling their shea products.

Thinking Global, Marketing Local

Sessions facilitated by international brands and shea business leaders will examine best practices to develop practical strategies for expansion to regional markets. Participants will engage in a technical exchange of information to strengthen and improve their strategies for formulating, packaging and labeling, regional marketing, business planning, and financing.

Special Features

Shea 2013: Global Perspectives will showcase a wide variety

of shea products through an exhibition of 40 vendors that will interact with participants throughout the conference. Additionally, attendees will be able to take advantage of the opportunity to meet one-on-one with exporters, producers, technical experts, financial service providers, shipping specialists, equipment suppliers and international brands.

Shea 2013: Global Perspectives will provide stakeholders with a platform to engage in meaningful conversations about the most pressing issues facing the industry. Space is limited, so register for the conference today at www.globalshea.com/register

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Establishing a Sustainability Strategy for the Shea Industry

By Laure-Helene Boudier, Sustainability Specialist

For the past twenty years, the shea industry has experienced a growing demand for shea butter, mostly due to an increase in global demand for vegetable oils and fats. This trend is foreseen to continue, and the Global Shea Alliance activities seek to reinforce it by unlocking new markets for shea products. As we consider the future of our industry, we are led to wonder where it will stand twenty years from now. Will there be the same number of shea trees in twenty years time? What will happen to shea nut collectors? Will the industry be geared toward African or international consumers? How do we build a resilient industry for the 21st century? This is what is at stake in building a sustainability strategy for the industry, and building our future starts now.

Three major challenges should be given great consideration. First, the quality of shea nut production has been declining. Falling quality is detrimental to the image of the industry and decreases profitability for shea nut processors, thereby diminishing competitiveness for the whole industry. Secondly, shea nut collectors are prevented from fully reaping the benefits of their labour and have been alienated from markets. Their labour is instrumental to the industry, and must be developed. Lastly, observers have identified a decline in the number of shea trees that is foreseen to continue in the future.

As a premier platform of collaboration, knowledge sharing and industry innovation for the shea industry, the Global Shea Alliance has designed a Base Code for Sustainability that addresses these challenges. This Base Code and the Principles of Implementation that detail its application in the industry are now circulating among the Global Shea Alliance membership, and will be gradually amended until they accurately reflect all the interests of the Alliance's members. The Base Code for Sustainability will be finalized by a vote during the General Assembly meeting at

the international industry conference, Shea 2013: Global Perspectives. This Base Code for Sustainability will set the foundation for building a strong, fair and reputable shea industry for the 21st century.

GSA Base Code for Sustainability: The way forward

The Global Shea Alliance has identified five key areas in which action ought to be taken. These areas are:

- **Nut quality improvement**
This shall be accomplished through **trainings** on best practices for shea fruit processing, the establishment of quality **standards** for shea nuts and the encouragement of **price premiums** corresponding to different levels of nut quality.
- **Rural women's empowerment**
This will be achieved through facilitating the **formalization** of women collectors into producer groups, dissemination of **information** on shea markets to these groups, and **trainings** that will improve the groups' business and management skills.
- **Labor rights enforcement**
This will be realized through dissemination of **information** on labor rights in members' organizations, the design of collaborative **settlement mechanisms** for labor issues and ensured respect of **national legislation**.
- **Rural communities development**
This will be brought about through the uncovering of **new revenue sources** for rural communities, such as intercropping shea trees, **consolidation** of existing revenues from shea trees and the realization of **pilot projects** to test these findings.
- **Shea trees and savannah conservation**
This will be fulfilled through increased **consumer awareness** on shea communities



and environments, increased awareness on **environmental best practices** among our members and increased **economic value of shea trees** brought about by implementation of the Base Code.

The Global Shea Alliance: A Platform for Industry Discussion

If you have not yet seen a copy of the working document by the Global Shea Alliance Secretariat, please ask us for one. This document seeks to generate lively discussions among our members that will lead to a consensus on the path forward.

The Secretariat is looking forward to hearing your comments, concerns and ideas concerning this sustainability strategy.

Market Opportunities for Shea

Innovative Edible Markets for Shea

By Peter Lovett, Shea Expert

The key components of shea butter that make it a highly desirable ingredient in the food industry include stearic acid and oleic acid. In West Africa, stearic acid usually represents over 40% of the *Fatty Acid (FA)* composition of shea butter, and is seen in a 1:1 ratio with oleic acid. Oils and fats derived from plant and animal products exist as *Tri-Acyl-Glycerides (TAGs)*, and the most common TAG in shea butter is Stearic-Oleic-Stearic (SOS), a symmetrical TAG that is also found in cocoa butter. SOS is highly valued as a *shortening*^{1,2} in the

food industry because of the functionality it adds to products, including texture, mouth feel, bloom prevention, lubrication, variable melting points and shelf life.

Cocoa butter is the world's largest commercial source of SOS and cocoa bean production forms the basis of a multi-billion dollar soft commodities index. European Union (EU) regulations specify shea as one of six permissible species in the formulation of cocoa butter equivalents and improvers (CBEs and CBLs), while the USA classifies shea

stearin (shea nut oil) as an ingredient that is *Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS)*. As shea butter is currently the world's second biggest source of SOS, the extraction of this product has the potential to be very lucrative.

