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# As shea industry continues to grow, stakeholders set their sights on Cotonou for annual conference

## “Shea 2012: Shared Value” April 23-27, 2012, Cotonou, Benin

With rising global interest in shea, the African shea industry is growing at an unprecedented rate. Prices for shea have increased by a staggering 50% since 2006 as the shea-producing industry has forged connections and built on its strength. Now, industry stakeholders will focus on positive impacts to communities and strengthening sustainability at the sixth annual shea conference. With a theme of Shared Value, Shea 2012, hosted by the Global Shea Alliance, will take place from 23-27 April 2012 in Cotonou, Benin.

“The industry is expanding so rapidly – this is a critical time for shea,” said Gilles Adamon of Natura, a Benin shea butter producer.

Shea 2012 will bring together leading stakeholders from across the shea value chain. Producers, researchers, processors and international brands will have opportunities to connect at business-to-business networking events and social forums. Experts on shea will present on such key issues as emerging innovations in processing technology, standards and certification, and supply chain logistics.

“We see our annual participation in the Shea conference as critical,” says Monica Hjorth of AAK, the world’s leading trader of shea nuts. “It allows us to discuss the most important issues in an industry that has such a huge impact on the world.”

After launching the Global Shea Alliance at Shea 2011 in April, industry stakeholders are developing the vision for the industry. The Alliance connects hundreds of companies across the sector, providing a platform for advocacy, promoting shea worldwide, and helping to set quality standards across the industry.

“The Alliance has brought together the entire industry to build strength and forge collaborations for the positive development of the shea industry worldwide,” said Eugenia Akuete, President of the Global Shea Alliance.

Shea, which is used widely in food products, is also growing in popularity for its benefits as a natural cosmetic as well as emerging research suggesting health benefits of its natural oils.



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Shea nuts grow on wild trees that are critical to maintaining environmental sustainability in the West African Sahel region. Harvested mainly by some four million women in the region, it is a significant and growing source of income for families and communities. A 2010 USAID study showed that for every \$1,000 of sheanuts sold at the farmgate level, US\$1,580 in additional household income is generated in the local economy. A major aim of the Shea 2012 conference is to highlight and strengthen the shea industry's focus on the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit.

With 12,000 tons in processing capacity and 35,000 tons of shea nuts harvested for export each year, Benin is an ideal place for industry stakeholders to identify new investment opportunities that will benefit business and local communities.

More information on Shea 2012 registration and accommodations is available online at [www.globalshea.com](http://www.globalshea.com).

### **About the Global Shea Alliance**

*The Global Shea Alliance is an international non-profit association of industry stakeholders whose mission is to represent and further the shared interests of the shea sector. The Alliance promotes shea worldwide, establishes industry standards for quality and sustainable sourcing and facilitates advocacy.*

### **About the USAID West Africa Trade Hub**

*The USAID Trade Hub is home to the secretariat of the Global Shea Alliance. Since 2007, the USAID Trade Hub has facilitated over \$110 million in exports from West Africa to international markets, working closely with thousands of export-ready companies. The Trade Hub collaborates with hundreds of partners, including UEMOA and ECOWAS, investment and export promotion councils, the leading banks and transport and logistics providers to reduce the costs of doing business across the region.*