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INTRODUCTION

Overview of West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP)

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) was adopted under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) of the Regional Indicative Programme for a total €120m. WACOMP aims to support a number of selected value chains at both national and regional level, to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets.

The major objective of WACOMP is to strengthen trade competitiveness of West African countries and enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system. To reach this overarching goal, the programme will work to:

- improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of selected value chains, and
- improve the business climate at national and regional levels.

The programme, which is aligned to support the implementation of the West African regional policies and programmes, including the West Africa Common Industrial Policy (WACIP), West Africa Quality System Programme (WAQSP) and ECOWAS Private Sector Development Strategy, will be instrumental in creating the foundations and promoting access of West African countries to the EU External Investment Plan (EIP).

The role of the WACOMP in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to create a single market - bringing together the 55 African economies - that would facilitate the movement of goods, services and people across the African continent.

Beyond the liberalization of goods and services or the free movement of natural persons and capital, the AfCFTA will lay the foundations for a continental customs union, promote industrial development and resolve overlapping issues that hamper regional and continental integration processes.

As part of the creation of a non-discriminatory liberalized market (duty-free and quota-free movement of goods), trade in goods and services is taken into account.

With regard to trade in goods, the process will involve the progressive elimination of import and export duties, quantitative restrictions, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and customs duties. The product-specific rules of origin approach will be applied on the basis of the change in tariff classification (CTC) and the value of non-originating materials or specific processing rules.

As regards trade in services, priority will be given to the following five sectors: business and professional services, communication services, financial services, tourism services and transport. The liberalization of services will be achieved through four modes of supply, namely cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and movement of natural persons.

As targeted by AfCFTA, trade liberalization will provide opportunities for the free movement of goods and services to all actors in the value chains covered by the WACOMP programme.

All such transactions and movements will be monitored by AfCFTA's dispute settlement system, a central instrument for ensuring the security and predictability of the regional trading system. The Dispute Settlement Protocol, which governs the operation of the system, applies only to disputes between States Parties to the Agreement with respect to their rights and obligations under the Agreement.

While AfCFTA represents a potential market of 1.2 billion people, this vast market will create opportunities for all actors at every stage of the value chains selected under the WACOMP, from seed selection to marketing and covering all support services.

In this regard, WACOMP can play an important role in supporting the strengthening of regional and national value chains and their integration into the African single market. Indeed, under the aegis of the programme, the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of technical partners, will take the necessary steps to build the capacity of the private sector to enable all stakeholders to reach their full potential for the successful integration of the region into AfCFTA.



The role of business support organizations in the integration of regional value chains

Part of WACOMP's mandate is to strengthen the contribution of regional value chains to the growth of West African economies and thereby improve their access to global markets. However, these ambitions cannot be achieved without first strengthening the capacity of enterprises along value chains at national and regional levels and facilitating their access to new market opportunities. This is where the essential role of business support organizations comes in.

Indeed, BSOs can help micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to expand their distribution network by introducing them to intermediaries and potential buyers at the national and international levels. They thus support their efforts by sharing information on export conditions to destination countries and by establishing links with BSOs in partner countries to create markets.

In the case of the "textiles and garments" value chain, a WACOMP-conducted study revealed that cotton fabrics, dyed (bogolan, bazin, indigo-dyed loincloth, etc.) and printed (baule loincloth, Kenté, sacred forest, Lepi, Kendeli, Batic, etc.) are in great demand in the region. They have the greatest transformational impact on the value chain. Therefore, BSOs can facilitate the connection between local supply in producer countries and regional demand, such as retailers and potential consumers in ECOWAS member countries as well as Mauritania and establish a network of BSOs in support of value chains covered by the WACOMP and beyond.

Providing information on the potential of existing niche markets will undeniably help local businesses. However, encouraging and helping them to be legally recognized and adopting an adequate strategy to facilitate access and market power will ensure the viability of their additional investments. In designing their strategies, BSOs can include access to financial resources, which cannot be achieved without a legally registered business and is crucial in these times of health crisis. In this way, BSOs can connect local MSMEs with potential investors or financial institutions.

