



## WEST AFRICA FOOD SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

# SUCCESS STORY

## Mushrooms: Solving Problems at Their Source

**Teaching farmers to produce their own inputs leads to sustainable enterprises.**



*Two participants prepare substrates for sterilization.*



*Participants wave next to their new equipment.*

In Northwest Cameroon, the potential for successful mushroom production has faced persistent challenges. Despite annual training sessions on oyster mushroom cultivation, small-holder farmers often engage briefly, harvest once, and then abandon the practice. Recognizing this trend, PCV Sean Potts, along with his counterpart Jude, embarked on a mission to uncover the underlying reasons for this rapid discontinuation.

Their investigations revealed a unanimous response from current and former mushroom farmers: acquiring reliable mushroom spawn cultures proved to be exceptionally difficult. Many farmers were compelled to undertake long, costly journeys in search of often-questionable quality spawn.

To address this fundamental issue, Sean and Jude took decisive action. Leveraging funds from the West Africa Food Security Partnership, they orchestrated a comprehensive two-part training program focused on spawn production techniques and essential material procurement. The first segment centered on spawn production techniques and essential material procurement. The second part delved into best practices for mushroom cultivation, supplemented by sessions on effectively disseminating this knowledge, marketing products, and comprehending the farm-to-market value chain.

Ten pilot farmers were chosen to receive start-up materials for their own enterprises, with the stipulation that each of them would in turn train ten others in basic mushroom production, thereby creating a sustainable client base.

The impact was remarkable. Within two months of the initial training, all participating farmers had successfully launched their enterprises. Seven farmers had already reached out to our recommended input distributor for expansion, and three farmers had collectively trained 53 others in mushroom cultivation. Every farmer managed to sell their entire mushroom harvest in less than a week. Now, these engaged farmers are actively exploring the formation of a cooperative.

By identifying and addressing the root cause, Sean and Jude has significantly bolstered the project's potential for long-term success and sustainability.