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Aspuna co-founders Maria-Yassin Jah and Luis Prazeres flank two members of the Gambia Investment & Export Promotion Agency

A GROUP of Cambridge Judge Executive MBA alumni are using their international commodities backgrounds to create a new commodity-trading house in Africa based around social responsibility.

The former EMBA students recently launched Aspuna Group, whose first project is working with the Gambian government and the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation to establish local farming cooperatives to supply them with cassava (also known as tapioca) – which is processed into starch and flour to be used in food and also by pharmaceutical companies.

Among other initiatives, Aspuna is exploring green energy solutions for the factory and is working with the government to bring electricity, water and sewage pipes to the local area.

"This is the social aspect that we really want to push with this company," says Luis Prazeres, one of the co-founders. "We're creating a lot of excitement among the government."

Another co-founder, Maria-Yassin Jah, says that Aspuna doesn't have a special department for social responsibility "because it is embedded in our DNA" and people who work with the company will have to subscribe to the company's values. The company plans to focus first on Africa and agricultural markets before expanding to other regions and into energy and metals.



Commodities in AFRICA