

Partners in Food Solutions Announces Five-Year, \$7.6 Million Grant to Fund Rice Milling, Fortification, More in Africa

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, UNITED STATES, March 6, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Partners in Food Solutions (PFS), a nonprofit consortium that provides technical assistance to food processors in Africa, announced today that they have been awarded a five-year, \$7.6 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support high-potential, entrepreneurial food companies in East and West African horticultural and rice value chains, and to develop rice fortification capacity in Nigeria.

With this new funding, PFS will expand the number of high-potential African food processing companies that they provide with technical and business expertise. They do this by tapping into the expertise of employee volunteers from seven corporate partner companies - General Mills, Cargill, dsm-firmenich, Bühler, The Hershey Company, Ardent Mills and The J.M. Smucker Company - and connecting them virtually with African processors. These volunteers provide expertise to help solve challenges that will improve food safety and quality, and help the local African processors grow and thrive. Additionally, PFS helps clients gain access to cheaper capital, business development services, and international food quality and safety certifications.

New operations in West Africa will focus on the rice value chain, helping strengthen the capacity of local millers with a goal of closing the import gap on rice and promoting local growth and processing. This funding will expand Partners in Food Solutions reach into new focus areas and additional countries, including Senegal, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone.

In Nigeria, PFS will also pilot a two-year rice fortification project to help develop technical capacity to fortify rice. Because rice is widely available and a very popular staple food in the region, fortification presents a hopeful opportunity to prevent micronutrient deficiency in the local population. Children are most at risk and can suffer life-long effects including stunted growth and cognitive impairment. The pilot will equip and train local rice millers to successfully blend fortified rice kernels supplied by PFS partner dsm-firmenich with local rice, then deliver this rice to school children via the World Food Programme and GAIN.

The focus in East Africa will be the horticultural value chain and specific crops in five countries. A recent study commissioned by the foundation identified key leverage and coordination opportunities for East Africa. To better understand the key opportunities and constraints for horticulture in the region, commodity-country value chain pairs were selected for deep-dive

studies based on four criteria: alignment to government priorities and level of donor investment, market growth/competitiveness, production capacity, and impact potential. PFS will be supporting avocado processors in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania, onion in Tanzania and Uganda, and Irish potato in Kenya.

“Unlocking the true potential of local food processing in Africa will not only help feed a growing population, it will also sow the seeds of sustainable development by creating jobs, lessening reliance on imports and improving food security,” PFS Co-founder and CEO Jeff Dykstra said. “The support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is a significant opportunity for Partners in Food Solutions to expand our work and an important validation in our business-to-business model of sharing food processing and business expertise globally.”

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About Partners in Food Solutions

Partners in Food Solutions (PFS), a consortium of leading global food companies – General Mills, Cargill, dsm-firmenich, Bühler, The Hershey Company, Ardent Mills and The J.M. Smucker Company – is working to strengthen food security, improve nutrition and increase economic development across Africa by expanding and increasing the competitiveness of the food processing sector. For 15 years, PFS has linked corporate volunteers from our world-class corporate partners, who share their expertise with promising entrepreneurs in eleven African countries. PFS works in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, TechnoServe, the United States Agency for Development (USAID). To date, they have helped strengthen the capacity of more than 2000, have over 1600 active volunteers in their pool of experts who have contributed 140,000 volunteer hours.

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