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PROSPECTS FOR AGRICULTURAL TRADE BETWEEN THE AES, TOGO AND THE UNITED STATES

Elements of response to the question: what agricultural products would the Sahel countries and Togo like to trade more with the United States?

1. General Orientation

Several value chains offer potential for expanding agricultural trade between the countries of the Confederation of Sahel States (AES), Togo and the United States. The most promising appear to be cotton and textiles, shea, sesame and cashew, as well as soybean. This perspective should, however, take into account the growing orientation of countries in the region toward local processing, value addition and industrialization. The objective would therefore not simply be to increase exports of raw agricultural products to the United States, but progressively to develop processed products capable of accessing the U.S. market, while encouraging the inflow of U.S. technologies, equipment, expertise and investment into the relevant value chains.

2. Main Value Chains of Interest

Cotton, textiles and apparel. Mali and Burkina Faso have significant cotton production, complemented by Togo's cotton sector. The most promising approach would be to support the progressive local processing of cotton – spinning, textiles and apparel – in order to increase local value addition. Yarn, fabrics, garments and other processed textile products could represent market opportunities to be explored in the United States.

Shea and derived products. Burkina Faso and Mali have significant potential in this value chain. Commercial interest would lie more in shea butter, refined ingredients and products for the cosmetics, personal-care and food industries than in the export of raw shea nuts.

Sesame and cashew. The AES countries and Togo have capacities in these value chains. Opportunities could include cleaned and graded sesame, sesame oil, processed cashew kernels and other derived or packaged products, with priority given to increasing local processing.

Soybean. For Togo in particular, soybean is a complementary value chain offering prospects in soybean oil, plant-based proteins, animal feed and other processed products. This value chain could constitute a specific Togolese contribution to a broader agricultural and agro-industrial offering.

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3. **Livestock: A Different Rationale**

Livestock is a major economic sector in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. It appears, however, less relevant to consider it primarily from the perspective of livestock or meat exports to the United States. The main value of cooperation with the United States would lie in modernizing the sector: animal health, genetic improvement, animal feed, meat and dairy processing, cold-chain systems, traceability and leather processing. It would therefore primarily be an area for investment, technology transfer and industrial cooperation.

4. **Opportunities for U.S. Companies**

The development of these value chains would, in turn, create business opportunities for U.S. companies. Needs could include agricultural machinery and mechanization equipment, irrigation and water-management technologies, agro-processing equipment, storage infrastructure and post-harvest technologies, refrigeration and cold-chain systems, packaging and quality-control equipment, veterinary technologies, as well as digital and precision-agriculture solutions. These areas would also offer opportunities for investment, joint ventures, training and technology transfer.

5. **Overall Rationale and Togo's Role**

A more structured agricultural relationship could therefore be based on a two-way approach: on the one hand, the AES and Togo developing an offering of increasingly processed agricultural and agro-industrial products; on the other, the United States providing equipment, technologies, services, expertise and investment contributing to the modernization and industrialization of the value chains. Togo would bring to this dynamic its own value chains – particularly cotton, soybean and cashew – as well as its industrial and logistics capacities. Its geographic position and transport infrastructure can also help facilitate access to international markets for the landlocked AES countries.

Conclusion

The cotton-textile, shea, sesame-cashew and soybean value chains thus appear to be the main areas to explore further for the development of agricultural trade with the United States. Livestock would fall more within the scope of technological and industrial cooperation. The overall objective would be to move beyond a relationship based on raw-material exports and promote a mutually beneficial trade and investment relationship combining market access, local processing and industrialization, while creating opportunities for U.S. technologies, equipment and investment. These orientations could serve as an initial basis for discussions with the U.S. side to identify the products, projects and partnerships offering the strongest commercial potential.

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