Bénin Republic–Nigeria South-to-South Learning and Business Linkage Mission Report

Location: Lagos, Nigeria
Mission Dates: 14–18 September 2026
Mission Lead: Mercy Olorunfemi - Project Manager, Nutrition Impact at Scale.

1. Background

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), through its Nigeria and Bénin country teams, coordinated a five-day Bénin Republic–Nigeria South-to-South Learning and Business Linkage Mission in Lagos from 14–18 September 2026.

As an international mission, it brought together cross-border representatives from GAIN Nigeria, GAIN Bénin, CARE International Bénin, the Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industrie du Bénin (CCIB), the Agence de Développement des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (ADPME), and agrifood enterprises participating in the SUN Business Network (SBN) across both Bénin and Nigeria. The mission was intentionally designed to move beyond a conventional study visit by combining practical enterprise learning with cross-border business-to-business, technical, and institutional linkages. It exposed participating businesses and institutions to different facets of Nigeria's agrifood ecosystem, including industrial food processing and fortification, processing machinery, packaging solutions, nutritious-food entrepreneurship, agribusiness management, market development, private-sector partnerships, and regional trade.

This international mission, therefore, had a dual purpose: to facilitate practical cross-learning for participating enterprises and institutions, while identifying sustainable commercial relationships, scalable technologies, technical services, and bilateral institutional partnerships that extend well beyond the visit to contribute to stronger, nutritious-food businesses and resilient food systems in Bénin and the wider region.

2. Mission Objectives

The mission sought to:

- Expose participating enterprises to commercial-scale food processing, nutritious food production, quality systems, packaging and enterprise-growth models in Nigeria.
- Connect Beninese processors with machinery, production-line, filling, and packaging technology providers that can supply, install, and provide technical support for equipment in the Bénin Republic.
- Provide direct exposure to agrifood packaging manufacturers and explore practical supplier relationships, product specifications, minimum order requirements and cross-border supply arrangements.
- Facilitate peer exchange with Nigerian nutritious food enterprises on product development, sourcing, food safety, processing, packaging, distribution and commercial scale-up.
- Strengthen relationships between CCIB and relevant Nigerian trade institutions, including LCCI and NEPC Lagos, to support supplier identification, B2B matchmaking and longer-term Nigeria–Bénin Republic commercial linkages.

- Leverage Lagos Business School's Agribusiness Management Programme network to support business matchmaking, industry connections, reflection and follow-up opportunities.

3. Delegation

The nine-member delegation comprised representatives of GAIN Nigeria, GAIN Bénin, CARE International Bénin, CCIB, ADPME and Beninese SUN Business Network enterprises:

- Mercy Olorunfemi – GAIN Nigeria
- Tomisin Odunmbaku – GAIN Nigeria Consultant
- Aubierge Flenon Yevide – GAIN Bénin
- François Azimbligbo – GAIN Bénin
- Edmond Zinzindohoúe – CARE International Bénin
- Gaston Gnonlonfoun – ADPME
- Faouziatou Bani Gani Bake – SUN Business Network Bénin
- Zoulériatou Traore – SUN Business Network Bénin
- Wilfrid Gbaguidi – CCIB

4. Key Engagements

4.1 Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) is one of Nigeria's leading organised private-sector institutions, representing businesses across sectors and providing advocacy, business support, networking and market-linkage platforms.

The engagement with LCCI provided an institutional and regional-trade foundation for the mission. The delegation was received by a high-level team led by the President and Chairman of Council, Engr. Leye Kupoluyi, alongside Vice Presidents, including Princess Funmilayo "Layo" Okeowo, and senior representatives responsible for agribusiness and other relevant areas. Discussions focused on how LCCI's extensive business network could support stronger commercial relationships between Nigeria and Bénin. These included business-to-business linkages, access to suppliers and service providers, technical support for SMEs, market connections and introductions to established Nigerian businesses across agricultural and food value chains.

The practical potential of the relationship was demonstrated during the meeting, when LCCI representatives reviewed a product from one of the participating Beninese enterprises and provided immediate feedback on areas for improvement. LCCI further expressed its willingness to connect participating enterprises with relevant members of its network, including businesses providing packaging, machinery, and other services.

