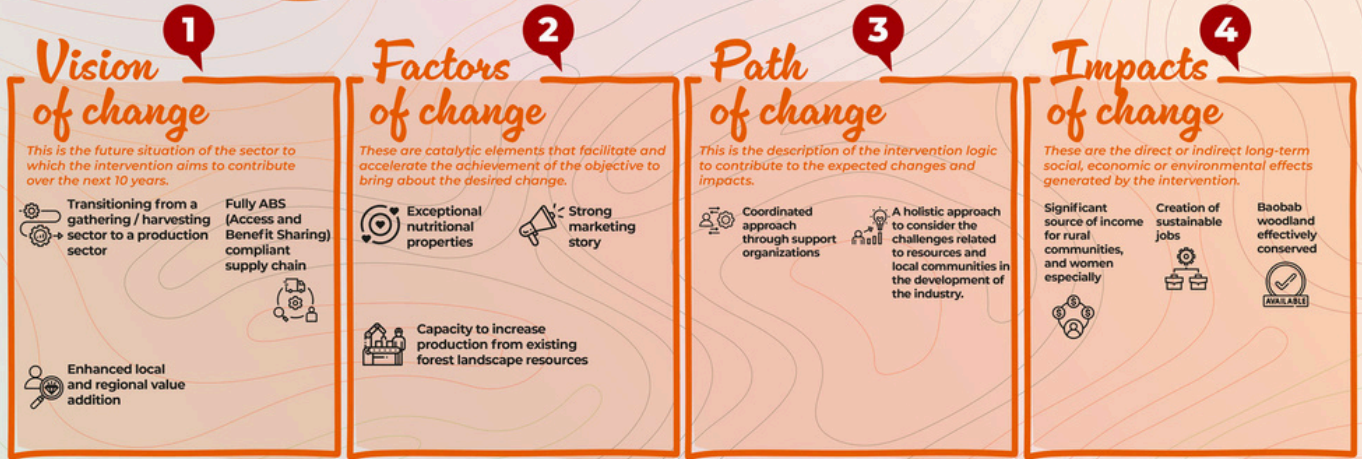




The African BAOBAB: a giant multipurpose tree



AFRICAN BAOBAB

ADANSONIA DIGITATA L.

Key information



Baobabs are found in over 30 Sub-Saharan African countries, thriving in hot and dry climates.

- Data on the extent and health of baobab resources across Africa are inadequate.
- The African Baobab exhibits remarkable resilience and strength:
 - o It thrives across diverse climates and varying rainfall levels
 - o Its bark is fire-resistant
 - o It shows no susceptibility to diseases and insects, though it is vulnerable to animals.
- Various pressures, particularly human activities, are reducing baobab populations in natural habitats. Nevertheless, the baobab is not classified as an endangered species.

Baobab sector: current situation

- Culturally significant, the baobab tree is often believed to host spirits.
- Baobab is a multipurpose tree: every part of the baobab is traditionally utilized. Its seeds, leaves, roots, fruit pulp and bark are edible and used for multiple medicinal purposes.
- A majority of baobab harvesters are women, often with children participating. They have to climb trees to harvest the leaves, which increases the risk of accidents and sometimes leads to fatalities.
- Research teams have developed techniques for cultivating baobabs as market garden crops and grafting techniques that have shown promise in accelerating fruiting to within five years.



- Two baobab products show the greatest market potential:
 - o Baobab fruit powder is considered as a 'superfood' due to its very high nutrient content.
 - o Baobab oil, valued for its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and moisturizing properties that aid in wound healing and skin rejuvenation.
- Baobab exports gained momentum in 2008, following approval of baobab pulp as a novel food ingredient in the European Union and the US. Since then, the baobab industry has seen substantial growth.

Support organizations have been instrumental in developing the baobab industry. Taking over from the work done by PhytoTrade Africa, the African Baobab Alliance, established in 2018, serves as a Pan-African industry association representing over 70% of baobab powder and oil exports from Africa. Key export market brands are also members.

