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Safer Food Reaches Major Senegal Supermarkets: Creating a Market-linked Food Safety Culture with Growing Food Businesses

Small-scale agribusinesses, or “growing food businesses” (GFBs), in Senegal face challenges in establishing and maintaining market positions, particularly as consumer concerns about food safety grow. In local markets, their products must compete with imported foods; and they often lack access to more profitable market outlets. Demographic dynamics show trends towards the expansion of the middle class with an increasing share of working women who need to reduce time spent on shopping and cooking. Additionally, lower income families more commonly access their food from formal markets, like name brand grocery stores, and these women need to ensure their hard-earned resources are spent on food that is good quality and safe for their families.



Carvi Food employee about to weigh dried salted meat before packing. Photo credit: Alimatou Zayda Diagne.

The presence of supermarkets in Senegal is a relatively new phenomenon. The French group Auchan was one of the first international brands to position itself in a sustainable way after they acquired the Spanish brand CityDia. Auchan opened its first store in Senegal in 2015 and has located several stores in lower-income neighborhoods in Dakar. With an annual growth rate of 29%, the company now has more than thirty stores. It was quickly followed by other international brands such as Carrefour and SupEco.

Driven by consumer demand, all companies within the Auchan food value chain need to meet strict food safety specifications. Auchan sources fresh and processed local products from 500 Senegalese suppliers, all of which must adhere to Auchan specifications and the intensive food safety standards that are regulated by the Senegalese ASN (*Association Sénégalaise de Normalisation* or the Senegalese Association for Standardization). Thanks to multi-year contracts, the suppliers are able to market their products in channels consistent with their targets and the supermarkets meet the needs of the local consumers in terms of quality, taste, and safety.

Access to supermarkets like Auchan provides significant growth opportunities for Senegalese GFBs, which often must deal with physical distribution of their products in addition to production.



Carvi Food flyer showing their commitment to food safety. Photo Credit: Alimatou Zayda Diagne.

Carvi Food, founded and managed by Alimatou Zayda Diagne, a 26-year-old Senegalese woman, has just been approved by Auchan following a supplier audit. Carvi Food is the first Senegalese company to make and offer “Kilichi,” a product that had previously been imported from Niger and South Africa. Kilichi is a dried meat with spices that is usually prepared at home during holidays following the traditions of Northern Senegal. Carvi offers its customers assorted flavors of kilichi in 30g and 100g packets at 1,000 and 3,000 FCFA (around US\$ 1.70 and US\$ 5.20). The chili, garlic, salt, and ginger flavored products are marketed on their website with home delivery service. With 10 full time employees, Carvi’s operations are expanding. Ms. Diagne estimates the Auchan contract will increase their annual sales by 100% (from US\$ 30,000 to US\$ 60,000). Carvi benefits from Auchan’s broad geographic network and its products will soon be available in major Senegalese cities beyond Dakar.

Feed the Future Business Drivers for Food Safety (BD4FS), funded by USAID and implemented by [Food Enterprise Solutions](#), helped build the capacity of Carvi Food to supply safe food products. BD4FS food safety experts trained Carvi Food employees and management on implementing prerequisite programs (PRPsⁱ). Resulting from this prerequisite training and implementation of the PRPs, Carvi demonstrated to Auchan that they could be a safe food supplier, thus winning a lucrative contract.

Whether it is to counter foreign competition in local markets or to find new markets, food safety has become a key strategic issue for the competitiveness of Senegalese agribusinesses. An overall “food safety management system” must be applied at all levels of action and decision-making to ensure that products are safe and that they meet the requirements of consumers who are increasingly aware and concerned about the quality of their food.

The BD4FS cocreation approach provides support to companies in a customized way according to their food safety goals. In collaboration with its technical partners, BD4FS is currently preparing companies for certification and working

with GFBs to establish local certification. The program has trained more than 100 Senegalese companies on national regulations and standards as well as pre-requisite programs. Additionally, it has raised awareness of more than 1,000 entrepreneurs through its mSafeFood mobile phone hotline. The hotline will be live for six months with a goal of reaching 3,000 to 6,000 young entrepreneurs and consumers.

By helping Carvi and other GFBs supply safe food products and verify that they are capable of meeting food safety standards, BD4FS is strengthening their competitive advantage in a food safety-conscious market. These efforts are directly benefiting women-owned business and are anticipated to have indirect benefits for women consumers who increasingly shop at large markets. BD4FS operations are also underway in Nepal and Ethiopia, where the program is working with GFBs to tailor capacity building and training activities developed in Senegal to meet their local needs.

According to Carvi Food owner Ms. Diagne, “This audit was successful thanks to BD4FS technical assistance. We are determined to win the bet on the quality of our products through a continuous improvement process. The BD4FS cocreation approach allows us to stay focused on our goals and succeed.”



Alimatou Zayda Diagne standing next to her products with other BD4FS GFBs during SIAGRO 2022 expo. Photo credit: Astou Diop.

Learn more about FES and BD4FS activities at <https://www.foodsolutions.global/> and <https://agrilinks.org/activities/business-drivers-food-safety>; and follow us at:



ⁱ PRPs - Prerequisite programs (PRPs) are the minimum control measures, actions and procedures that must be performed to produce/manufacture a product that meets consumer needs. As no single policy or set of standards can be applied to every plant or distribution system, PRPs are used as guides in setting up individual policies. Food-safety management systems are management systems that involve the systematic and logical assessment of all the steps in a food-manufacturing operation. A food-safety management system cannot be successfully implemented unless the facility has PRPs in place.



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