



**HUB-IIT**  
**INTÉGRER**  
**L'INFORMATION**  
**TECHNOLOGIQUE**

## **THE AFRICAN NETWORK OF HUBS-IIT**

A network of national structures providing local technological support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in agri-food processing in Africa



Tech-Dev is an international solidarity nonprofit, working to support the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). It works mainly in the agricultural and food processing sectors, and focuses on transmitting methodologies and reinforcing local capacities through technological support and South-South exchanges. Tech-Dev works with, and complements, the work of the local private sector support structures it partners with.

Tech-Dev builds on over 25 years of experience in francophone Africa (West Africa, Central Africa and the Maghreb), and on close to 500 completed projects. The board of directors is mostly made up of engineers with experience in the agri-food sector. This contributes to Tech-Dev's strong ability to call on a large network of technological resources and skills.

*“The economic environment in the Sahel region is unfavorable for the development of the private sector, and is characterized by a context of extensive underemployment, especially of women and young people. Supporting MSMEs in this context is particularly crucial, and small enterprises involved in the transformation of agricultural products, one of the main job-providing industries, are a priority.*

*Experience has shown that setting up a local, African network of technological advisors, providing entrepreneurs guidance, counseling and local support is an appropriate answer to their needs.*

*After a successful project financed by AFD in Mali, we are today deploying similar networks in the Sahel region with our local partners, helping entrepreneurs integrate technological knowledge. This is the meaning of the Hub-IIT name (Intégrer l'Information Technologique).”*

Hubert de Beaumont - President of Tech-Dev



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## THE HUBS-IIT SUPPORT STRUCTURES RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF LOCAL MSMEs

The Hubs-IIT are innovative structures for MSMEs working in the agri-food transformation sector, mostly headed and staffed by women. The Hubs-IIT help with access to adapted technological knowledge that takes into account social and environmental aspects, and support their implementation.

*At the heart of the Hub-IIT concept is the belief that tailored support can enable entrepreneurs to improve their decision-making and better steer their companies.*

The basis of these structures is a network of advisors, who are trained to interact with the MSMEs and disseminate technological information.

One of the core values of the networks is to promote a professional, high-quality and local service, without barriers to entry (notably via affordable subscription fees for MSMEs), and with a focus on the public good. Local teams work in a spirit of partnership, emphasizing trust, confidentiality and long-term engagement and in synergy with other structures helping MSMEs in their region, without trying to compete with them.

*“Our goal is to create synergies between the different actors involved in the ecosystem. We want to support entrepreneurs who have a taste for a challenge, who want to move forward, even if their businesses are still informal. I therefore invite them to reach out to us and tell us about their issues.”*

Faouzi Bichara, Hub-IIT service director in Chad

### Target Sectors:

Fruits and vegetables, Cereals, Dairy products, Meat products, Fishery products, Produce gathered in the wild, Oilseeds, Honey, Cosmetics etc.

### A large portfolio of areas of intervention:

- Improvement of manufacturing processes
- Development of new recipes and improvement of product quality
- Advice on health and safety
- Control of environmental and social risks and impacts
- Fitting out of premises to standards
- Comparison of technologies and quotes for the choice of suitable equipment
- Restarting production equipment
- Help with the choice of packaging
- Connecting with suppliers
- Regulatory information for easier access to markets
- Orientation for training employees
- Management advice
- Connection with options for financing (including FADEV, privileged partner of Tech-Dev)

*“Our advisor, Sacko, brought us many improvements regarding the technical aspect of food transformation, and on the materials and the appearance of the finished product. The advisor has always been there when needed. What I like about this service is the easy access to technological information. Our average monthly production has doubled, sometimes more than that.”*

Lamine Diarra, Manager of UPVDA in Bamako

## A few key impacts after four years of deployment:

- Significant increase in products obtaining authorizations for sale.
- Development of collaborative relationships (joint selling/purchasing, subcontracting, valorization of by-products...)

Number of products developed and released to the national market	498
Companies having increased their production volume	262
Companies having increased their number of sales points	227
Companies taking measures to improve their environmental and social impact	220



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## The African Network of Hubs-IIT in numbers

As of December 2022, the network features 8 operational Hubs-IIT, and 22 technological advisors, having performed around 3,500 on-site visits to 898 supported companies.

Once fully deployed, the African Network of Hubs-IIT will have exceeded its goals, and contributed to the professionalization of more than **7,500 workers** in the industry, **80% of which are women**.

## The Tech-Dev support

Tech-Dev intervenes to support the technological advisors with its long-distance Technological Support Service (SATD, Service d'Appui Technologique à Distance). More specifically:

- The Tech-Dev network (volunteer experts, technological partners, material suppliers) can help solve problems that are not covered by local solutions.
- Our technological database can be accessed and leveraged, including around 200 documents such as practical guides, lists of suppliers, comparison of technologies, regulation information, decision support models...



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*The Women's Network of Producers and Food Processors of Keur Moussa (RFPT Keur Moussa) is a Senegalese unit of food transformation, employing 23 women workers to produce juices, syrups and canned products from local fruits and vegetables, as well as milk products such as curd and yogurts. It has been a member of the Hub-IIT in Thiès since 2019. Their Hub-IIT adviser enabled them to increase the storage duration of syrups, and to improve the taste of the yogurts. The company also benefited from a loan to purchase inputs and packaging - a one-off initiative of the Hubs-IIT to respond to the impact of the covid-19 crisis on food transformation MSMEs, in order to maintain their activities during this difficult period.*

# DEVELOPING AND PERPETUATING THE NETWORK OF HUBS-IIT TO CATALYZE THE SHARING OF INFORMATION AND GOOD PRACTICES ACROSS AFRICA

In each country where they are implemented, the Hubs-IIT position themselves as links to empower the local ecosystem to support MSMEs (consisting of local support programs, professional associations or local nonprofits). They are driven by local NGOs, with a long-term local implantation, and specialized in the support to agri-food MSMEs. The Hubs-IIT thus benefit from the experience of local ecosystems.

