

Celebrating the Commercial Success of Cassava in Inhambane,  
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Speech of her Excellency, Frédérique de Man,  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

It is an enormous pleasure for me to be today in Morrumbene, Inhambane at this ceremony celebrating the progress that has been made in the commercialization of cassava for the brewing of impala beer. I have listened with interest to the previous speakers because their interventions have shown that what we are celebrating is people and organisations working together.

We are also celebrating a plant, the cassava plant (mandioca in Portuguese) that has been always important in the lives of Mozambicans, because of its leaves and roots for consumption. But now it is even more valuable because of its financial contribution to the household economics of many families. I would like to share with you a fairy tale about the cassava plant. In Portuguese it is called mandioca because in Brasil, where it originally comes from an Indian woman gave birth to a girl and called her MANI. Mani was a beautiful girl and she spread happiness wherever she went. But one day Mani got ill, died and was buried in the house she had been living in, which in the local language was called OCA. Mani's parents and the people from her village cried a lot after having lost this beautiful girl. After a few days however, a beautiful plant with big and tasty roots started growing in the house and the mother of Mani called it MANIOCA. This is a fairy tale of long ago but it shows that wherever cassava plants grow they bring good fortune.

Allow me to go further in 'history', but more recent. It was four years ago I travelled to the district of Ribaué in Nampula Province to be part of the official launch of Impala beer. That was quite an event, because what we could see was that suddenly farmers that had up till then been subsistence farmers suddenly got guaranteed market access and turned from subsistence farmers into small entrepreneurs. At that time we were dreaming of expanding to other parts of Mozambique. These dreams have turned into reality, one so called AMPU is in Nampula with platforms in three districts and one AMPU is now here in the province of Inhambane with apart from the platform here in Morrumbene, also a platform in Zavala.

I am happy to see that also Inhambane is showing that its local farmers are very well capable to produce consistently sufficient amounts of good quality cassava. The sales of cassava in the province of Inhambane have grown tremendously over the past half year.

I think the effect of this increase in income should not be underestimated. I have been told that many of the producers have been able to improve the lives of their families with their additional earnings, spending it on improved housing, better access to water, education for their children and many other things.

So we can speak of a big success! It is important to look at the factors that made this success possible. There is one crucial element that I mentioned already but now would like to highlight now: COLLABORATION and PARTNERSHIP.

And when I say collaboration I am talking about collaboration between the government, then private sector, international organisations/ngo's and my country, the Netherlands.

The Mozambican Government has created an enabling tax environment for Cervejas de Mocambique (CDM) and its mother company SAB Miller. This has led to CDM deciding as a first brewery in the world to start brewing cassava beer on a commercial basis. CDM managed to successfully integrate cassava, always considered as a subsistence crop, into its production process and their sales of Impala beer are showing a huge increase. I visited the CDM offices in Maputo last week and had a good talk about local sourcing and corporate social responsibility. Because that is what we are seeing here in the form of an innovative partnership between CDM and DADTCO. I really hope that this will be a long lasting partnership.

Here in Inhambane the Instituto de Investigaçao Agrária de Moçambique (IIAM), local extension officers and the International Fertilizer development Centre ( IFDC) have worked together to increase cassava yields per hectare, introducing and using improved varieties. They also should be keeping up with this very important work. I mentioned already IFDC, I would also like to mention IFAD that through the PROSUL project (being implemented by the Dutch organization SNV) is also working on improving the cassava production in Inhambane. Both IFDC and IFAD are receiving funding by the Netherlands.

The Dutch Company DADTCO has turned experiences in the Dutch potato starch industry into technological innovation of the mobile unit AMPU. And I think it is fair to say that Dutch knowledge in the field of small scale agriculture has contributed to build up a reliable supply chain. I am proud that DADTCO is a Dutch company.

When I spoke during an earlier cassava event, I expressed some concern about gender issues. Because what we have sometimes experienced is that men get very enthusiastic when seeing the possibilities of turning from subsistence farmers into small entrepreneurs. And because of that men take over the work from women (planting and processing cassava) without paying attention to the fact that women have the same rights as men when it comes to doing business and gaining profits. I have been informed however that 53% of the farmers that are selling the cassava for Impala beer consists of women. That is good news because, as we all know, the work of women in agriculture is the real backbone of the economy. Even while things look good from a gender perspective we have to continuously pay attention that the gender balance is not disturbed and the rights of women are respected.

Let me finish by saying that we at the Embassy are very proud having been associated with this exciting programme. I wish all our partners the very best for the continuation and expansion of their activities.