BSOs also work to strengthen the technical capacity of MSMEs to improve the quality of the goods and services they can provide. This support can cover a range of key activities - input selection, production, post-harvest activities, transport and storage conditions, processing or branding to improve sales and customer loyalty.

A company's performance depends on the quality of its management. By carrying out a diagnosis, the BSOs identify the company's weaknesses and possible opportunities and can propose appropriate solutions. Generally, poor performance is the result of cumbersome procedures, lack of standardization procedures, poor management of inputs and/or waste, poor measurement of financial performance and results. Opportunities may arise from the acquisition of better quality/cheaper equipment or inputs, the adoption of new production processes, or the integration of technological changes and the mobilization of adequate human resources.

Let's take the example of cassava. Cassava is one of the most common value chains in West Africa. In the region, processing processes - generally artisanal - and issues relating to storage and conservation affect the competitiveness of the sector. BSOs can truly optimize productivity and value creation in many ways. They could, for example, help small enterprises to identify more suitable equipment and link them to potential suppliers. Or they could introduce them to good practices in the storage, packaging and transport of processed cassava.

In their search for new markets, BSOs can facilitate the establishment of facilities in partner countries within or outside the region and help them to source locally to reduce the cost of imports and strengthen regional integration along value chains. They can also provide support by disseminating market intelligence or creating partnerships that are relevant to partner country businesses.

In light of the above, there is a clear value in the services that a business support organization can provide to small firms. To deploy such potential, West African BSOs will need to build their capacity. With the support of its technical partners, WACOMP has already developed a set of concrete actions to develop this type of expertise.



Why Accreditation?

In today's world, consumers are becoming increasingly savvy and want to know more about the products and services they are buying at good value for money.

This phenomenon is hardly surprising given the scarcity of resources. Therefore, they seek to ensure that these resources are used optimally for maximum satisfaction. In doing so, individuals develop a growing interest in quality issues in business operations.

In this era of competition, consumers are making extra efforts to find products and services that meet a set of criteria that are at the heart of their concerns. These concerns generally relate to the quality and acceptability of laboratory services, the certification of products and services, the tests offered to individuals and organizations and inspection activities.

The answer to these concerns is accreditation, a process that provides proof that a given business organization has the consumer's interests at heart and is prepared to satisfy them to the maximum extent possible. Business organizations established to provide goods and services strive to ensure that the needs of consumers are met in order to ensure safety, good health and environmental protection.

When it comes to the quality of products and services, accreditation plays a key role. Indeed, many institutions are determined to define and measure quality in clear terms. For this reason, many accreditation bodies include quality improvement in their mandates.

When an institution or organization is said to be accredited, it means that it has been evaluated on the basis of internationally recognized standards to demonstrate its competence, impartiality and capacity for performance. This usually identifies a competent and confirmed assessor, so that the choice of a laboratory, inspection or certification body can be made with full knowledge of the facts.

Thus, accreditation makes it possible to demonstrate that a product or service made available to the consumer is fit-for-purpose. Once it is fit-for-purpose, we can be assured that quality is also guaranteed. Accreditation can be obtained by laboratories, verification bodies, inspection companies, organizations that offer testing services and also certification institutions.

The importance of accreditation lies in the fact that an accredited organization has its test results and certificates accepted in any part of the world. In other words, accreditations provide international recognition of the technical competence of accredited laboratories. Accreditation makes it easier for companies to enter local and international markets, which in turn allows them to generate more revenue.

Companies are therefore encouraged to apply for accreditation at any time. It will help them develop continuously, increase their profit levels and guarantee the provision of quality, safe, healthy and environmentally friendly products and services.