Furthermore, there is a growing consensus from findings across the world that diets rich in stearic acid can be beneficial to people's health. Regrettably, stearic acid is a Saturated Fatty Acid (SFA), and as such, is grouped with other SFAs such as trans-fats, palmitic, lauric and myristic acid – that are



generally considered to be detrimental to one's health. Studies demonstrate that diets rich in stearic acid, including shea butter rich diets, can lower *postprandial lipemia*^{3,4}, and alleviate cholesterol levels through a reduction in the ratio of *High Density Lipid* (HDL) to *Low Density Lipid* (LDLs) ratio^{5,6}, lowering the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Although available studies are limited, there is a strong justification for further research on SOS and stearic acid rich diets. Future research should consider the differences in the benefits obtained from shea butter, versus other sources of vegetable oils and TAGs.

Results from research on whole shea butter consumption becomes particularly compelling when the positive health benefits of fatty acid and TAG type are considered in combination with the known effects of bioactives found in shea, e.g. cholesterol lowering (SheaNature®), anti-arthritis (FlexNow®), anti-inflammatory (Verma et al, 2012)⁷, anti-tumour (Akihisa et al. 2010)⁸ and the anti-malarial / cardiovascular benefits of diets with high flavonoid content (Maranz, 2012)⁹.

Ongoing market research in the natural food sector reveals that there is a growing interest in incorporating whole or fractionated shea into a wider range of products of health conscious, vegetarian or vegan consumers. This could lead to the replacement of less-beneficial fats by shea, as an ingredient for applications in both sweet and savoury products. Companies that make butter and dairy alternatives have already begun promoting the health virtues of plant based diets in mainstream markets. As these companies expand their consumer base, they are increasingly looking for new ingredient options and suppliers. Having created a business model focused on



thinking outside of the box and offering new, healthier, more sustainable alternatives to our daily staples, this group of companies is ready and waiting to start incorporating shea.

- 1 Shortenings are fats formulated from oil and base oil (often with a plasticizer and an emulsifier). Their name is derived from the 'shortness' they impart to the food products they are contained within. The term 'shortening' refers to the ability of a fat to lubricate, weaken, or shorten the structure of food components so that they function in a characteristic way to provide desirable textural properties to a food product.
- 2 Ghotra BS et al. (2002) Lipid shortenings: a review. *Food Research International* 35 (2002) 1015–1048
- 3 A term which refers to the fat, oil or lipid content in your bloodstream between 2-12 hours after eating
- 4 Berry SEE et al. (2008) Impaired Postprandial Endothelial Function Depends on the Type of Fat Consumed by Healthy Men. *J. Nutr.* 138(10). 1910-1914
- 5 USDA (2010) DGAC: Part D. Section 3: Fatty acids and cholesterol. In "Report of the DGAC on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010." Washington, DC: USDA, pp D31–D65, 2010.
- 6 EFSA (2010) EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition, and Allergies (NDA); Scientific Opinion on Dietary Reference Values for fats, including saturated fatty acids, polyunsaturated fatty acids, monounsaturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, and cholesterol. *EFSA Journal* 2010; 8(3):1461. [107 pp.]. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2010.1461. Available online: www.efsa.europa.eu
- 7 Verma N et al. (2012) Anti-Inflammatory Effects of Shea Butter through Inhibition of Inos, Cox-2, and Cytokines via the NF-kB Pathway in Lps-Activated J774 Macrophage Cells. *Journal of Complementary and Integrative Medicine*. Volume 9, Issue 1, Pages 1–11, ISSN (Online) 1553-3840, DOI: 10.1515/1553-3840.1574, January 2012
- 8 Akihisa T et al. (2010) Anti-Inflammatory and Chemopreventive Effects of Triterpene Cinnamates and Acetates from Shea Fat. *Journal of Oleo Science* 59(6) 273-280
- 9 Maranz S (2012) An Alternative Paradigm for the Role of Antimalarial Plants in Africa. *Scientific World Journal*, published online April 19 2012. doi: 10.1100/2012/978913

Spotlight on Sheanut and Butter Trade in South Sudan

Regional Shea Markets

By Peter Lovett, Shea Expert (Research conducted with funding by USAID via Weidemann Associates)



General distribution of *Vitellaria paradoxa* [shea] across West, East and Central Africa (source: USAID West Africa Trade Hub, 2012)

In Central and Eastern Africa, shea trees (*Vitellaria paradoxa* ssp. *nilotica*) occupy a broad swathe of the Sahel-Savannah ecozone, through Cameroon and Chad into the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia. Shea grows widely in South Sudan, across the three Equatoria States, through Lakes and Warrup, and into Western and Northern Bahr el

Ghazal, forming a zone (est. @ 100,000 km²) referred to as the shea belt, that extends westward into Senegal.

