

## SOYMAX from Togo

A fruitful cooperation between sequa, its Import Promotion Desk (IPD) and GIZ opens the European market doors to a young SME from Togo

In 2016, Hamed Djabaré left the shop he was running in the market of Lomé to work for an agribusiness company in Bassar, where he discovered for the first time the reality of small farmers. That year, GIZ set up its Green Innovation Centres (GIC) in the region, with the aim of promoting the agri-food sector, by facilitating the transfer of knowledge and experience on organic farming practices. Hamed was one of the first internal inspectors to be trained in organic agriculture and his “Innovation Test Field” soon became the best of the GIC in the region. This is when the idea of creating his own company began to take root in his mind.



### Facts



- 3 participations in the Biofach Trade Fair supported by sequa (2021, 2022, 2023)
- 1 international certification
- 44 matches with European buyers
- 4 new trade relationships
- 33 employees (10 in 2018)
- 8,463 producers (3,000 in 2018)
- Annual production capacity of 14,000 t organic soybean (10,000 in 2018)
- 2.115t organic soybean cake, 250t organic soybean oil
- 2.000t cashew nuts

### The rise of SOYMAX

In 2018, taking advantage of the experience he had gained thanks to the GIC, Hamed decides to stand on his own feet and create SOYMAX. The company quickly received technical support from GIZ and Hamed managed to finance organic certification.

In 2020, he attended Biofach for the first time, which allowed him to present SOYMAX to many importers and to better understand the expectations of the European market. He received a first large order of soybeans, but the Covid-19 pandemic curbed his ambitions. SOYMAX nevertheless continued its activities and at the end of 2020, GIZ selected it for a new project aimed at helping Togolese SMEs establish trade relations. The three-year project was implemented by sequa and had several components, including a coaching and matchmaking programme at European trade fairs. Hamed also received sequa’s training in corporate social responsibility, sales and marketing.

The SOYMAX team becomes more professional, also thanks to Christian Appiah who joined in 2021 as Executive Assistant. During these three years, the company strengthens the contacts made at the fairs, builds a certain level of trust and closes several important deals.



## Challenge



In a context of fluctuating soybean prices, Hamed and his team strive to retain their farmers by offering them contracts, providing them with seeds, training and putting at their disposal tractors to plough their fields.

Also, the financial mechanisms in Togo do not help SMEs to become competitive; interest rates on bank loans are very high and repayment periods are difficult to achieve.

The organic certification costs and the risks associated with non-compliance with organic standards by their farmers are other aspects that SOYMAX has had to learn to manage.

SOYMAX has also realised that communication is key to building a trusting relationship with trading partners and that language and cultural barriers combined with poor communication can lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in cooperation.

The challenges remain many, but SOYMAX has learned to forge new partnerships that will progressively give it the means to achieve its ambitions.

## Support



### Introduction to the European market

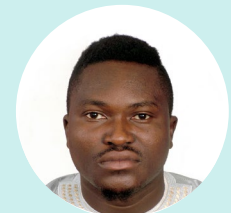
Thanks to the sequa program SOYMAX has been able to promote its products at Biofach for three consecutive years. Hamed met with European importers, has gained a better understanding of the EU market requirements and built a network of (potential) customers with whom he has stayed in contact after the trade fairs.

## Effect



Today, SOYMAX aspires to become a leading company in the organic farming sector in Togo. It now has 30 employees, employs 187 seasonal workers and provides its farmers with quality seeds and training in agricultural practices that respect the principles of organic farming. The SME also contributes to the empowerment of Togolese women by providing them with technical and financial support in order to encourage their involvement in the production of organic products. This enables them to support themselves and their families.

SOYMAX trades mainly cashew nuts and certified organic soybeans (beans, cake and oil) with a long-term objective of achieving an annual production capacity of 20,000 tons of soybeans, 10,000 tons of soy cakes and 5,000 tons of soy oil. In addition, the SME plans to expand its product range by offering sesame, pineapple and corn in 2024, and shea and honey in 2025.



Hamed Djabaré  
Founder of SOYMAX

Our participation in the sequa program has been a great opportunity and a transformative experience for SOYMAX. Exhibiting my products at Biofach gave me access to importers that I would never have had the opportunity to meet on my own. I also understood the importance of offering quality products and building robust, reliable and sustainable value chains.

For more information on SOYMAX, visit <https://soymaxbio.net>

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