Accreditation and Business Growth

The world has become a global village, making it easier to export products to other parts of the world as if they were made in the same place or region of the world. Fierce and growing competition between the various commercial operators is leading them to improve the quality of the products and services they offer. Only those operators and commercial entities capable of satisfying consumer requirements in the best possible way will be able to stand out and take the largest market shares.

Any business entity that wishes to develop locally and internationally will have to position itself properly and be able to meet the challenges ahead. And to do so, they will need to ensure that consumer confidence in their products and services continues to grow. That's where accreditation comes into play.

Accreditation contributes to the growth of businesses. First of all, it helps to strengthen confidence between suppliers and consumers. Accredited conformity assessment bodies are responsible for assessing the quality of production processes on the basis of a series of well-defined quality criteria.

Secondly, accreditation makes suppliers aware of the need to reduce certain production-related costs. By reducing these costs, accredited companies are able to increase profit margins and positively affect the growth and expansion of their business.

Finally, accreditation is a means of demonstrating the technical competence and expertise of the accredited conformity assessment body concerned. Accredited certification provides firms with a business advantage that will propel them to higher levels.

The role of accreditation in accessing markets: The case of GhaNAS



In West Africa, three accreditation bodies support the international recognition of conformity assessment bodies in the region, strengthen the technical capacity of accreditation assessors and contribute to export promotion through quality assurance. They are the Ghana National Accreditation Service (GhaNAS), the Nigerian National Accreditation System (NiNAS) and the Cote d'Ivoire-based West African Accreditation System (SOAC) for the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), constitute the ECOWAS Accreditation System (ECORAS).

Many companies have their own standards to help them produce quality goods and services. However, if they want to break into the international market, they will have to use the services of accredited conformity assessment bodies.

Accreditation helps to cut down costs and increase profit margins, thereby making it possible for accredited companies with accredited certifications to compete favourably with other companies in the world. Besides, it provides evidence of technical competence and expertise in the area of business support organizations.

Institutions that are seeking accreditation can demonstrate to their customers that they have been successful at meeting the requirements of international accreditation standards. When any ECOWAS member guides and accredits a conformity assessment body, it helps the accredited conformity assessment bodies concerned to demonstrate to their customers that they are able to meet the requirements of international standards.

Accreditation is defined by ISO/IEC 17011 as a third-party attestation of a conformity assessment body that demonstrates its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. In other words, it is a recognition of the competence of a testing, inspection, calibration or certification body to carry out specific activities.

GhaNAS was established to provide accreditation services to conformity assessment bodies in Ghana and beyond. GhaNAS is recognized by the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) as an accreditation body for conformity assessment in Ghana.

Thus, if Ghana's business support organizations want to rise to the top, they need to fraternize with accreditation bodies such as GhaNAS and prove to the world that they have reached maturity. Accreditation will reinforce their credibility as reliable business support entities, enabling their clients to access regional and international markets.