The discussion also provided an opportunity to consider a stronger institutional relationship involving LCCI, CCIB, ADPME, CARE International Bénin, GAIN Bénin and GAIN Nigeria. An existing Memorandum of Understanding between GAIN and LCCI was identified during the discussion. However, the mission highlighted the need to locate and review the agreement, confirm its current status and ensure that any future arrangement moves beyond an institutional document to a practical implementation framework with clear activities, responsibilities, timelines and expected results.

Potential areas of collaboration include SME technical support, business matchmaking, cross-border market linkages, access to larger businesses across agricultural value chains, supplier connections and participation in relevant business missions.

LCCI also invited the delegation to explore participation in the **Lagos International Trade Fair**, which could provide a platform for GAIN-supported enterprises and institutions to connect with machinery manufacturers, technology providers, suppliers, buyers, and other commercial actors. LCCI's wider international business missions could similarly provide opportunities for GAIN Bénin and, where relevant, other GAIN country programmes.

4.2 Olam Agri / Crown Flour Mills

The delegation toured Olam Agri's Crown Flour Mills industrial milling and processing complex in Ikorodu, examining commercial food processing alongside the macroeconomic realities of Nigeria's wheat value chain.

Discussions highlighted that processing competitiveness cannot be separated from structural value-chain bottlenecks. Severe domestic supply constraints require Olam to rely heavily on imported wheat to sustain industrial capacity, while national grid deficits necessitate a self-generated, hybrid energy mix (gas, diesel, and solar) to power 24/7 operations. Upstream, Olam shared lessons from its outgrower and capacity-development initiatives with smallholder and women wheat farmers in northern Nigeria, demonstrating inclusive commercial models.

On the processing floor, the delegation tracked the end-to-end production sequence from primary destoning and cleaning through milling, automated industrial fortification, and final packaging. Olam demonstrated how dedicated quality-control laboratories and granular market research inform regional brand distribution: distributing Dangote Pasta primarily in northern markets, Crown Pasta in the South East, and Mama's Pride Pasta across national retail channels.

Large-scale food fortification emerged as the strongest strategic alignment with GAIN. While operating high-speed fortification lines, Olam identified procurement bottlenecks around quality fortificants and premixes (vitamins A and K, iron, and zinc), creating an immediate opportunity to leverage GAIN's technical advisory and premix channels. The delegation also observed Olam's workplace health practices, notably dedicated nursery and lactation facilities supporting female employees. Olam accepted an invitation to participate in the Bénin trade fair in November.

4.3 BAGCO

BAGCO is a major Nigerian packaging manufacturer delivering industrial and consumer packaging solutions across food, agriculture, and industrial sectors. The visit showcased the scale and diversity of domestic manufacturing capacity, with the delegation observing solutions across diverse product categories, including woven polypropylene bags for flour and agricultural commodities, flexible laminates for confectionery and biscuits, and barrier pouches suited to products like ice cream and yoghurt. While the tour confirmed that substantial, high-grade packaging capacity exists locally, it also underscored the structural gap separating industrial manufacturers from smaller agrifood businesses.

BAGCO's operational model is built on high-volume production runs requiring minimum order quantities (MOQs) of roughly 50,000 units. These thresholds far exceed the immediate cash flow, inventory capacity, and production scale of small and growing nutritious-food enterprises. Because the economics of heavy industrial manufacturing preclude a dedicated low-volume SME line, growing processors remain effectively shut out from accessing sophisticated domestic packaging at their current stage of growth.

This disconnects prompted strategic discussions on collective and flexible procurement models. One viable pathway is producing standardized, generic high-barrier pouches at scale, which individual MSMEs can subsequently customize locally using branded labels, stickers, or sleeves. Another

approach is demand aggregation pooling orders across enterprises sharing similar packaging formats to hit BAGCO's commercial order minimums. Additionally, the visit surfaced a potential cross-border trade opportunity regarding whether Bénin-produced rice could meet Nigerian commercial off-take requirements, warranting further analysis of specifications, quality standards, price competitiveness, and import regulations.

