

Business Women Lead Development of Safe, Nutritious Food Systems in Senegal

In partnership with USAID and Feed the Future, Food Enterprise Solutions implements the pioneering program called Business Drivers for Food Safety (BD4FS). Part R&D and part implementation, BD4FS's purpose is to research and develop effective strategies to accelerate adoption of food safety technologies and practices among food businesses. BD4FS offers food safety training, technical assistance and B2B networking services to businesses (processors, transporters, storage operators, retailers, etc.) working along supply chains for local markets.

In addition to group trainings, online events, and technical advice to businesses directly, BD4FS also sponsors broad-based communication campaigns such as our digital platform mSafeFood which transmits food safety information in four different local Senegalese languages, and which reaches a large segment of the nonliterate workforce, most of whom are women. Program staff also expects to see wider benefits for women consumers, who are primarily responsible for purchasing food for households and, increasingly, shop at large markets.

The Platform of Women for Development and Solidarity (PFDS) is a national network of women entrepreneurs that includes women cooperatives and individual enterprises. Most of the members are young and involved in different sectors of activity such as food processing or natural cosmetic products. To help them build their professional reputation, PFDS partnered with BD4FS to provide food safety trainings for its members.



Manda Bio's CEO Ms Armande Lo inspects fruit for her company's organic juice products. Credit: Manda Bio



“These trainings offered by BD4FS allowed us to discover new ways of operating, efficient tools for the management of food safety in the processing workshop [and] at home, and finally, knowledge that will help us to better respond to the needs of consumers.”

- Mrs. Adj Tabara Ndiaye, President of the Platform of Women for Development and Solidarity

The BD4FS mission is to reduce pre-consumer food losses and the risks of contamination so that local markets can offer greater quantities of safe, nutritious foods to consumers. Participating in the BD4FS program is strictly on a voluntary basis. Program staff interviews candidates to understand their challenges, to co-create solutions, and invite them to partner to improve their food safety operations.

In addition to the number of women working toward a culture of food safety with BD4FS, the gender characteristics of individual Senegalese businesses partnering with FES are also notable:

- 79% are owned by women
- Of these, 87% are 30 years of age or older; thus 13% can be considered youth entrepreneurs
- 92% of the female owners/operators have a secondary school education or greater
- 79% of the women owned/operated businesses are focused on food processing
- 59% of them work with fresh produce; 18% fish and seafood; 15% meat and poultry

Compare these with national SME statistics, and we can see that women are "leading the charge" on food safety in Senegal:

- Private sector businesses in Senegal are highly dominated by men. In 2014, women only accounted for 23 percent of firm owners and 14 percent of top managers.¹
- Over 82% of businesses of all types in Senegal are male led.²

This quick comparison shows that businesswomen are key actors in accelerating food safety and food systems strengthening overall in Senegal - they are drivers for positive change in food safety practices and technologies. And, like any business, they need equitable treatment under the law, access to finance, and access to services to build their capacity and gain market share.

Learn more about FES and BD4FS activities at <https://www.foodsolutions.global/> and follow us at:



¹ Ashman, D; Calhoon, B; & Fall-Diop, A. 2017. Gender Analysis for the Follow-On USAID/Senegal Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2019 – 2024. United States Agency for International Development

² 2017 Rapport global du Recensement général des Entreprises (Global Report of the General Business Census). National Agency of Statistics and Demography

