REPORT FOR THE UNF

The Spice Market on the African Continent

Analysis, opportunities and recommendations for the development of the sector as a lever for poverty alleviation



Illustration: Traditional spice market (Morocco)

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1. Introduction

The spice market in Africa represents a strategic sector with high potential. The continent has considerable agro-climatic advantages, significant production and growing demand both locally and internationally. However, the value captured remains limited due to low local processing and structural challenges.

This report presents an overview of the market in 2024-2025, identifies the main players and products, analyzes the challenges and proposes concrete recommendations to develop the sector while making it an effective tool for rural poverty reduction.

2. Market Overview

In 2024, spice consumption in Africa reached approximately 2.5 million tons, valued at USD 6.4 billion. Production is comparable. After a slight decline in 2024, the market experienced average annual growth of +2.5% in volume and +3.3% in value between 2013 and 2024 (IndexBox).

Forecasts indicate moderate growth until 2035 (CAGR +1.8% in volume and +2.1% in value), reaching 3 million tons and USD 8 billion. The broader seasonings and spices market is estimated at around USD 5.1 billion in 2025 and could reach USD 8.1 billion by 2031 (Mordor Intelligence, CAGR ~7.8%).

The main products by volume are pimenta pepper (chili), ginger and other spices. In export value, cloves and vanilla stand out due to their high prices.



Illustration: Diversity of spices and herbs

3. Main Producers and Products

The top three producers (Nigeria, Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire) account for approximately 60% of continental production:

Country	[illegible]	[illegible]
Nigeria	~845,000 t	Ginger, chilies
Ethiopia	~546,000 t	Chilies, local spices
Côte d'Ivoire	~139,000 t	Chilies, others
Madagascar	High value	Vanilla (~60% global), cloves

Madagascar is the world leader in vanilla (approximately 60% of global supply, exports in the order of USD 230 to 270 million) and a major player in cloves (average production of around 24,000 tons/year, exports of USD 150 to 180 million depending on the year). Tanzania (Zanzibar) and the Comoros are also important for cloves. Morocco stands out for saffron and cumin.

4. Foreign Trade

In 2024, African spice exports jumped by 43% to reach 292,000 tons, valued at approximately USD 968 million. By volume, Nigeria (~45%) and Madagascar (~20%) dominate. By value, Madagascar accounts for approximately 45% (USD 432 million), thanks to vanilla and cloves.

Imports amounted to approximately 263,000 tons (USD 687 million). Africa is overall a net exporter, but many countries remain importers of processed products. The main obstacle is low value capture: the example of Nigerian ginger (significant production in volume but raw exports limited to a few tens of millions of dollars) illustrates the unrealized potential.

5. Major Challenges

- **Low value addition:** exports are mostly raw; processing can multiply value several times over.

- **Quality and sanitary standards:** post-harvest problems (molds, aflatoxins), pesticide residues, lack of traceability. Frequent rejections at EU borders.
- **Infrastructure:** lack of dryers, storage, roads and reliable energy.
- **Agronomic risks:** diseases (e.g. fungal disease on ginger in Nigeria), climate change, poor quality seeds.
- **Organization and financing:** fragmentation of producers, numerous intermediaries, limited access to credit.

6. Potential for Poverty Alleviation

Spices are high-value crops often suited to smallholders, mountainous or agroforestry areas, and frequently involve women. Concrete examples show significant income increases:

- In Tanzania (Uluguru), organic spice projects have increased household incomes and created local jobs.
- In Madagascar, vanilla and spices in agroforestry support hundreds of thousands of families.
- Integrated models (certification + purchase contracts) multiply farmers' incomes by 3 to 5 times.



Illustration: Spice farm in Zanzibar (Tanzania)

7. Recommendations

7.1. Prioritize local value addition

Invest in controlled drying, grinding, packaging, essential oils and ready-to-use blends. Create community or cooperative processing centers.

7.2. Improve quality and certification

Deploy Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), support organic, Fairtrade and traceability certifications. Strengthen national laboratories.

7.3. Organize producers and secure markets

Strengthen cooperatives and forward purchase contracts. Promote integrated models (seeds + training + financing +

guaranteed purchase).

7.4. Resilient agricultural practices

Certified seeds, integrated pest management, agroforestry, early warning systems and crop insurance.

7.5. Infrastructure, financing and policies

Invest in dryers and storage. Facilitate access to credit. Integrate spices into national strategies and promote origin branding. Prioritize women and youth.

8. Conclusion

Africa has significant natural advantages and a growing market, but the main lever for progress is to move from exporting raw materials to processing and quality. Properly structured, the spice sector can generate significant and sustainable incomes for millions of rural smallholders, while contributing to food security and environmental preservation.

The proposed recommendations aim to maximize value capture on the continent and make spices a genuine tool for poverty alleviation.

Main Sources

- IndexBox – Africa's Spice Market Overview 2024
- Mordor Intelligence – Africa Seasoning and Spices Market
- FAO / WITS – trade data (vanilla, cloves, ginger)
- Focus Austral and sectoral analyses on value capture
- Project reports (Tanzania, Madagascar, Nigeria)

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