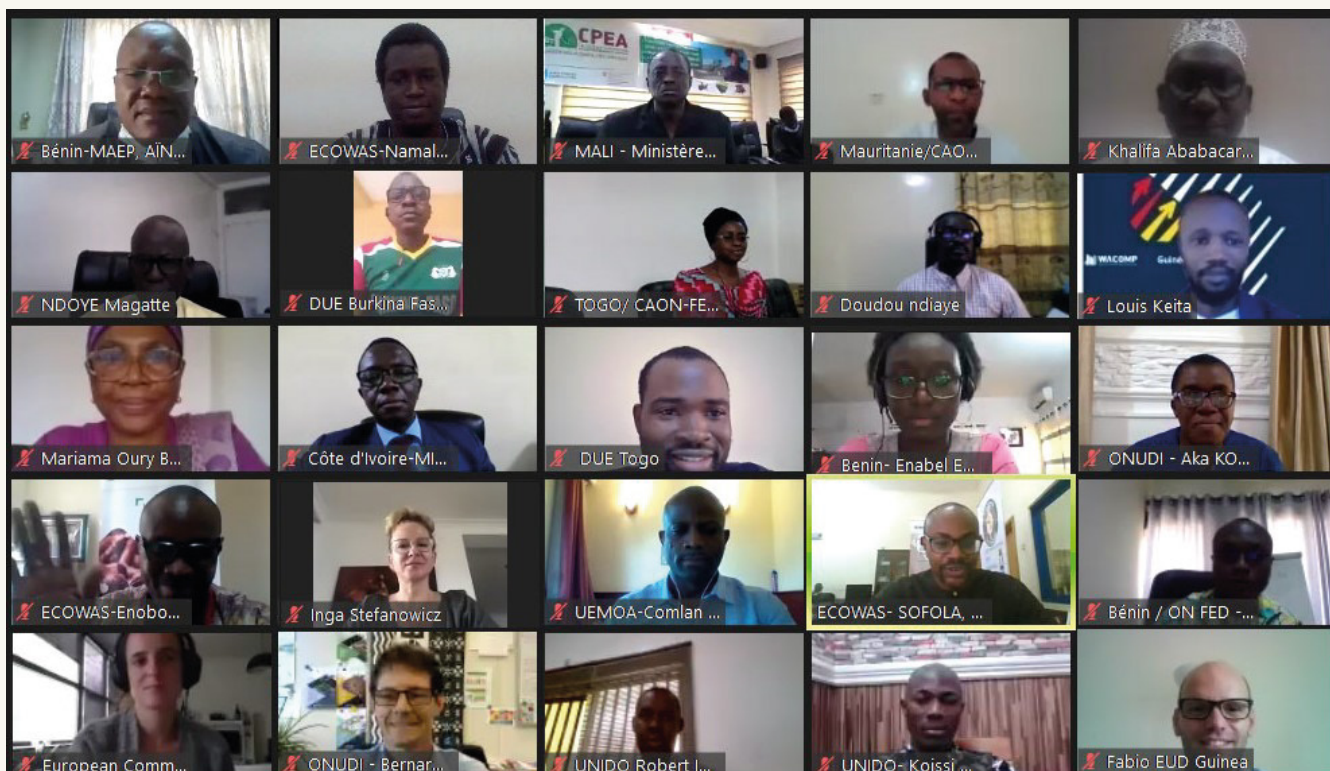
PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT & COORDINATION

Strengthening the coordination between WACOMP national and regional components

The COVID-19 pandemic affected WACOMP's implementation in many ways. Adapting to the circumstances, the project coordination team initiated a series of virtual meetings to review progress and optimize the coordination of the programme implementation.

The ECOWAS Commission organized a series of coordination meetings with stakeholders to ensure optimal ownership of their activities. In addition, coordination also focused on capacity building of business support organizations, training of trainers, establishment of a regional investment portfolio and support for the quality of the regional value chains covered by the programme.

A meeting with all the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the programme components was held last July to provide an update on all the activities, challenges faced, issues pertaining to communication and visibility for an improved cooperation and coordination both at national and regional levels.



WACOMP held the 2nd meeting of the technical steering committee of its regional component



The current health crisis has led to a slowdown in international trade. In particular, it has affected the access of West African companies to international markets and their participation in global value chains. Significant restrictions have also been imposed on the movement of people and physical interactions. All these measures have had a negative impact on the development of value chains at the national and regional levels and on the implementation of the WACOMP.

Last July, the ECOWAS Commission considered it important to bring together the stakeholders of the programme involved in its implementation – the UEMOA Commission, the International Trade Centre and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization – around a technical steering committee in order to identify the difficulties facing the programme and corrective measures.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the state of implementation of the WACOMP, strategies for adapting to the current context and to decide on measures that will make it possible to achieve the objectives initially set.



The current health crisis has led to a slowdown in international trade.

