



## PRESS RELEASE

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On February 17, 2023, the closing ceremony of the Gender Smart Accelerator Challenge was held at the Ndiambour Hotel in Dakar. On this occasion, 17 Senegalese companies from the agri-food sector received their certificate of participation following four months of coaching and support.

On February 16 and 17, the entrepreneurs of the GENDER SMART ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE were able to present their projects in front of a jury composed of investors and actors of the Senegalese financial ecosystem. At the end of the competition, six companies were chosen to be awarded amounts ranging from 6 to 15 million CFA francs.

The winners are:

- **FRUITY**, a company specializing in the processing of fruits and vegetables into juices, soups and smoothies, and developing practices to reduce post-harvest losses,
- **ACASEN**, a company specialized in the production of cashew-based appetizers and snacks for large distributors. It is also active in the promotion of local products,
- **NUTRIVIE**, which produces and markets vegetable meat made from cashew apples, thus limiting post-harvest losses,
- **AT-TEEN Groupe**, which specializes in the packaging of medicinal plants into herbal teas and oily macerates, encouraging the empowerment of women,
- **DAKANE AGRO COSMO**, a company specialized in the transformation of mangoes into cosmetic and food products, which fights against waste while integrating people with disabilities,
- **FERME LA BARAKAH**, an agro-ecological farm, which produces and markets organic fruits and vegetables, and promotes local consumption.

The GENDER SMART ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE is a first in Senegal! This initiative has highlighted the opportunities offered by the agribusiness sector, particularly for women entrepreneurs, and will hopefully increase the adoption of climate smart practices to increase their resilience in the face of climate change.

Launched in September 2022, the GENDER SMART ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE is a pipeline building activity initiated by AICCRA Senegal and implemented by the WIC Academy with the support of the CGIAR Sustainable Finance Team (OneSF) and the CGIAR Climate Change Resilience Initiative (ClimBeR).

The GENDER SMART ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE is an innovative program! It offers the opportunity to Senegalese companies with a strong gender component and from the agribusiness sector, access to finance by integrating climate-smart agriculture practices in their business scaling strategy. It facilitated the flow of private capital towards companies in the agribusiness sector through integrating gender and climate dimensions in the investment process.

After a national call for applications, nearly 250 companies from Senegal and the west Africa sub-region applied to join the accelerator. Following a screening process, 21 companies were chosen to participate in the program.

For four months, the beneficiaries were coached on various topics such as business development, financial strategy, personal development, in addition to climate smart agriculture practices and the use of climate information services. They were also able to participate in various events to help them connect with various actors in the ecosystem and develop partnerships.

The grants, totalling US\$100,000, are awarded by AICCRA and WIC Senegal.

Beyond the grant, the companies will continue to receive support from AICCRA's partner, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF), to implement of their project and secure matching follow on investments from the private sector.

Thank you to all the partners who believed in this project, and congratulations to all the participants!

AICCRA Senegal and WIC Senegal.

*About the partners and stakeholders:*

[Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa \(AICCRA\)](#) is a project that helps deliver a climate-smart African future driven by science and innovation in agriculture. It is led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and supported by a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. AICCRA Senegal is coordinated by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in collaboration with the Alliance of Bioversity Alliance and CIAT.

[ClimBeR](#) is a CGIAR initiative that aims to increase the capacity of smallholder production systems to withstand the severe effects of climate change. In the context of the accelerator, it is co-funded by the Belgian Federal Public Service (FPS) of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

OneSF is a CGIAR facility that aims to produce locally relevant analysis and evidence to mobilize capital aligned with the impacts of the SDGs and enabling the transformation of food production systems in the context of climate change.

[WIC Senegal](#) was created in 2016, to provide women with privileged access to financial instruments and achieve inclusive economic development. The objectives are (1) to create innovative financial mechanisms for women, (2) to promote women's entrepreneurship and leadership, (3) to accompany the empowerment of African women to enable them to fully participate in the economy. WIC Academy has a strong expertise in supporting women entrepreneurs from various sectors.

[AECF](#) is a leading nonprofit impact investor and is a leading non-profit development organisation that supports innovative enterprises in the agribusiness and renewable energy sectors with the aim of reducing rural poverty, promoting resilient communities and creating jobs. AECF is an AICCRA strategic implementation partner.