Eastern shea varieties have lower stearic acid levels (C 18:0 = 25 - 38%, mean 32%) and lower melting points (25-30°C) as compared to those of western varieties, known for their high stearin content (C 18:0 = 30 to 52%, mean 42%) and higher melting points

(304-38°C). Varietal levels of unsaponifiables are comparable but despite the exceptional silky skin-feel of *nilotica*, few commercial cosmetic formulations incorporate the oil of ssp. *nilotica*. Traditional processing of ssp. *nilotica* involves sun-drying of "raw/un-boiled" fresh nuts before storage of the kernel. To extract shea oil, kernels are roasted whole (mixed in sand or ash), ground to a fine paste on stone querns and boiled with water.

Oil is decanted off and re-boiled to dry and clean. Usually sold in bottles, fresh shea oil is liquid at ambient local temperatures or semi-solidified after overnight cooling. Improved methods utilizing bridge-presses and oil-seed expellers offer exciting opportunities to increase the efficiency and quality of production.

Despite supply chain weaknesses (e.g., underdeveloped road networks, limited access to electricity in rural areas) South Sudan has a shea resource with enormous potential—in terms of volume availability (estimated at 500,000 SETs) and market demand. The population (8-10 million people) requires basic necessities, including edible oil and soap, which are mostly imported. Further, there is demand for cosmetic and other natural ingredients from neighbouring countries. These conditions provide a golden opportunity to jump-start

a shea producing industry to meet domestic needs.

If short-term goals are achieved, and a sustainable shea industry is established in South Sudan, the available resource size suggests that medium to long-term goals should include development of an export market. With recognition of shea's healthy fatty acid profile, as compared to trans-fats and other saturated fatty acids (SFAs), there is an opportunity to competitively market South Sudan's shea for use in the cosmetic, speciality fats and niche health food sectors, especially in India and Asia. To this end, further research is required to assess the economic viability of refining and fractionation to meet international cosmetic and food grade specifications.

Global Shea Alliance Updates

Global Shea Alliance Wins Grant from Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund

The Global Shea Alliance won a grant from the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund, known as the BUSAC Fund. The goal of the BUSAC Fund is to enable the private sector, including business membership organizations, trade unions, and media to influence public policy formulation by conducting research and developing evidence-based policy positions at the national, regional, and local levels. The BUSAC Fund works to improve the private sector by helping to remove bottlenecks at all levels of administration and broaden public understanding of the role of business in society. With the grant money, the GSA will start a campaign to build capacity among stakeholders to advocate for the shea industry.

Shea Quality Improvement Project

The Shea Quality Improvement Project (SQIP) was launched in recognition of the importance of high quality shea nuts in contributing to a profitable and sustainable value chain. Facilitated in collaboration with Meridian Agricultural Services, SQIP trained collectors and processors in the Ghana shea belt from June—September 2012. The project focused on the following outcomes: developing training materials that address key quality issues; conducting community level training workshops on techniques that improve shea nut quality for 5,000 collectors in northern Ghana; and introducing collector groups to buyers. Local partners fluent in various local languages delivered each of the trainings. Key quality issues that

were addressed included the construction of drying platforms with specific dimensions and instructions on how best to dry shea nuts. A total of 6,590 collectors were trained by SQIP, exceeding the target outreach number by 10%.

New Global Shea Alliance Website—February 2013

The Global Shea Alliance is excited to announce the launch of our new website in February! Members currently enjoy unique access to shea industry updates and resources that help strengthen small shea businesses, promote shea worldwide, and facilitate information sharing about best practices throughout the shea value chain. Additionally, members have access to business to business networking opportunities, voting rights in the annual General Assembly meeting, priority access and discounted admission to the annual international shea industry conference in West Africa, and logistical support for promotional trips in West Africa. Beginning in February, members will gain access to a complete online business directory that includes profiles of all Global Shea Alliance members. Furthermore, members will be able to network and communicate online through discussion forums and working groups focusing on the most important industry issues of the moment. The new website will contain an extensive academic and business library of resources that are available exclusively to members. Finally, the new website will provide current industry information and market data that can be used to improve business practices. Look for the new website in February 2013!

Dates for the



January

26-27 Cosmetics Trade Fair 2013, Hannover, Germany
www.ki-online.de/en/messe

29-31 Food Across Borders Conference 2013, Accra, Ghana
www.agribizafrika.org

February

13-16 BioFach 2013, Nuremberg, Germany
www.biofach.de/en

21-22 Borderless 2013: Connecting Markets, Accra, Ghana
www.borderlesswa.com

28-3 Mar BEAUTY Moldova 2013, Chisinau, Moldova
en.beauty.moldexpo.md

March

7-10 Natural Products Expo West 2013, Anaheim, CA
www.expowest.com

9-11 Guangdong International Beauty Expo-Spring Edition, Guangzhou, China
www.gdbeautyexpo.com

April

3-4 AOCS Oils and Fats, World Market Update 2013, Ukrainian House, Kiev, Ukraine
worldmarket.aocs.org

7-9 8th International High End Edible Oil and Olive Oil Exhibition, Beijing, China
www.oilexpo.com.cn/en

16-18 in-cosmetics show 2013, Paris, France
www.in-cosmetics.com

Please contact the Global Shea Alliance for further details: info@globalshea.com

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