# ALLANBLACKIA, A NEW TREE CROP IN AFRICA FOR THE GLOBAL FOOD INDUSTRY: MARKET DEVELOPMENT, SMALLHOLDER CULTIVATION AND BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMEN

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## ABSTRACT

The seeds of Allanblackia trees produce edible oil with significant global market potential. Consequently, a private-public partnership involving Unilever and known as 'Novella Africa' is engaged in the development of Allanblackia as a new crop in a number of African countries. The purpose of this partnership is to build a profitable and sustainable initiative for harvest, marketing and cultivation. Rural communities are directly involved and a participatory approach to domestication is being followed to maximise farmers' livelihood benefits. This is the first time a multinational company has partnered in such an approach, and the initiative represents an example for the domestication of other new tree crops. Investing in good communication between partners is considered to be essential to success by ensuring trust and a common understanding of priorities. Progress to date has involved the establishment of market supply chains for oil, based firstly on wild harvest, and the initiation of cultivation by smallholders. Further work will involve the development of rural resource centres to deliver improved germplasm to growers. At the same time, these centres will provide other services such as market information, credit and access to buyers. Through this strategy it is foreseen that there will be progress towards the development of a market value chain which removes producers' constraints to profitable involvement. Furthermore, the diversification of farmers' cropping systems should have positive impacts for biodiversity and provide resilience in the face of climate change. Currently, the most important activity under the initiative is the promotion of Allanblackia planting, so that production constraints do not hamper market development.