4.4 Processing Equipment and Fabrication – DSpark and Webring

Visits to Nigerian fabricators DSpark and Webring exposed the delegation to intermediate, locally manufactured food-processing equipment scaled to SME operational capacities. The delegation inspected machinery spanning sorting, sieving, mixing, mechanical frying, de-stoning, coconut de-husking, and milling across cassava, maize, and staple grain value chains. These visits demonstrated accessible mechanization pathways that allow SMEs to standardize quality, boost throughput, and eliminate production bottlenecks without overcapitalizing.

However, the engagement surfaced legitimate concerns from delegates and participating SMEs regarding the build quality, operational durability, and reliability of locally fabricated machinery. Enterprise participants noted widespread regional challenges with unstandardized equipment, including frequent breakdowns, poor component calibration, motor burnout, and the lack of certified food-grade contact materials. While both fabricators affirmed their commitment to build quality by offering a one-year warranty on their equipment, the delegates emphasized that cross-border enforcement, access to replacement parts, and timely technical support remain significant operational risks for Beninese businesses.

Consequently, moving forward requires a structured due-diligence and verification approach rather than immediate procurement. While Webring's machinery line appeared particularly well-aligned with the scale and processing needs of several Beninese enterprises, any future commercial facilitation must translate warranty commitments into enforceable service level agreements. This includes establishing strict engineering specifications, verifying food-grade contact surfaces, benchmarking power ratings against local conditions, and defining formal protocols for cross-border warranty fulfillment, spare-parts logistics, and technician deployment before enterprises commit capital.

4.5 August Secrets

August Secrets, an SBN Nigeria enterprise producing fortified infant and young-child cereals, provided peer insights into navigating product formulation, regulatory approval, branding, and export growth.

A key strategic insight centered on packaging economics. August Secrets develops its packaging concepts locally but manufactures and prints final laminated pouches in China. The enterprise explained that domestic packaging companies either impose prohibitive MOQs (similar to BAGCO) or deliver inconsistent barrier quality at high unit prices for small runs. This verified the "missing middle" in the packaging ecosystem: sophisticated industrial capacity exists locally, but growing nutritious-food SMEs are forced to import packaging to achieve necessary barrier integrity and commercial margins. August Secrets expressed openness to providing structured peer mentorship and advisory support to emerging Beninese infant-food processors on formulation, product presentation, and export compliance.

4.6 Baby Grubz

Baby Grubz, another established Nigerian child-nutrition brand, provided practical peer learning on agile product design, lean manufacturing, and brand positioning.

The Beninese delegation examined Baby Grubz's adaptable packaging strategy, which utilizes standardized high-grade containers customized with high-finish labels and branded security seals. When evaluated alongside BAGCO and August Secrets, Baby Grubz demonstrated that professional product presentation does not require immediate, capital-intensive investments in custom-printed runs. Packaging support must follow an enterprise growth continuum: beginning with flexible labelling on generic barrier packaging, moving to aggregated group purchasing, and transitioning to custom industrial manufacturing only as retail volumes mature.

4.7 Lagos Business School

The delegation engaged senior executive leadership and agribusiness faculty at Lagos Business School to evaluate how an African academic institution can anchor nutrition-sensitive agribusiness development, executive education, applied research, and commercial linkages.

Beyond academic collaboration, LBS served as an active business convener. The School mobilized alumni from its Agribusiness Management Programme (AMP) network including a representative from Dangote Feeds, for direct exchange with the delegation. This engagement met the mission's core objective of facilitating high-level B2B matchmaking, enabling the delegation to explore commercial synergies, livestock and aquaculture feed value chains, and supply-chain linkages with one of the region's largest industrial conglomerates.

