

PREMIUM HORTUS

CATEGORY:

POLICY | RESEARCH | **FIELD** | CLIMATE | BUSINESS

LOCATION/SCALE:

Benin (National)

FOUNDER:

Johannes Goudjanou and colleagues

PERIOD:

2012 - now

IN A NUTSHELL

Premium Hortus is the first African greentech company for scaling up agroecology and sustainable development in West Africa. They are specialized in the e-commerce of agroecological products, organic production and producer support in Benin. Available as a web and mobile platform, Premium Hortus allows consumers (households, restaurants and hotels) to subscribe and choose from more than 60 varieties of organic certified products. Produced in short food supply chains, the products are delivered to the costomers' destination of choice. In addition, Premium Hortus provides farmers with education programmes that inform them about the latest innovations. They further provide workshops and trainings for companies, which range from drafting business plans to product introductions and the evaluation of their activities. This education programme is meant to train new 'agroecologists' who apply various methods of agroecology and access new markets. Besides the benefits of increased agroecological production, waste is limited and otherwise recycled for organic composting, biogas, and the cosmetic industry. Premium Hortus is also collaborating with other companies and actors aiming at organizing summits and seminars on food security, agroecology and improved access to the markets. Due to the success of Premium Hortus in Benin, they started an expansion phase to Morocco, Togo and Cameroon.

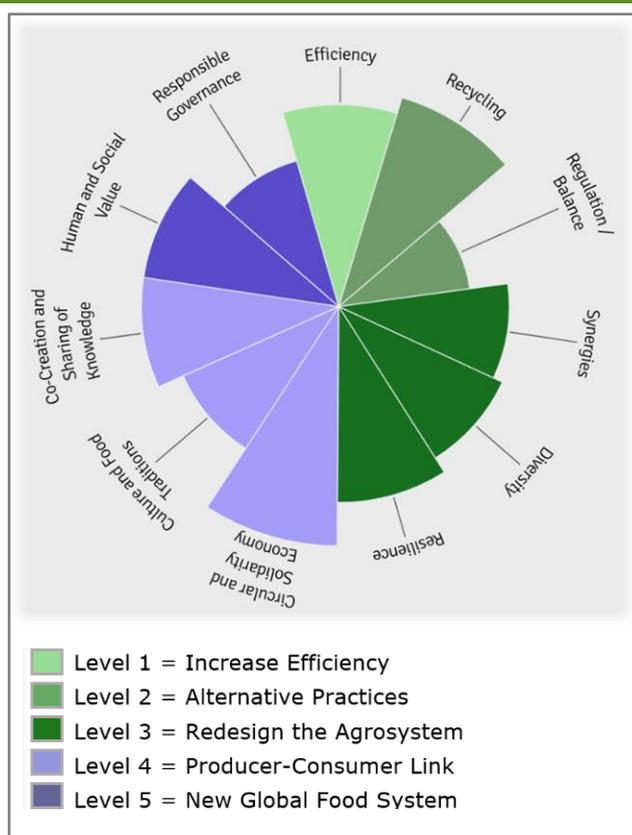


Figure: Assessment of Premium Hortus based on FAO Elements of Agroecology and Gliessman's five levels of food system change

CONTEXT

While Benin ranks among the poorest countries on earth, more than a third of Benin's citizens live below the poverty threshold. Although Benin has had a rapid increase in its urban population, a third of the country's families remain affected by food insecurity, while 16% of children are malnourished. Overall, more than two-third of the population is working in the agricultural sector. Large quantities of fertilizer and chemical inputs are used and the distribution system remains obsolete, lacking modern technology. Consequently, the country

suffers from significant water and soil pollution, biodiversity loss, low productivity as well as increased vulnerability to climate change and price volatility.

OBJECTIVE

Premium Hortus' main goal is to develop and promote agroecology and sustainable food by embedding local knowledge and combining it with modern information and communication technologies as well as business management skills. Premium Hortus can act as a role model for the promotion of agroecology and green innovation in Africa while fighting against climate change. Moreover, they lobby for the promotion of a circular and inclusive economy and create short circuits that benefit producers and consumers.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

FARM LEVEL:

- Trained over 400 green entrepreneurs and small farmers in business management with technical support in agroecology and access to markets
- Provide certified natural bio-pesticides made from local plants to over 400 producers

REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL:

- Helped to preserve the soil, water, biodiversity and health of more than 400,000 African households and reduced about 47% of greenhouse gases out of a total 1,681 kg/ha/year emitted by conventional agriculture
- By creating an online selling platform, Premium Hortus supports marketing of the farmers' products while simultaneously providing fast and secure online payments through QR Codes and Cryptocurrencies
- Providing a credit assurance system (CALIM+) to customers, to support them during financially difficult times
- Reducing waste through recycling and food donations/transfers through the platform

LESSONS LEARNED/CHALLENGES

Premium Hortus provides access to more than 700 urban households subscribing to agroecological products. As a whole, their business model creates at least 500 jobs/year in rural farms of which 70% are carried out by women and young people. While farmers profit from lower production costs, increased revenues and improved living conditions, subscribers reduced their food waste by 60%. As e-commerce has become an important topic nowadays, their digital business model possesses a big market potential, without noticeably increasing their fix costs. Nonetheless, a large scale-up might be difficult because of fierce competitors offering similar services and which know how to maintain marketplaces in profitable business sectors.

RELEVANT LINKS & REFERENCES

- Premium Hortus Homepage
<https://premiumhortus.com/>
- Hortus Agriboost
<http://agriboost.premiumhortus.com/>
- Award from World Future Council for "Outstanding Practices in Agroecology 2019"
<https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/p/opa-2019/>



Foundation for
ecological development

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