

Press release, 16 January 2024

Tomato Jos wins the 2024 SAVE FOOD project competition

Every year, the SAVE FOOD project competition honours exemplary projects. This year, the award and the funding amount of 10,000 euros are going to Nigeria, where a combination of modern technology, transport packaging, education programmes and direct market access has significantly reduced post-harvest losses.

10,000 euros for reducing food loss and waste: For the second time, the SAVE FOOD initiative is supporting a specific project of one of its members as part of its annual competition. Tomato Jos Farming and Processing Limited is the winner of the 2024 SAVE FOOD project competition. This initiative supports small farmers in Nigeria in cultivating, processing and marketing tomatoes more efficiently.

“Tomato Jos has already achieved a great deal and shown how much potential is created when players along the entire processing, packaging and distribution chain are systematically supported”, explains Thomas Dohse, Director of interpack and the SAVE FOOD Initiative. “The project proves that innovative approaches not only help to reduce food loss but also create sustainable economic and social structures.” Due to its consistent focus on practical solutions, Tomato Jos has already reduced post-harvest losses of tomatoes by approximately 45 percent.

Between surplus and imports

Nigeria is the largest producer of tomatoes in Africa south of the Sahara. Despite this, the country imports tomato products worth millions of US dollars per year. Why? Almost half of the crop yield spoils due to a lack of cold chains, poor storage and transport facilities and high temperatures and humidity, which is an economic disaster for the small farmers. Tomato Jos, founded in 2014 by Mira Mehta, runs farms, creates jobs and produces its own brand of tomato paste in Kaduna. Training programmes teach small farmers modern cultivation methods while high-quality seeds, fertiliser and technologies ensure higher yields. An innovative credit system facilitates establishing productive operations and reinforces the farmers’ financial independence. “Among other things, we provide small

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An initiative on food loss and waste reduction established by Messe Düsseldorf, interpack and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

farmers with knowledge about when to ideally harvest tomatoes and how to best sort and package them”, says CEO Mira Mehta.

Transport packaging is the key to success

One of Tomato Jos’ pragmatic solutions is the use of large-capacity crates. These sustainable packaging solutions significantly reduce damage to the tomatoes compared to the woven baskets that are traditionally used. They protect the fruit during transport and are easy to stack thanks to their uniform design. The available space in lorries is used optimally, reducing transport cost per unit. Additional training for the transport personnel in handling the tomatoes when loading and unloading is also having a positive effect.

New impetus for 2025

With the SAVE FOOD Award prize money, Tomato Jos is further expanding its activities. The project is investing in education programmes on pest control, new tomato varieties and improved packaging systems. “This award is a springboard so that thousands of farmers can profit and optimise their harvest yield”, says Mira Mehta.

The 2024 SAVE FOOD project competition winner was announced in December at pacprocess MEA in Cairo, an event organised by the interpack alliance. The professional jury consisted of members of the WPO (World Packaging Organisation), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation) and interpack/Messe Düsseldorf.

About the SAVE FOOD Initiative

The SAVE FOOD Initiative was founded in 2011 by Messe Düsseldorf and interpack, the world’s largest trade fair for the packaging sector and the related processing industry, and has since cooperated with, for example, FAO and the UN Environment programme. As a global alliance, it follows UN SDG 12.3, fighting for a reduction of food loss and waste. A special focus is put on innovations from the packaging industry.

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If your company or organisation is interested in becoming a member of SAVE FOOD, please contact Ivania Portillo-Elzer: Phone: +49 211 4560 7781, Email: PortilloI@messe-duesseldorf.de

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