Building on this session, three long-term strategic workstreams were agreed:

- **Curricular Mainstreaming:** Integrating nutrition, large-scale food fortification, and nutrition-sensitive business models directly into LBS's flagship AMP, engaging mainstream commercial agribusiness leaders rather than relying solely on siloed development trainings.
- **Cross-Border Executive Training:** Expanding executive management education to Beninese agribusiness operators and institutional leaders through executive modules delivered in Lagos or Cotonou.
- **Applied Research & Case Development:** Translating implementation models and supply-chain lessons from GAIN's Farm to Market Programme (FMTP) into published teaching cases and practical knowledge products, institutionalizing field insights within African business scholarship.

The engagement also established an internal staff-development pathway, identifying opportunities for GAIN country and technical teams to leverage LBS executive courses in agribusiness finance, value-chain economics, and market systems development.

4.8 Tetra Pak

The engagement with Tetra Pak's regional leadership for West and North Africa emerged as a cornerstone of the mission, fundamentally shifting the delegation's perception of the company from a carton supplier to an integrated processing, preservation, and engineering partner. This capability aligns directly with the Farm to Market Programme (FMTP). Rather than deploying only the capital-intensive installations used by multinationals such as FrieslandCampina and Chi Limited, Tetra Pak confirmed its readiness to engineer appropriately scaled pilot configurations for FMTP's hub-and-spoke model. Centralized aggregation hubs—equipped with cold-chain storage and solar energy solutions where viable can anchor processing for perishable commodities like soya, tomato, dairy, and fruits. By pairing production catchments with aseptic processing, products achieve extended, ambient shelf life without dependence on continuous refrigeration, directly mitigating post-harvest losses and

expanding distribution, subject to alignment with enterprise throughput, product viscosity, and unit economics.

Upstream, the dialogue connected processing to smallholder production through Tetra Pak's global Dairy Hub model, which trains farmers on hygienic handling, yield management, and chilling infrastructure. This technical capacity complements GAIN's nutrition-sensitive agriculture expertise, creating joint opportunities across farmer livelihoods as well as downstream school feeding and social protection initiatives utilizing ambient, packaged milk and fortified juices in West Africa, Ethiopia, and other GAIN countries.

For the Bénin delegation, the breakthrough was Tetra Pak's willingness to enter developing regional markets like Bénin and Togo through an aggregated enterprise model. While engaging fragmented micro-businesses individually is unviable, aggregating an organized pipeline of roughly 100 enterprises via cooperatives or commodity clusters provides the operational scale required for Tetra Pak to deploy machinery, high-barrier packaging, and technical services. This aggregation principle directly mirrors the FMTP hub-and-spoke logic by using collective structures to unlock economies of scale for SMEs. Crucially, because Tetra Pak specializes in liquid and semi-liquid aseptic systems, participating enterprises manufacturing dry or powdered nutritious foods will still require complementary providers for flexible, SME-appropriate packaging solutions.

5. Key Learnings

- **Enterprise support needs to address the ecosystem around the business.** Finance and business training remain important, but they are insufficient when enterprises lack appropriate machinery, packaging, quality systems, technical services, reliable suppliers, management capability and market access. The mission demonstrated how these constraints interact rather than occurring independently.
- **A significant missing middle exists between industrial capability and SME accessibility.** Nigeria has substantial processing and packaging capacity, yet the commercial models surrounding these capabilities are not always suited to smaller businesses. The contrast between BAGCO and August Secrets demonstrated this particularly clearly: sophisticated domestic packaging capacity exists, while growing SMEs may still source packaging internationally because they cannot access appropriate quality at viable volumes.
- **Aggregation could help overcome some of these scale constraints.** The BAGCO and Tetra Pak discussions independently pointed towards collective approaches. Demand aggregation, cooperatives, enterprise clusters and shared infrastructure could allow SMEs to access technologies and services that would otherwise be commercially unrealistic at the individual-business level.
- **Technology must be matched to the enterprise scale and stage of growth.** The contrast between Olam's industrial operations, Tetra Pak's technology and the equipment available through DSpark and Webring demonstrated that the most sophisticated technology is not automatically the most appropriate. Businesses need solutions that correspond to their production volumes, financing capacity, technical capability and growth trajectory.
- **Increased agricultural production needs to be connected to processing, preservation and markets.** Without these links, higher production can simply shift losses further along the value chain. The Tetra Pak engagement was particularly instructive in demonstrating how processing and preservation infrastructure can connect production to longer shelf life, wider distribution and stronger market access.

