



BADÉMÈ NATURAL FOODS

BENIN

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## ABOUT BADÉMÈ NATURAL FOODS

- Company status: Sole proprietorship.
- Year of creation: 2019.
- Number of employees: 7 permanent employees, including 2 women and 5 men.



### Marlène Kindji - Founder and Managing Director

Marlène Kindji holds a master's degree in finance and treasury administration, and is the promoter of Badémè Natural Foods, a Beninese company specialising in processing and adding value to market garden produce (leafy vegetables, fruiting vegetables, aromatic plants, local confectionery made from aromatic plants).

Before starting her business, she spent a few years working alongside her mother, a market gardener, which gave her first-hand experience of the difficulties involved in preserving market garden produce, and above all of finding solutions.

Determined to make a lasting impact on the market gardening sector in Benin and to promote local flavours beyond the country's borders, she is training in food processing.

## BUSINESS MODEL

After observing the difficulties her mother, a Beninese farmer, had in preserving her market garden produce - particularly post-harvest losses due to the lack of preservation solutions - Marlène set up her business.

She realised that processing vegetables would be the key to preserving them. So, Badémè Natural Foods began processing and selling vegetables, before expanding into vegetable dehydration.

Badémè Natural Foods meets three needs: save time in the kitchen, stay in touch with Benin's culinary heritage and flavours, and eat healthily.

**Mission:** To make market garden produce 100% accessible to everyone, natural, transportable, easy to store and cook, for Benin and the diaspora.

### Objectives:

- Promote healthy, local and sustainable food (SDGs 2 and 3).
- Create stable jobs, particularly for women and people with disabilities (SDGs 1, 5, 8 and 10).
- Maximise Benin's agricultural resources by sourcing from small-scale market gardeners.



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## STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH SMALLHOLDERS, COOPERATIVES...

Badémè Natural Foods meets the need for healthy eating with 100% natural, additive-free products, while maintaining a strong commitment to quality and transparency.

In line with this commitment, Badémè Natural Foods works with environmentally conscious market gardeners, both cooperatives and private individuals. This collaboration enables the company to monitor and control vegetable production, from sowing to harvesting



## PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

Badémè Natural Foods produces in the Atlantic department, where they have access to natural, local raw materials throughout the year, thanks to their collaboration with a number of market gardeners.

The dried leaves are sold in biodegradable 60g packs (the equivalent of 2kg of fresh leaves). They can be stored at room temperature for at least twelve months. Their waterproof packaging is fitted with zips so that the product can be used over time.

Badémè Natural Foods produces

- Ten varieties of dehydrated vegetables, including moringa, nightshade, vernonia, African basil, amaranth, vitex doniana, vegetable cortea, wild spinach, okra and cassava leaves.

- Aromatic plants such as peppermint, lemongrass, bissap and ginger.
- Ingredients for preparing the African sauce: fried wagashi, cleaned smoked fish, pre-cooked seasoned crabs, flour, spices, etc.

Badémè Natural Foods dried leafy vegetables can be found on the shelves of certain supermarkets in Benin thanks to a partnership with a distribution company.

Badémè Natural Foods also distributes their products on all five continents.

To reach their entire target audience, Badémè Natural Foods uses online sales sites and social networks.



## INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

Recognising the need for convenience, especially for women, Badémè Natural Foods offers clean, cut and pre-cooked vegetables available all year round. In

addition to these vegetables, the company provides the ingredients needed to quickly prepare a delicious

African sauce. Therefore, it frees women to spend more time on other activities.

After realising that their loved ones from overseas (and many others), on their return from holidays back home, were trying to bring back as much local produce as possible, and in order to be able to transport and preserve Beninese flavours across borders, Badémè Natural Foods started dehydrating vegetables. From four varieties in 2019, they now offer ten varieties of dehydrated vegetables as well as aromatic plants.

The project is part of a long-term conservation programme for agricultural products, in particular dried

leafy vegetables, but above all it is about making these leaves easily and conveniently available to Africans, both residents and non-residents.

The herbs and vegetables are dried naturally, ready to cook, easy to cook and above all easy to transport across borders. Drying is carried out in compliance with hygienic standards, using solar dryers and with respect for the environment.

To expand their market, Badémè Natural Foods plans to organise virtual trade fairs to give their products greater visibility and reach a wider target audience.

## SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The success factors of Badémè Natural Foods are based on a detailed understanding of market needs and an ability to respond in innovative ways. By anticipating these needs, in particular by offering prepared and pre-cooked foods, we have been able to transform the promotion of local and traditional products.

This approach has also helped to enhance the value of traditional food systems and to reduce food waste through drying, thereby contributing to the achievement of key sustainable development objectives. Finally, the use of technologies such as solar dryers and biodegradable packaging reinforce the circular economy, while meeting growing expectations in terms of eco-responsibility.

Marlène Kindji has also been rewarded for her efforts. She took part in the AWE GROW UP programme in 2020, winning first prize in the pitch competition with her dehydrated vegetables. In 2021, she was supported by the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) with seed capital of \$10,000. In 2022, it was a finalist in the Francofil competition in the sustainable agri-economy category, organised by La Francophonie. In 2023, it received technical and financial support from the African Foundation for Development (ABC) in collaboration with the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDIF). In 2024, she was an alumnus of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, a programme funded by the US Department of State, which enabled her to strengthen her business leadership skills.



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