

# INNOVATION SERIES

## BUSINESS PROFILE



AXXIOM

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CÔTE D'IVOIRE

[HTTPS://AXXIOM.BUSINESS.SITE/](https://axxiom.business.site/)

### ABOUT AXIOM

- Company status: Limited company, established in 2015
- Number of staff: 12 permanent employees



#### Elmine Kouyaté, Founder and Director

Elmine Kouyaté is the founder and Director of AXXIOM, a company specialising in production, processing and marketing of mushrooms.

An active entrepreneur, Elmine has developed several business projects and received numerous awards, including:

- the Prix de la Francophonie awarded by the Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers of the Francophonie (Conférence des ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports de la Francophonie, CONFEJES) in 2003
- the Talents of the World prize awarded by the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in 2014
- the Best Startup Africa award at the African Guarantee Fund (AGF) forum in 2016
- finalist at the first edition of the Pierre Castel Prize in 2018
- fourth place for the 2019 Academy of Sciences, Arts, Cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora (ASCAD) prize.

Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support out-of-school girls and young women in Côte d'Ivoire and train them in mushroom growing.

Elmine holds a Higher Technician's Certificate (Brevet de technicien supérieur, BTS) in industrial and food chemistry from the Ecole Supérieure de Technologie (EST) GROUPE LOKO, Côte d'Ivoire; an Engineering Diploma in food and industrial engineering from the Professional University Center in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; as well as a University Diploma in food safety from the Faculty of Pharmacy in Montpellier, France. She has also completed two management capacity-building programmes at the MDE Business School network (Management and Business Development) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the Institute of Higher Business Studies (IESE Business School), Spain.

In 2020, Elmine was named Green Climate Ambassador and selected by the United Nations

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**

**Mission:** to grow and market tasty mushrooms from soil-less cultivation (which avoids additional soil degradation) to protect health and the environment.

**Vision:** to contribute to the development of Africa's agriculture and industry through mushroom cultivation.

In 2015, Elmine founded AXXIOM, a company engaged in soil-less mushroom culture using agricultural waste. This business model valorises waste that would otherwise be disposed of in the ground or incinerated, and promotes deforestation-free agriculture through soil-less cultivation. Deforestation, partly due to agriculture, is a major environmental problem in Côte d'Ivoire, with 90% of the country's forests having disappeared over the past 60 years.

In addition to limiting the negative effects of agriculture on the environment, AXXIOM aims to contribute to a healthy diet, as mushrooms have

a high nutritional value. Notably, mushrooms are a source of vitamin D, strengthening the immune system and helping to prevent diseases such as diabetes and cholesterol. Their consumption is also recommended for infant feeding as it helps to combat malnutrition.

As a way to secure a steady supply of mushrooms, Elmine created the NGO Artin, which enables women to organise themselves into producer groups and to receive technical assistance for mushroom production on a domestic franchise model. AXXIOM promotes mushroom cultivation among local producers, especially women and youth, to empower them and strengthen the circular economy in Côte d'Ivoire.

AXXIOM is present in all 14 districts of Côte d'Ivoire, supporting local mushroom production initiatives.

The company is a pioneer in Côte d'Ivoire in the soil-less cultivation of mushrooms.

**STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMALLHOLDERS, COOPERATIVES...**

AXXIOM is involved throughout the entire mushroom value chain. Upstream, the company works closely with local producers to develop their mushroom-growing activities.

Downstream of the value chain, the company develops distribution partnerships with wholesalers and supermarkets.

AXXIOM supports and has invested in seven mushroom farms run by women, each of them employing five people and providing a 30% profit on the investment.

In addition, AXXIOM works with approximately 40 mushroom suppliers.

## PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

Every day AXIOM offers fresh mushrooms for sale, mainly of the oyster variety, packed in trays to guarantee their freshness. The company also has a range of processed products, including dried

mushrooms, prepared meals and an energy drink. AXIOM also produces ready-to-grow mushroom kits, and mushroom-based cosmetic products such as soap.



AXIOM's products are sold mainly on local markets, to wholesalers, supermarkets and individuals.

In addition, the company supports its raw material suppliers by providing technical assistance and training to develop their businesses.

AXIOM produces, processes and markets its products.

The company also provides bamboo culture kits that are easy to move and set up for interested growers to start growing mushrooms.

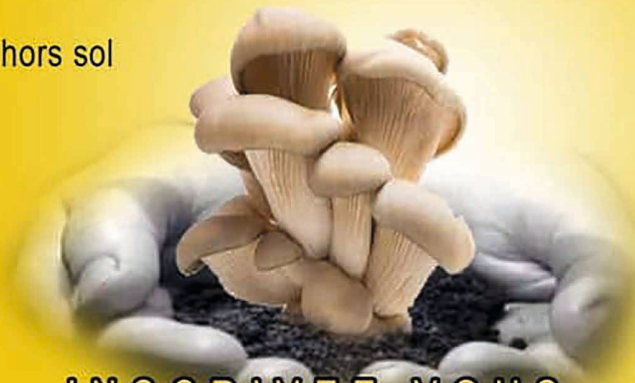


# FORMATION

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AXXIOM is in the process of obtaining organic certification for its products.

## INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

The development of AXXIOM’s business was achieved through several investments, starting with financing the mushroom farms with cash prizes awarded to the company and its Director, Elmine Kouyaté. For example, a \$15,000 cash prize from the Global Environment Facility enabled the creation of a mushroom farm for women in the village of Seguelon.

AXXIOM’s business development also relies on the development of key skills. As a finalist of the Pierre Castel Prize in 2018, Elmine benefited from personalised mentoring on value addition, company structuring and fundraising.

AXXIOM aims to continue to develop its business, and to have trained 1,000 people in mushroom production by 2022. The company is also looking to finance training in organic farming for its mushroom suppliers.

The increase in production will allow the company both to support local mushroom consumption, and to export part of it to countries in Africa, Europe and Asia where oyster mushrooms are widely consumed. In this context, the company is also looking for financial and structural support.





## SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

AXXIOM's activities have many positive impacts, which have been recognised by many prizes and distinctions. From a social and economic point of view, the company has enabled many women and young people in rural communities to obtain a stable income through mushroom production and thus to become economically independent. The company also promotes local production and sells mushrooms at a lower price than those imported in large quantities into Côte d'Ivoire. From an environmental aspect, AXXIOM uses as inputs agricultural by-products that would otherwise be considered as waste (and disposed of in the soil

or burned), thus contributing to the reduction of soil and air pollution.

AXXIOM uses social networks and other digital communication tools, such as QR codes, to promote its activities and products. The company also participates in various trade fairs, exhibitions and other promotional events.

In addition, AXXIOM is very attentive to customer feedback in order to adapt its product range to their needs.