- **Large private-sector companies can contribute beyond conventional buyer or supplier relationships.** Olam's activities across fortification, smallholder wheat and workforce nutrition, and Tetra Pak's capabilities across technology, livelihood implementation and technical services, demonstrate opportunities for deeper programme partnerships where commercial and development objectives align.
- **Nutrition can be mainstreamed into established agribusiness systems.** The LBS engagement demonstrated the potential to integrate nutrition, fortification and nutrition-sensitive business models into existing agribusiness education and to use African institutions to generate and institutionalise programme knowledge.
- **South-to-South learning generates the greatest value when exposure translates into relationships and action**. The strongest outcomes of the mission were not simply the facilities visited, but the commercial connections, institutional relationships and programme opportunities that can now be taken forward.

6. Emerging Opportunities

Based on the engagements and cross-cutting lessons, nine priority opportunity areas emerged:

- **Strengthening Nigeria–Bénin institutional and market linkages through LCCI.** The existing GAIN–LCCI relationship provides a platform for a more structured collaboration involving GAIN Nigeria, GAIN Bénin, CCIB, ADPME and CARE International Bénin. A revised implementation framework could combine SME technical support, business matchmaking, supplier and buyer linkages, access to LCCI member companies, participation in the Lagos International Trade Fair and relevant international business missions.
- **Developing Olam as a strategic food-system partner.** The Olam engagement presents opportunities at both the country and institutional levels. In the immediate term, these include Olam's requirements around fortificants and premixes, its smallholder and women-focused wheat initiatives, workforce nutrition, potential FMTP relevance and participation in the Benin trade fair. Beyond these individual opportunities, GAIN could assess whether its existing relationship with Olam can be developed into a broader institutional partnership around food fortification. Given Olam's processing footprint across multiple food value chains and markets, such a partnership could examine whether its commercial infrastructure could provide a route for strengthening the availability of fortified foods across relevant GAIN countries. This could include priority food vehicles and markets, fortification and quality systems, access to appropriate fortificants and premixes, and mechanisms for connecting country-level opportunities through a wider institutional relationship. The feasibility, commercial incentives and respective roles of GAIN and Olam would need to be assessed before a partnership model is defined.
- **Addressing the nutritious-food SME packaging missing middle.** The BAGCO, August Secrets, and Baby Grubz engagements collectively demonstrated a gap between the packaging available to small, nutritious-food businesses and the sophisticated, high-volume solutions available to larger manufacturers. This challenge is particularly important for nutritious foods because packaging requirements extend beyond branding and product presentation. Depending on the product, appropriate packaging may require laminated or multilayer materials and suitable barriers against moisture, oxygen and light to protect food quality, safety, shelf life and nutrient stability. Other product categories may require aseptic processing and packaging or temperature-controlled distribution. The opportunity is therefore not simply to make existing packaging available in smaller quantities, but to identify technically appropriate and commercially accessible packaging solutions for different categories of

nutritious foods. Potential approaches include standardised high-barrier packaging that can subsequently be customised through labels or sleeves, aggregation of demand among businesses requiring similar specifications, connections to specialised packaging providers, and technical support to help SMEs determine the packaging specifications appropriate to their products. This also strengthens the relationship between the BAGCO and Tetra Pak findings: BAGCO illustrates the challenge of accessing suitable dry-food and flexible packaging at SME volumes, while Tetra Pak demonstrates the more integrated processing and preservation requirements associated with appropriate liquid and shelf-stable products.

