

Cartier

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE AWARDS



2017 FINALIST FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

SALMA ABDULAI

Ghana

Unique Quality Product Enterprise

WWW.UQUALITYPRODUCT.COM

Processes and markets Fonio, a nutritious and climate resistant indigenous cereal

Driven by a desire to tackle malnutrition and transform rural women's lives, 31-year-old Salma Abdulai, from the impoverished, drought-prone North Ghana, launched Unique Quality Product Enterprise, a company which processes Fonio, a sustainable indigenous crop with extraordinary health benefits.

While nobody else thought of processing the almost extinct crop, Salma had a brainwave. Drawing on her extensive knowledge and academic experience – she holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Agriculture Technology and a postgraduate degree in Agricultural Economics – she discovered the



potential of Fonio, which takes only eight weeks to mature, and is drought and flood-proof. In 2014 she launched Unique Quality Product Enterprise, processing and marketing the cereal, registering farmers to produce the crop and building a team based in Tamale to process precooked Fonio for the markets.

“What I like about running my own business is the fulfilment I get by supporting other women and knowing that providing them with an income will impact their family’s lives, their education, and their social responsibilities”

The business has a proven holistic approach to social, economic and environmental problems. It is also addressing food insecurity and unsustainable land management, particularly for landless female farmers with no access to fertile lands.

Salma started Unique Quality Product Enterprise with 10 landless women and to date, the business has supported 500 farmers – 350 women and 150 men – to produce raw Fonio for the enterprise. Products are marketed under the DIM Fonio brand – ‘dim’ means eat in the local language.

BRIDGING THE NUTRITIONAL GAP

Fonio can grow on less fertile soils, even throughout drought, and can be harvested three times in a season. The gluten-free cereal is rich in iron, amino acids, protein and carbohydrates and can meet the needs of the malnourished, improving their nutrition and health. Fonio can even benefit those with existing health problems, such as diabetes, normalising sugar levels. “It has key insulin regulating properties and a low glycaemic index level.”

It also has a positive environmental impact. The cultivation of Fonio minimises soil erosion and does not require fertiliser to grow, thereby reducing soil leaching. It is resilient to the impact of climate change because of its low water requirements and can withstand a wide range of weather conditions. Raw Fonio is first sieved to remove sand and stones, it is then washed to remove any remaining stones before being dried in a solar dryer. Dried Fonio is then milled using a de-husking machine, washed again and dried again before being packed into 500 gram or 1kg packs ready to be sold into schools, hotels, restaurants, retail shops and health stores.

“We’re trying to solve the problem of malnutrition, a serious social issue in Ghana”