

Smallholder farmers in West Africa receive boost after the ABC Fund invests USD 1.8 million through microfinance institution

- The ABC Fund injects XOF 1 billion into Union Nationale des Caisses Rurales d'Épargne et de Prêt ('UNACREP'), a microfinance institution providing financial support to smallholder farmers in Benin
- This follows previous investments in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Uganda, Ecuador and Bolivia

Luxembourg, 25 October 2021 - The Agri-Business Capital Fund ('ABC Fund') has invested XOF 1 billion (USD 1.8m) in the Union Nationale des Caisses Rurales d'Épargne et de Prêt ('UNACREP'), a microfinance institution in Benin, West Africa.

UNACREP provides short- and long-term loans and microcredits to its members, collects deposits and savings from its members and clients and trains and builds capacity of its members. Over the past two decades, it has built a network of over 130,000 members, four of ten of whom are women. Nearly half (48%) of its borrowers are women and women-led groups. It is headquartered in Porto Novo, the capital of Benin, and has 65 branches and outlets spread around the country.

The ABC Fund is providing a credit facility to UNACREP which will use the proceeds to further scale its agriculture portfolio. The investment will enable UNACREP to reach underserved smallholder farmers and cooperatives in the country, a critical segment of the economy, which makes up 70% of employment and contributes nearly 30% of the GDP. The investment will be directed towards rural Benin, especially in the north of the country where UNACREP is setting up two offices to cater for the needs of cotton growers.

The ABC Fund is a blended-finance impact fund which provides catalytic financing to underserved yet profitable segments of agribusiness value chains in developing countries. The Fund has already supported farmers co-operatives in Côte d'Ivoire, agri-businesses in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, and financial institutions operating in Kenya, Uganda, Ecuador and Bolivia, which on-lend to smallholder farmers and agri SMEs.

Jean-Philippe de Schrevel, Founder and Managing Partner of Bamboo Capital Partners commented: *"This is a milestone moment as the ABC Fund continues the strategy of injecting much needed capital into the agricultural ecosystem in developing countries. We are particularly pleased to provide this credit facility to UNACREP, which will enable them to achieve a significant impact through improving the lives of smallholder farmers in Benin."*

Laurent Tolomé, Chief Executive Officer at UNACREP, commented: *"ABC Fund's financing reinforces UNACREP's expertise in agricultural financing. This financial injection not only boosts its capacity to meet the real needs of smallholder farmers, small producers and cooperatives, but also accelerates the establishment of two new branches in the cotton-growing regions of Borgou and Alibori, where it is not yet present. Thus, this ABC Fund investment will be mainly directed towards these regions of the North-East of the Republic of Benin."*

The ABC Fund was initiated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in partnership with, and is currently funded by investments from, the European Union, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the Luxembourg Government and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and IFAD. The IFAD investment was made possible thanks to financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The Fund is managed by Bamboo Capital Partners in partnership with Injaro as investment advisors. Its technical assistance facility is led by Agriterra, in partnership with Advance Consulting, AgriCord and Rabo Partnerships.

This transaction of the ABC Fund was facilitated by the advisor [Fragg Investment](#), specialised in fundraising and management of investments in the areas of impact and climate.

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About the ABC Fund:

The ABC Fund is a blended-finance impact fund which provides catalytic financing to underserved yet profitable segments of agribusiness value chains in developing countries. The Fund deploys loans and equity investments in farmer organisations, rural SMEs and financial institutions. The ABC Fund was initiated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in partnership with, and is currently funded by investments from, the European Union, the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the Luxembourg Government and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and IFAD. The IFAD investment was made possible thanks to financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The ABC Fund is managed by Bamboo Capital Partners in partnership with Injaro as investment advisors and with technical assistance led by Agriterria. For more information, please visit www.agri-business-capital.com or follow @abcfund.

About Bamboo Capital Partners:

Bamboo Capital Partners (“Bamboo”) is an impact investing platform which provides innovative financing solutions to catalyse lasting impact. Bamboo bridges the gap between seed and growth stage funding through a full suite of finance options – from debt to equity – which it activates unilaterally or through strategic partnerships. Founded in 2007 by Jean-Philippe de Schrevel, Bamboo aims to improve the lives of the world’s most marginalized communities while delivering strong financial returns. Since its inception, Bamboo has raised over \$400m and invested in over 30 developing countries. Its investees have positively impacted over 184 million lives and supported 45,000 jobs, including 15,900 jobs for women. The firm has a team of 30 professionals active across Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Bamboo also acts as the Asset Management arm of global impact firm Palladium, which operates in over 90 countries, following a strategic partnership in 2020. For more information, please visit www.bamboocp.com or follow @bamboocp.

About Injaro Investments:

Established in 2009 by Dadié Tayoraud and Jerry Parkes, Injaro Investments is a private capital investment firm with a long track record in impact investments in Africa. Injaro makes investments in debt, quasi-equity, and equity in African SMEs, deploying capital and solutions to create value for partners and investors. Injaro’s experience includes managing Injaro Agricultural Capital Holdings (“IACHL”), a US\$49m impact investment fund focused on SME investments across the agricultural value chain in West Africa. Injaro’s investment portfolio has generated \$107m of revenues and benefitted more than 3.7 million persons, mainly comprising smallholder farmers, low-income persons and their families. For more information, please visit www.injaroinvestments.com or follow @injaro on Twitter and Injaro Investments Limited on LinkedIn.

About UNACREP:

UNACREP has one of the most extensive rural networks in Benin and has set up agricultural financing hubs in areas with limited bank access and some of the lowest financial inclusion rates. It has been involved in agricultural financing for almost three decades. Its agri loan portfolio is estimated at 61%, plus an estimated 13% of loans are awarded to traders of agriculture produce. Cooperatives and groups constitute approximately 40% of the agri loan portfolio.

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