



## BUSINESS PROFILE



**SURIVIT N.V.**

<https://wi-suriname.org/>

📍 Suriname

### ABOUT SURIVIT N.V.

- **Company status:** Limited Liability Company
- **Year of registration:** 2006
- **Number of employees:** 15, all women
- **Business sector:** Food processing (mainly cassava)



**Tania Lieuw-A-Soe,**  
**President**

Tania Lieuw-A-Soe is a successful Surinamese entrepreneur committed to contributing to sustainable food and nutrition security, economic growth, and employment opportunities

in Suriname, with a specific focus on rural women.

Tania grew up in an agricultural family, and has lived and studied in Suriname and the Netherlands. In 2004 she founded a company that produces juice from local exotic fruit, selling to hotels and restaurants across Suriname.

Tania is also the founder and president of the rural women's cooperative in Suriname, Wi! Uma Fu Sranan, established in 2013.

In addition to these positions, since 2016 Tania is the president of the Suriname Network of Rural Women Producers (SNRWP), a chapter of the regional Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP) and chairwoman of the Federation of Surinamese Agrarians. She has served as a policy advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture. In 2015, she was elected Entrepreneur of the Year in Suriname by the national radio station ABC.

Tania has continuously taken part in training to improve her entrepreneurial skills and knowledge about food safety, crop and project management, and other topics.

This series of events is organised by IICA and COLEACP.

COLEACP operates within the framework of development cooperation between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and the European Union (European Development Fund – EDF), with the support of the French Development Agency (AFD).



## Mission/vision

SURIVIT N.V. is the processing company created by the women's cooperative Wi! Uma Fu Sranan. Both the company and the cooperative share the same mission: supporting robust economic development in Suriname to improve social and economic standards of living. To do so, Wi! Uma Fu Sranan has established private businesses that produce sustainable and profitable high-value

end products, and economically empowers rural women by educating them to learn all aspects of producing, value adding, food safety, marketing and distribution.

As a social enterprise, SURIVIT N.V. aims to be Suriname's most successful ethical, collaborative and customer-focused social enterprise with an inclusive business model.

## CONTEXT

### Background

Cassava is one of Suriname's main staple foods (along with rice, wheat and plantain), and plays an important role in food security. In 2013, small-scale women cassava processors from two rural inland communities, Klaaskreek and Kapasikele, created the cooperative Wi! Uma Fu Sranan, which means "We, the Women of Suriname". Traditionally, women in these communities have cultivated and processed cassava to feed their families without any further financial improvement. The cooperative Wi! Uma Fu Sranan aims to upscale these farming activities to generate a sustainable source of income.

Together, the members of Wi! Uma Fu Sranan invested in capacity development, training and value chain development, and entered into strategic partnerships (with the Surinamese Government, agricultural (support) organisations, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Union, and others). This led to the development of a cooperative to produce high-quality products, generate sustainable income for its members, which started exporting in 2018. In 2020, the Wi! Uma Fu Sranan cooperative and SURIVIT N.V. opened their refurbished processing plant.

SURIVIT N.V. is a social enterprise based on an inclusive business model with a special focus on taste, health and food safety.





### Position in the market

Wi! Uma Fu Sranan is the first female farmers' cooperative in Suriname. Its processing plant, SURIVIT N.V., is one of the most successful social enterprises in the country.

### Relationships

SURIVIT N.V. employs 15 women, and Wi! Uma Fu Sranan has 38 members.

## PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

### Main products

SURIVIT N.V. mainly processes cassava into various naturally gluten-free end-products, such as flour, preparation for pancakes, porridges, and

baby food named Kokori, a traditional Amerindian porridge prepared with cassava bloc which has been smoked for two weeks.







SURIVIT N.V. also produces natural oils, including from coconut, maripa palm (*Attalea maripa*) and andiroba or crabwood (*Carapa guianensis*), as well as honey and several flavours of chilli sauces.

Another product is *pomtajer*, a Surinamese oven dish prepared with American taro or arrowleaf elephant ear root (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*).



### Main markets

SURIVIT N.V. products are mainly sold on the local market. They are also exported to the Netherlands and to Trinidad and Tobago.

### Main services

In addition to processing local crops, SURIVIT N.V. provides a comprehensive education to its employees about production, value addition, food safety, marketing and distribution.

## Certifications

SURIVIT N.V. is the first company in Suriname to produce baby food according to Codex Alimentarius standards.

The processing company is also undergoing an FSSC 22000 Audit to attest that its food safety management system ensures effective monitoring and management of food safety hazards.

Wi! Uma Fu Sranan members and suppliers of SURIVIT N.V. are in the process of being GLOBALG.A.P. (Good Agricultural Practice) certified, to add value to the end products by complying with international requirements, facilitate access to markets and trade, better ensure food safety, and encourage environmentally sustainable farming practices.

Both Wi! Uma Fu Sranan members and SURIVIT N.V. are in the process of receiving Rainforest Alliance certification to attest to their environmental commitment and mitigation strategies.

## INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

### Milestones

Since its creation, Wi! Uma Fu Sranan has received support from various sources. Prior to the construction of the processing plant, in 2016 the cooperative received cassava graters and smoke houses to improve the quantity and quality of the processed end products. The equipment was provided by the IICA under the Intra-ACP Agricultural Policy Programme funded by the European Union under the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF).

Over the years, the cooperative members have attended several training courses to improve the design of packaging and labelling of the products. For example, in 2019 the IDB, with the support of the Japanese Social Fund, provided training to increase the quality, quantity and trade opportunities of cassava by using modern technologies with an integrated crop processing model. Some members also received support to achieve GLOBALG.A.P. certification for their farms to enable them to export raw and/or processed cassava to Surinamese diaspora markets in the Netherlands and the United States.







### Needs for upscaling

Equipment for upscaling and innovation, and for implementation of renewable energy.

## SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Wil Uma Fu Sranan and SURIVIT N.V. have sustainably improved the living conditions of the cooperative's members, as well as of their families and communities, through the creation of trade and job opportunities, income generation and knowledge sharing. They contribute to the achievement of the following UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 2 ZERO HUNGER – by investing in sustainable agricultural practices, promoting sustainability and minimising waste, as well as contributing to food security and improved nutrition
- SDG 4 QUALITY EDUCATION – by continuously providing capacity building and training to empower women through higher incomes and decision-making power (including within their household), as well as to ensure their children's education
- SDG 5 GENDER EQUALITY – by empowering women as economic actors to ensure economic prosperity, prevent violence against women and girls, and create equal opportunities for everyone
- SDG 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE – by creating economic opportunities and enhancing knowledge, skills and wealth to contribute to the attainment of other SDGs such as SDG 1 NO POVERTY, SDG 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, and SDG 12 RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION.



The cooperative is one of the winners of the 2020 Development Superheroes Award of the IDB, which acknowledges the successful adaptation of its operations to COVID-19-challenges. The cooperative implemented a project to create videos, virtual training materials and an interactive mobile application to help its members get to grips with the international standards required in agricultural practices. In parallel, SURIVIT N.V. maintained its workers' wages, and launched a system of sales and home deliveries through social networks which boosted the local market and contributed to food security.