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Press release

AAK triples its activities with women groups in Burkina Faso

On Friday 23 March, AAK – AarhusKarlshamn signed an agreement with the government of Burkina Faso. With the agreement, AAK engages in tripling its activities with women groups in rural Burkina Faso in West Africa over the next two years.

AAK does this to ensure improved supply and quality of the strategically important shea kernels and to improve living conditions locally in the villages.

Expanding the number of women groups

– As the world's leading producer of speciality vegetable oils and fats, AAK has been sourcing shea kernels in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, since the 1950s. Based on our long experience, AAK has in the past three years established local women groups with whom we work closely, both to do business and to educate the women in how to improve the quality of the shea kernels. Currently, more than 10,000 women are members of these groups, and we now wish to triple the number of women involved, says Knud Larsson, Sourcing Director, AAK.

– The partnership between AAK and the women groups is based on the fair trade principles, ensuring the women a steady income and a bonus for delivering high-quality products, but without binding them to trading with AAK. The formation of women groups empowers the women in terms of being a business partner and contributes to their fight against poverty and for improved living conditions locally in the villages, says Knud Larsson.

Signing of agreement

On Friday, Burkina Faso's Minister of Economy & Finance Lucien Marie Noël Bembamba and Sourcing Director Knud Larsson, AAK, signed the agreement by which AAK commits to tripling the number of women in Burkina Faso with whom AAK works, while also the Burkina Faso government supports the further expansion of the formation and education of women groups throughout the country together with AAK.

The signing event took place at the Ministry of Economy & Finance in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in the presence of several representatives of the government, including the Minister of Environment, the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Women Affairs, the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Christian Friis Bach, and the Danish Ambassador in Burkina Faso Birgitte Nygaard Markussen.

– With this agreement, we further strengthen our commitment to the government and the people of Burkina Faso, says Knud Larsson. – Shea kernels are a strategically important raw material in AAK's solutions for the Chocolate and Confectionery industry, and as a company, we need a steady supply of high-quality shea kernels. This is ensured through our close cooperation with the women groups and the government of Burkina Faso. We are also very proud and thankful for being selected for this venture by the government of Burkina Faso.

In a comment to the signing of the agreement, the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Christian Friis Bach, says: – It is important and gratifying that companies take responsibility for ensuring high ethical standards in trading and for fair payment, and thereby

ensuring better opportunities for thousands of women in Burkina Faso. This type of cooperation is a great possibility for the local African communities and an important contribution to developing poor communities.

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AarhusKarlshamn is the world's leading producer of high value-added speciality vegetable fats. These fats are characterized by a high technological content and are used as substitute for butter-fat and cocoa butter, transfree solutions for fillings in chocolate and confectionery products, and in the cosmetics industry. AarhusKarlshamn has production facilities in Denmark, Mexico, the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain, Uruguay and the US. The company is organised in three Business Areas; Food Ingredients, Chocolate and Confectionery Fats and Technical Products & Feed. Further information on AarhusKarlshamn can be found on the company's website www.aak.com.