



Cashew Industry Responses to Mighty Earth Cashew Research Findings

Last updated: November 7, 2023

In July 2023, Mighty Earth wrote to a number of companies sourcing cashew nuts from Côte d'Ivoire to present the findings from our report, "The Cashew Conundrum", which was published on November 7, 2023. The companies contacted were: ALDI SOUTH Group, Carrefour, CostCo, CVS, Harris Teeter, Olam Food Ingredients, Target, Walmart.

Responses received from these companies to date are given below. Two green checkmarks (✓ ✓) signifies that we have received a full statement. One green check mark and a red X (✓ X) indicates that we have received an acknowledgement of our communication, but have yet to receive a full statement. Two red Xs (X X) signifies no response.

ALDI SOUTH Group



Response: None

X X

Carrefour



Response: None

X X

CostCo



Response: None

X X

CVS



Response: A representative from CVS replied to Mighty Earth on August 7 to say that the company plan to provide a written statement in response to our findings. This will be published here once received.

✓ X

Harris Teeter



Response: None

X X

Olam Food Ingredients (ofi)



Response: Representatives from ofi were quickly responsive to Mighty Earth. The company shared information about its cashew sustainability initiative, and provided the following statement in relation to the specific concerns raised by the report:

“Cashew is enjoyed across the world for its taste and nutritional benefits, but few realize the complex challenges behind the production and processing. For the farmer, cashew is a relatively low maintenance, low input crop that provides much needed income in areas of Cote d’Ivoire and other origins where few other economic opportunities exist. Originally, the main intention of introducing cashew into Africa from India was to use it as a restoration species plant for degraded areas in drier agroecosystems. The ability of the species crop to thrive under difficult growing conditions makes it among the ideal ones for restoring ecosystems that are devoid of vegetation due to human exploitation.

“However, given farmers’ lack of access to knowledge about good agricultural practices and the importance of biodiverse landscapes for resilient farming and food systems, it is easy to understand why the issues raised in the report might be occurring. Indeed, our Ivoirian social teams see high rates of malnutrition, with many farming households unable to access foods with the micronutrients needed for normal functioning of the immune system and optimal health, which negatively impacts productivity and earning potential.

“This is often combined with poor health infrastructure and access to clean water and sanitation. But there are solutions available. With training and better access to finance, farmers can improve yields and quality from the same trees. Digitizing supply chains and providing access to mobile banking improve cash flow, and reduce fees and cash theft. With climate-smart training, farmers also better understand that cashew has an important role to play as part of a diverse landscape with other crops, in mixed agroforestry systems, and not replacing natural ecosystems with high conservation values. Empowering women through agri-training but also on nutrition education and the importance of different food crops are all critical.

At ofi we have been working with cashew communities for over a decade, in 2021 setting ourselves formal public targets for 5 key areas in our Cashew Trail strategy – improved livelihoods, education & skills, nutrition and health, diversity & inclusion and climate action. Last year, we reached over 36,000 cashew farmers with sustainability support and have single point GPS mapped over 55% of the cashew farms in our sustainability programs we source from in Cote D’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria, to identify potential deforestation risks. Our goals also extend into our shelling facilities which are mechanized, requiring minimal manual intervention and where employees are provided with industrial PPE (three layers of gloves, masks, aprons, shoes and hairnets) and nutrition and wellbeing programs. But the only way to really make the depth of impact required is to collaborate with customers, civil society and governments to improve farmer livelihoods and apply the principles of landscape scale sustainability and regenerative agriculture on farm to maximise the benefits and mitigate risks associated with cashew production.”

Burcu Turkey, Global Head Sustainability for Nuts, ofi

✓ ✓

Target



Response: None

✗ ✗

Walmart



Response: Representatives from Walmart were quick to respond to our email, and have since engaged in a conversation with representatives from Mighty Earth. This has included a brief but constructive video call. The company has promised to provide a written statement (which will be published here once received), and to continue the conversation going forward.

✓ X