## A link between small businesses and scientific research

One of the innovations of the structure is the implementation of links with institutes, working mostly on applied scientific research. The partnerships are based on the part-time secondment to the Hubs-IIT of research engineers working in the role of technological advisors:

- **In MALI:** The Hubs-IIT in Bamako and Sikasso are managed by AMASSA - Afrique Verte, in partnership with the Center for the Private Sector in Bamako.



- **In SENEGAL:** The Hubs-IIT in Dakar, Thiès and Ziguinchor are managed by the hub for food security intervention of ENDA GRAF SAHEL.



- **In CHAD:** The Hub-IIT in N'Djamena is hosted by the house of the small enterprise of the nonprofit Bet Al Nadjah.



- **In BURKINA FASO:** The Hubs-IIT in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso are managed by AMASSA - Afrique Verte Burkina.



- The Food Technology Laboratory (LTA, Laboratoire des Technologies Alimentaires) in Mali
- The Institute of Food Technology (ITA, Institut des Technologies Alimentaires) and the Polytechnic School (ESP, Ecole Supérieure Polytechnique) in Senegal
- The Center for Control of the Quality of Foods (CECOQDA, Centre de Contrôle de Qualité des Denrées Alimentaires) in Chad
- The Institute for Applied Science and Technology Research (IRSAT, Institut de Recherche en Sciences Appliquées et Technologies) in Burkina Faso

These partnerships allow for the transfer of research results on the field, and conversely the adaptation of research projects to the innovation projects of MSMEs.





## The challenge of long-term sustainability of the project

A major challenge of the project is to ensure the sustainability of this **service of general interest**, as it requires **public and private funding in addition to the revenue** generated by the Hubs-IIT.

Indeed, each of the local structures plans for a self-financing of up to 15%, provided via membership fees and the invoicing of certain services. This objective is complemented by looking for resources around the ecosystem: the constitution and animation of a monitoring committee of the structure, integrating technical and financial partners at the national, regional and international level, and the implementation of win-win partnerships with other programs supporting MSMEs.

## Strengthening the hubs by building a network

Networking the different Hubs-IIT at the regional level helps build a solid basis for their deployment, and for looking for ways to sustain them in the long term.

A **charter of the African Network** of Hubs-IIT, signed in July 2020, sets out the commitments and objectives shared by its members as well as the features of its functioning.

The Network aims to:

- Accumulate and share experiences, each Hub-IIT benefiting from others and contributing to collective memory, with a South-South exchange approach;
- Increase the sources of information to solve the problems of MSMEs;

- Create a critical mass sufficient to consider pooling certain operations based on feedback;
- Create a club of professionals in support of MSMEs;
- Strengthen the ability to reach out to states, regional bodies and international organizations.

## The role of Tech-Dev as Network Head

Tech-Dev guarantees that members will respect their commitments, and plays a coordinating role for the Network. This is done by organizing regional and international workshops for exchanges, awareness and the training of advisors, as well as promoting the network.

Tech-Dev also provides an interface with a network of technical experts, and other international partners:

- French Association of Technological Resource Centers - AFCRT,
- Technical Coordination Association for the Food Industry - ACTIA
- Francophone Technological Support Network for Research and Innovation in Business - FRATRIE (of which the African Network of Hubs-IIT is a member)
- French organizations such as CIRAD and Institut Agro for sharing experiences.

*“The approach and the tools of the Hubs-IIT will help professionalize the system deployed since 2003 by Afrique Verte in Burkina Faso, as well as make it more efficient for agri-food MSMEs, which will thus benefit from a new end-to-end support service - a big novelty for the Burkinabe MSMEs”*

Philippe Ki,

APROSSA Coordinator

*APROSSA aims to improve food security for local populations in a sustainable manner, focusing notably on the professionalization of the cereal sector.*

*“The small businesses are adopting the system, leading to indirect effects on their ecosystem, and in particular on the support for entrepreneurship through an increasingly close relationship with NGOs, structures supporting MSMEs and national agencies working on the topic.”*

Emmanuel Seyni Ndione,

Enda Graf Sahel President

*ENDA GRAF works to promote closer relationships between public policies and entrepreneurs creating local, regional and national wealth.*

*“Job creation, increasing incomes and improving food safety and nutrition remain among the major challenges of Mali. The Hub-IIT is a valued tool, because it responds to many difficulties encountered by MSMEs in the agri-food sector. The fact that several support structures and local communities would like it to be perpetuated is proof of this.”*

Mohammed Haidara,

AMASSA / Afrique Verte Coordinator

*AMASSA works for food security and food sovereignty.*

*“The Hub-IIT system was the missing link to enable Bet Al Nadjah to offer its members full support, including technical and financial, and technological aspects. In just one year, more than 80 companies benefited from information provided by the Hub-IIT.”*

Youssef Rahma Amane,

BAN Ex-Director

*BAN fights against poverty and unemployment among young people and women, by supporting the development of SMEs and project leaders.*





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*These organizations have supported us from the start, and some continue to support us in the deployment phase of the network of Hubs-IIT:*



*For more information on this project and the network being developed, you can contact:*

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