

INNOVATION SERIES

BUSINESS PROFILE



LES FRUITS TILLOU SARL

LES JUS TILLOU SA

BP 1207 ABOMEY CALAVI

RÉPUBLIQUE DU BENIN

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
LESFRUITSTILLOU/](https://www.facebook.com/LESFRUITSTILLOU/)

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
TILLOUJUS/](https://www.facebook.com/TILLOUJUS/)

ABOUT LES FRUITS TILLOU & LES JUS TILLOU

Company status:

- LES FRUITS TILLOU is a Limited Liability Company, created in 2000.
- LES JUS TILLOU is a Limited Company, created in 2015.

Number of employees:

LES FRUITS TILLOU

- 12 employees, including two women,
- 21 workers (full or part time), including six women, on its farm
- 40 workers, including 32 women, for its dried pineapple processing unit.
- During the period of high demand, seasonally, nine male staff to work on its farm and 23 women staff to work in its packing station.

LES JUS TILLOU:

- 28 employees, including 3 women.



**Bertille GUEDEGBE MARCOS,
Founder & CEO**

Bertille GUEDEGBE MARCOS is the founder and CEO of both LES FRUITS TILLOU and LES JUS TILLOU. She is an agricultural engineer and has worked in the agri-food sector for over 20 years before starting to grow pineapple by herself on an 11-ha field in 1999.

In 2016, Bertille was elected chairman of the Interprofessional Pineapple Association of Benin for three years (*Association interprofessionnelle de l'ananas du Bénin, AIAB*).

This series of events is organised by the PAFO and the COLEACP. COLEACP operates within the framework of the development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union, with the support of the French Development Agency.

BUSINESS MODEL

The companies' mission is to promote worldwide the quality of pineapples produced in Benin, especially the Sugarloaf variety which has high organoleptic qualities.

LES FRUITS TILLOU is a family business created in 2000 which produces and processes pineapple. It began by producing fresh pineapples and exporting them, from 2003 onward, to the international market (mainly to Europe and the Middle East). In 2008, the business was formalised into a Limited Liability Company and started producing pineapple juice with a small-scale artisanal production unit for the local and sub-regional market.

In 2015, a partnership between the Network of pineapple producers in Benin (*Réseau des producteurs d'ananas du Bénin, RÉPAB*), LES FRUITS TILLOU, Les Jus de Marmande, and SH BIAUGEAU led to the creation of LES JUS TILLOU. This Limited Company has an industrial production

unit for pineapple juice and LES FRUITS TILLOU owns 65% of its shares.

In 2016, the Beninese government decided to temporarily suspend exports of fresh coloured pineapples to the European Union. LES FRUITS TILLOU decided to focus on the production and marketing of organic pineapple and to invest into organic production and certification, as green pineapples could still be exported and organic certification adds value to the products.

In 2018, the company invested in a fruit drying unit to produce organic dried pineapples for the European market.

Nowadays, LES FRUITS TILLOU is one of the main horticultural and pineapple export companies in Benin. The industrial production unit for the pineapple juice of LES JUS TILLOU is the largest processing factory in Benin of pineapples destined for the European market.

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMALLHOLDERS

LES FRUITS TILLOU works with around 1,600 small producers grouped in cooperatives within RÉPAB.

LES FRUITS TILLOU provides its pineapple farmers with support and technical supervision to ensure they produce quality products with high

added value. In 2010, it also launched an organic certification initiative to support its suppliers to convert from conventional to organic farming. Today, about 300 small producers were certified organic.



PRODUCTS COVERED AND MARKETS

LES FRUITS TILLOU adds value to pineapples in three ways: as organic and conventional fresh fruit, organic juice and dried fruit. Do to so, it has three processing units, one for the artisanal production of conventional bottled pineapple juice, one for organic pineapple juice (packaged in 210 liter drums for the food industry) and one for dried pineapples.

The (organic) fresh pineapples are mostly exported to the European market. The industrial pineapple juice and the dried pineapples are also destined for international markets.

The artisanal pineapple juice is sold on the local market and in the sub-region.

LES FRUITS TILLOU has the GlobalG.A.P. and HACCP certifications, and all three of its product types are certified organic for both the European and the American market.

All the products of LES FRUITS TILLOU are certified FairTrade and organic for both the European and the American market. The company is also working on ISO 22000 certification.



INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

As a main stakeholder of the pineapple processing industry in Benin, LES FRUITS TILLOU has benefited from several initiatives initiated by the Beninese government and institutions supporting the pineapple sector. Within the framework of its various programmes financed by the European Union, COLEACP provided training on good agricultural practices to members of the Network of pineapple producers in Benin (RÉPAB) who work with LES FRUITS TILLOU.

LES FRUITS TILLOU has continuously adapted its business model and offer to the market and to trade circumstances. Twenty years after it started to export fresh pineapples to international markets, LES FRUITS TILLOU had exported up to 60 tons per week in 2020.

In 2008, LES FRUITS TILLOU invested in a production unit to process artisanal pineapple juice destined to the local and continental markets, which has a producing capacity of 750 litres per day.

In 2015, the company decided to export pineapple juice to the international market and thus built an industrial production unit with a producing capacity of 1,000 litres per hour.

Since 2018, both LES FRUITS TILLOU and LES JUS TILLOU have received various support from COLEACP, including in the form of collective

and individual trainings. LES FRUITS TILLOU also received support in implementing drying techniques, optimising operations in the packing station, staff training in the management of the packing station and the sanitary quality management system according to ISO 22000.

In 2018, LES FRUITS TILLOU added dried pineapple to its product range and acquired a fruit-drying unit with a drying capacity of around 500 tons per year.

All three processing units generate more or less 5 tons of organic waste per day, which is turned into fertiliser and distributed to the pineapples farmers.

In 2020, during the Covid-19 crisis, LES FRUITS TILLOU circumvented the lack of export facilities and transport barrels, supplied from Europe, by increasing its access to local and regional markets. Dried pineapples are sold to local supermarkets and exported to Burkina Faso and Nigeria, and the company sources inputs (e.g. barrels) locally.

The strategy of LES FRUITS TILLOU is to produce more organic juice or dried pineapple and to support more producers to convert to organic farming. It also plans further investments in processing and production tools to increase the added value of its products.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Hiring well-qualified key-staff is of tremendous importance in order to achieve good results. This has to be coupled with continuous work on quality management through regular training and close control. LES FRUITS TILLOU provides support through technical assistance to its pineapple suppliers to help them overcome problems and maintain quality production. This on-site support also enables the farmers' children to be trained in good agricultural and organic practices and to evolve professionally in this field.

The successful development of LES FRUITS TILLOU has contributed to creating employment, empowering women, and developing the area surrounding the processing units with the construction of schools and wells among others.

Lastly, since 2020, the Beninese Sugarloaf pineapple variety from the Allada plateau has a protected geographical indication. This enhances the growing potential of the pineapple sector in Benin with regard to both the market and the producers' business development.