

SIGNING OF THE A.C.A./APROCA PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

A great day for the African Cotton

The African Cotton Association (A.C.A) and the African Cotton Producers' Association (AProCA) have enhanced their excellent relationships, with the signing of a strategic partnership agreement which took place on Thursday, 27 August, 2009, in Dakar. By thus laying the foundation of a Pan-African Cotton Inter-Professional Platform, both Associations have projected themselves into a position whereby they could defend and protect the interests of the African cotton within an unfavourable world economic environment. The Minister-Delegate in charge of Farmers' Organisations and Trade Unions in Senegal attended, with keen attention, this important and symbolic event, in the presence of about thirty journalists belonging to the Senegalese and international media houses.

Mr. François Traoré, President of AProCA and Chairman of the Burkina Faso Union of Cotton Producers, did not conceal his delight at signing the agreement which, in his



The President of AProCA (with a red cap), addressing the gathering. From L to R: Mr. Adéyemi Fahala, A.C.A's P/S, Mr. Bachir Diop, A.C.A's President, Mr. Khadim Gueye, Minister, Mr. François Traoré, AProCA's President and M. Moussa Sabaly, AProCA's Vice-President

opinion, is justified by the belief that producers and ginners are interdependent, as they form the key links within the cotton segment. He highlighted that the indispensable solidarity between both Associations, based on mutual benefits and interests, which started right from the WTO negotiations conference, has been taking significant shape with time. This solidarity process has

finally led to this agreement which goes beyond the scope of the Doha's issues, while opening the door to the prospects of a sustainable productivity growth, enhancement of quality standard and competitiveness of the African cotton segments. The agreement will also pave the way towards the sustainable reclaiming and development of the cotton producing regions, the cotton-focused agricultural production systems and their implementation by family-type farm settlements. He therefore expressed his happiness at the formal establishment of this strategic alliance with the A.C.A, which is an embodiment of the excellent partnership existing between the cotton producers and ginning companies in Africa.

« Today is a memorable and momentous day for the African cotton », said the A.C.A. President, Mr. Bachir Diop, who is also the Managing Director of Senegal Cotton and Textile Fibers Development Company (SODEFITEX). In his view, the signing of the

agreement is the outcome of actions conducted daily, in each country throughout the continent, by cotton companies and cotton producers within the framework of inter-professional bodies. The latter are organised enough to stimulate competitiveness while removing all hindrances that inhibit the African cotton. Addressing the Minister, whom he considers as representing all the Ministers of Agriculture of cotton producing countries of Africa, he stressed the point that « *the protection of the African cotton, the release into the market of a highly qualitative cotton brand, the transparent governance of the cotton segments and meeting, as a matter of priority, of demands emanating from the national added value generating sectors using cotton fiber or grain, should be a joint endeavour of actors in the segment, with the support of the States* ». He emphasised the rationale behind the strategic alliance.



The A.C.A's President, Bachir Diop, 2nd from the left, delivering his own address

According to him, this partnership is the logical confirmation and consolidation of the existing relationships between producers and ginning companies. While recalling the strategic role of cotton in the economy of the cotton producing countries of Africa, providing livelihoods to about 20 millions persons, he pointed out that the segment produces a

positive impact on almost all the other sectors of the economy. « *Ensuring the survival of the cotton segment is to protect the heart of the African agricultural and economic systems* », considering its key role in agricultural production, animal husbandry and ginning industries located in the cotton producing areas.

On his turn, while delivering the closing address of a ceremony marked by conviviality as well as by the solemnity of the event, with regard to the stakes in view, the Minister, Mr. Khadim Gueye, also hailed the initiative of the actors operating in the African cotton segments. He opined that this is the kind of integration needed in Africa. Were all the other African agricultural segments able to organise themselves in the same manner as the cotton segment, a giant stride would have been made forward. He added that « *it is thanks to the organisational ability, the spirit of solidarity, the sheer determination and mobilisation of cotton producers and cotton companies that the African cotton can be saved* ». He called upon the African producers to gather round strong organisations in order to pull weight during international negotiations. He assured the actors of the Senegalese government's support, just like the governments of other African cotton producing countries.

The Minister-Delegate in charge Farmers' Organisations and Trade Unions, addressing the gathering via his speech entitled: « *It is thanks to the organisational ability, the spirit of solidarity, the sheer determination and mobilisation of cotton producers and cotton companies that the African cotton can be saved* ».



In the Minister's opinion, it is only through similar strategic alliance that the African agricultural sector could be protected and defended worldwide. He pointed out that the African cotton segment is quite ahead of the other segments, in terms of organisation and structuring.



Exchange of signature books between the Presidents of A.C.A and AProCA, following the signing of the partnership agreement, while the Senegalese Minister, Mr. Khadim Gueye, looks on.

The A.C.A. and AProCA should be praised for having the foresight to set up a joint Steering Committee, with the purpose of preventing the agreement from turning into a mere catalogue of intentions and wishes. The Committee, which is made up of the Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Permanent Secretaries of both Associations and entrusted with the implementation,

animation, monitoring and evaluation of the agreement, shall meet at least twice during the first year and once per year thereafter. It is free to request the inputs of skilled resource persons if and when necessary, to conduct a documented study of issues on the agenda.