



DIANA MANASSEH, BOMARTS FARMS LTD, GHANA

'There has been a great change for those who come into contact with the Bomarts Fairtrade experience.'

Diana Manasseh, Bomarts Farms

INTRODUCTION

Diana Manasseh is the Certification Officer and Fairtrade Officer at Bomarts Farms Ltd, a producer of pineapples and mangoes for export. Diana is married with a 12-year-old son and 16-month-old daughter. Her professional qualifications include an HND in Statistics.

Diana's role as Certification Officer involves putting measures in place to ensure the company continues to meet both Fairtrade and GLOBALGAP certification standards. GLOBALGAP is the on-farm standard established by Europe's leading food retailers to assure their customers about the safety of agricultural food products. Without certification growers cannot access major UK supermarket chains like Tesco, ASDA, and Sainsbury's. The role of Fairtrade Officer includes supporting the workers in managing projects funded by the Fairtrade premium.

Diana is also a board member of the West Africa Fairtrade Network, a regional member of the Africa Fairtrade Network (AFN), the umbrella organisation for Fairtrade certified producer organisations across Africa. The AFN's mission is to increase awareness of fair trade in Africa and explore remunerative trade opportunities for Fairtrade producer organisations through networking within and outside Africa. The AFN also represents the interests of African producers within Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), the umbrella organisation for the international Fairtrade movement.

BACKGROUND TO BOMARTS

Bomarts was set up as a small fruit farm by Ghanaian national, Anthony Botchway in 1985 and began exporting fresh fruit in 1998. It is now a private limited company, 85% Ghanaian-owned with a 15% share owned by a Swiss partner. Mr Botchway is the majority shareholder and Managing Director.

The company employs between 500 and 650 workers, depending on the season. Its head office, plant nursery, tissue culture laboratory, and pineapple packhouse with cold store facilities are an hour's drive from Accra and employ 60 workers.

Mmampheia farm is 50 minutes drive from the head office. It grows pineapples on 700ha, employs 500 workers, and has a new ultra modern packhouse with packing lines installed. Mangoes are grown on 380ha at Tafi Abuife farm in the Volta region, three hours drive from Accra. It has its own packhouse with pre-cooler and packing lines and employs 80 to 120 workers depending on the season. All fruits are transported to the port in reefer containers. Fruit for the conventional market can also be sourced from small-scale local farmers who participate in an out-growers scheme.

BOMARTS AND FAIRTRADE

Bomarts was Fairtrade certified for pineapples and mangoes in 2002. Fairtrade sales include payment of a minimum price and additional Fairtrade premium to invest in social projects that benefit the workers and their communities. The premium fund is managed on behalf of the workers by a Joint Body (JB) of elected worker representatives. Diana represents the management on the JB in her capacity as Fairtrade Officer to co-ordinate Fairtrade matters between workers and management. Her skills and experience are used to guide the JB in project management, finance, accounts, and administration, while the overall decision-making power rests with the elected members.

The Fairtrade premium has been used for a variety of projects including:

- Small loans scheme available to all workers
- Canteen subsidy – a daily meal is provided for all workers with a 40% reduction in cost

- Christmas allocation of consumables
- Construction of boreholes at three locations to provide clean drinking water
- Refurbishment of two village clinics
- Construction of two kindergarten blocks, each with three rooms, office and washrooms
- Provision of furniture for the two kindergartens
- Cash donation towards the construction of a maternity wing for Notre Dame clinic
- Construction of an 18-cubicle toilet block
- Computer pool for training workers in computer skills
- Sponsorship for extra tuition of workers' children at three schools
- Supply of books and writing materials to workers' children
- Training for Joint Body members.

PRODUCTION

Fresh pineapples are available year-round, with the peak harvest period between March and July. The mango harvest is from May to August. Integrated crop management techniques are used by Bomarts wherever possible in the production process to minimize use of chemical pesticides.

The EU is Ghana's traditional export market for pineapples. In recent years consumer demand has changed from the Smooth Cayenne variety produced in Ghana to the MD2 variety developed in South America. Many producers were unable to finance the shift to MD2 production which incurs high costs of inputs such as planting materials, expensive chemicals and fertilizers, and training in new agricultural practices.

As a result Ghana's export volumes fell by 44% from 71,158 tonnes in 2004 to 40,000 tonnes in 2007, while the number of exporters fell from 42 to eight.

In 2003 Bomarts invested significant resources into switching 98% of its pineapple production to the MD2 variety, maintaining reduced production of Smooth Cayenne for other markets. In 2008, 6,000 tonnes of MD2 pineapples were produced of which 2,200 tonnes were sold to the Fairtrade market. In the same year 300 tonnes of mangoes were produced, all sold to the conventional export market.

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Agriculture is a mainstay of Ghana's domestic economy, accounting for 35% of GDP and employing 55% of the workforce, mainly small landholders (CIA World Factbook).

The rural farming areas, with a large, underdeveloped population, have an unemployment rate of approximately 20% and a consequent huge demand for employment and wealth creation. Underlying problems include lack of access to education, an illiteracy rate of 48%, inadequate healthcare, and lack of access to drinking water and electricity.