- **Improving access to appropriately scaled processing technology.** DSpark and Webring provide potential pathways for businesses that need to mechanise or increase production but are not yet ready for industrial-scale technology. Enterprise-specific assessment of machinery requirements could translate the mission exposure into direct supplier relationships.
- **Strengthening peer technical support for nutritious-food enterprises.** Experienced businesses such as August Secrets could potentially provide structured mentorship or consultancy to emerging infant and nutritious-food businesses in Benin, particularly around product development, packaging, commercialisation and market growth.
- **Developing LBS as an agribusiness, nutrition and knowledge partner.** The relationship could combine nutrition integration within agribusiness curricula, capacity development for Nigerian and Beninese businesses and institutions, contributions from GAIN technical teams, agribusiness learning for GAIN staff, and FMTP research and case-study development. This provides an opportunity to institutionalise nutrition and programme learning within an established African agribusiness institution.
- **Exploring Tetra Pak as an FMTP processing and technology partner.** Tetra Pak's processing equipment, technical services and preservation capabilities could support the development of shared processing infrastructure and hub-and-spoke models for relevant FMTP value chains, including soya and tomato, with potential application to dairy, fruits and vegetables.
- **Developing an aggregated Tetra Pak–Benin SME proposition.** Tetra Pak's interest in the Benin market and willingness to engage organised groups of SMEs provides an opportunity to assess whether GAIN Benin, CCIB, ADPME and existing enterprise networks can organise a viable pipeline of businesses through cooperatives, clusters or other aggregation mechanisms. This could provide SMEs in Bénin access to technologies and services while providing Tetra Pak with a structured entry point into a market of interest.
- **Extending strategic partnerships across the wider GAIN portfolio where relevant.** Some relationships generated through the mission have potential relevance beyond Nigeria and Bénin. Tetra Pak's livelihood, school-feeding, processing and preservation capabilities, for example, could be relevant to Ethiopia and other GAIN programmes, while LBS knowledge partnerships and relevant private-sector relationships could potentially support wider learning. Such expansion should be driven by defined programme needs rather than bBénin existence of a relationship alone.

7. Recommendations and Follow-up Actions

- **Establish a joint post-mission follow-up mechanism.** GAIN Nigeria and GAIN Bénin should maintain a single opportunity tracker capturing each priority opportunity, responsible lead, relevant partners, next action, expected output and timeline. Opportunities should also be classified according to the appropriate level of follow-up enterprise, country/regional, or institutional/global, so that actions are assigned to the team best positioned to progress them.
- **Operationalise the GAIN–LCCI relationship and Nigeria–Bénin business linkages.** The existing GAIN–LCCI MOU should be located and reviewed, after which GAIN and LCCI should

agree on a practical implementation framework covering priority areas such as SME technical support, business matchmaking, supplier and buyer linkages and connections to relevant LCCI members. CCIB, ADPME, CARE International Bénin and GAIN Benin should help define the needs of Beninese enterprises so that the relationship responds to actual demand. The Lagos International Trade Fair and relevant LCCI business missions should be considered as platforms within this broader collaboration rather than as standalone activities.

- **Progress the immediate Olam opportunities while assessing the case for a broader institutional partnership.** Country-level follow-up should progress the specific opportunities generated during the mission, including Olam's fortificant and premix requirements, smallholder wheat activities, workforce nutrition, and participation in the Bénin trade fair. In parallel, the opportunity should be shared with the relevant GAIN technical and global teams to assess whether the existing relationship with Olam warrants a broader institutional discussion around food fortification. This assessment should map Olam's relevant geographic and value-chain footprint against GAIN's fortification priorities and identify where the two organisations have sufficient strategic and commercial alignment. It should consider priority countries and food vehicles, existing fortification operations, quality-assurance requirements, fortificant and premix supply constraints, and the respective contributions and incentives of GAIN and Olam.
- **Develop a nutritious-food packaging workstream.** GAIN Nigeria and Beninese businesses participating should document their packaging requirements by product category, including current materials, required barrier properties, pack sizes, volumes, costs, shelf-life requirements and key constraints. This should inform subsequent engagement with BAGCO and other packaging providers. Follow-up should assess the feasibility of technically appropriate standardised packaging that can subsequently be customised, the aggregation of demand among enterprises requiring comparable specifications, and the identification of specialised providers able to serve lower volumes. Products requiring aseptic packaging, cold-chain solutions or other specialised preservation systems should be treated separately rather than incorporated into a generic SME-packaging solution.
- **Convert the processing-equipment visits into enterprise-specific supplier linkages.** Relevant catalogues from Webring, DSpark and other suitable providers should be shared with participating businesses. Enterprises should first identify their specific processing bottlenecks and equipment requirements before further discussions on capacity, specifications, pricing, maintenance, after-sales support and financing. This will help ensure that equipment procurement is driven by production needs rather than by what was available during the visits.
- **Develop the LBS relationship around three connected workstreams.** The first should explore the integration of nutrition, fortification, and nutrition-sensitive business models into relevant agribusiness curricula. The second should address capacity development and knowledge exchange for Beninese businesses and institutions, including opportunities for LBS to deliver relevant learning in Bénin. The third should examine LBS as an FMTP research and knowledge partner, including research, documentation and development of African agribusiness case studies from programme implementation. Opportunities for GAIN technical contributions and staff agribusiness learning can sit within these workstreams rather than becoming separate initiatives.
- **Develop a defined FMTP–Tetra Pak proposition before progressing to technical design.** GAIN should first articulate the programme problem to be addressed through shared processing infrastructure, including priority value chains, geographic areas, potential users, required processing functions and an indicative operating model. This can then form the basis for structured discussions with Tetra Pak on an appropriately scaled pilot and the feasibility of a

hub-and-spoke model. Soya and tomato should be considered alongside other relevant commodities, while Tetra Pak's processing and preservation capabilities should be matched to the technical requirements of individual products.

- **Develop the Bénin SME aggregation proposition with Tetra Pak.** In parallel with the FMTP discussion, GAIN Bénin, CCIB, and ADPME should assess whether existing enterprise networks could provide the scale required for direct Tetra Pak engagement. Follow-up should clarify Tetra Pak's indicative requirement of approximately 100 enterprises, the preferred cooperative or cluster structure, priority product categories, production volumes and other commercial and technical conditions. This should be treated as a distinct Bénin market-development opportunity, given Tetra Pak's expressed interest in Bénin and Togo, rather than being subsumed entirely within FMTP.
- **Facilitate targeted peer technical assistance for participating enterprises.** Where Beninese businesses identify specific needs, relevant Nigerian enterprises should be considered as potential technical or peer-learning partners. August Secrets, for example, could potentially support infant and nutritious-food enterprises around product development, commercialisation, packaging and market growth. Such support should be based on defined enterprise needs rather than established as generic training.
- **Share strategic private-sector opportunities across GAIN where there is a defined use case.** Relevant Tetra Pak, Olam and LBS opportunities should be communicated to the appropriate GAIN country and technical teams where there is a clear programme fit. This includes potential Tetra Pak applications to livelihood, school-feeding/social-protection, dairy, fruit and vegetable programmes and the Ethiopia opportunity discussed during the mission. Cross-country engagement should remain demand-led so that the relationships developed through the mission generate wider value without creating unfocused follow-up.

8. Conclusion

The Bénin Republic–Nigeria South-to-South Learning and Business Linkage Mission delivered decisive commercial and strategic value, demonstrating that the technical and industrial capacity needed to transform West Africa’s food systems already exists within the sub-region. By anchoring every engagement in market realities rather than high-level study, the mission moved well beyond exploratory visits to establish real bilateral momentum. It confirmed that regional capabilities in advanced processing, preservation, and fabrication are robust, while diagnosing the structural bottleneck that isolates growing agrifood enterprises: an acute missing middle that restricts SME access to industrial-scale infrastructure without deliberate demand aggregation and structured institutional backing.

The priority now transitions firmly from discovery to commercial execution. The mission established a strong foundation, aligning key trade bodies, securing buy-in from major industry players, and mapping viable pathways for enterprise mechanization and packaging access. GAIN, CCIB, ADPME, and CARE International Bénin must now maintain a coordinated focus on delivery: converting these early linkages into enforceable commercial agreements, joint processing pilots, and unhindered cross-border trade flows that drive sustainable, market-led nutrition impact