Extraordinary session of WACOMP Strategic Steering Committee

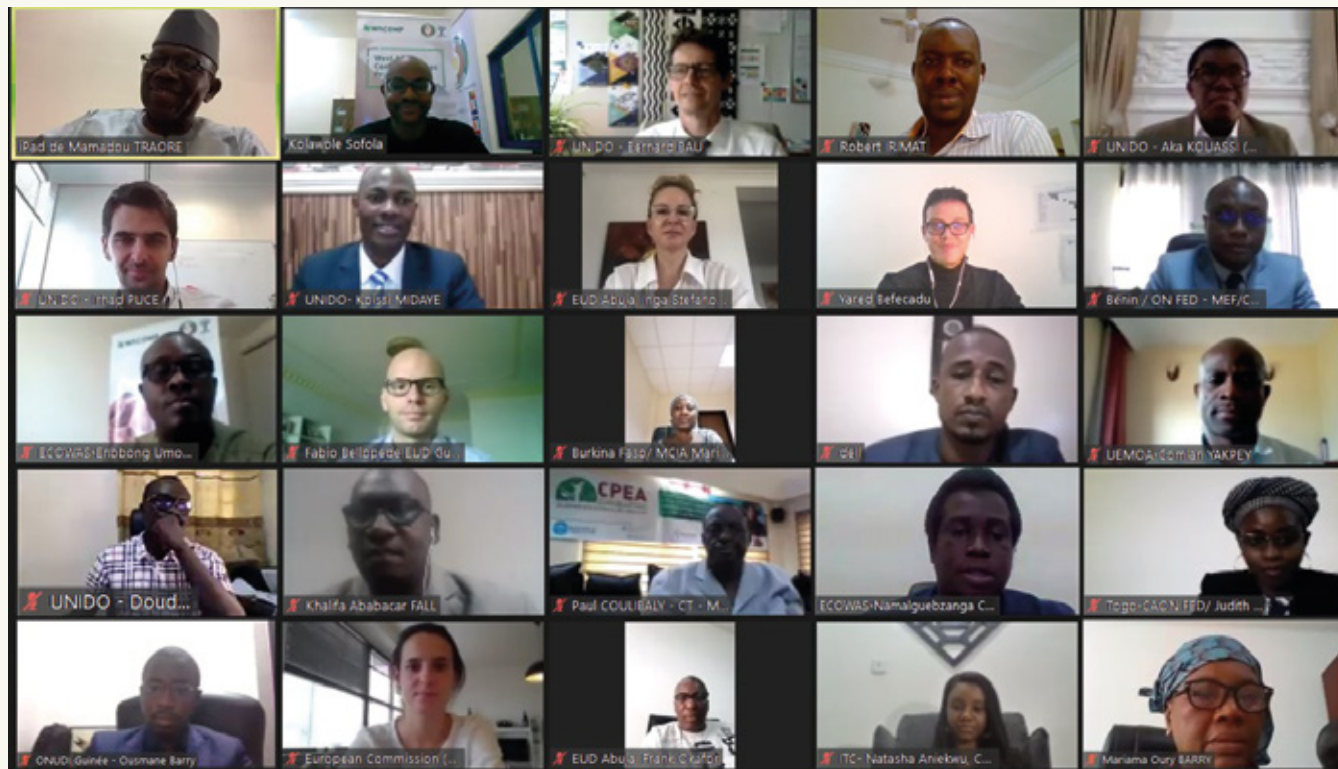
After the regional meeting with its national components and implementing agencies, WACOMP held an extraordinary meeting of the Strategic Steering Committee on 28 July 2020 to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the execution of the overall project. In addition of the members of the technical steering committee meeting, National Focal Points were invited to participate.

This extraordinary session discussed the implementation of all components of the Programme, the establishment of the West Africa Competitiveness Observatory and visibility and communication. The national components of Sierra Leone and Togo seized the opportunity to present the objectives, their status of implementation and upcoming activities. In terms of selected products, WACOMP Sierra Leone focused on Palm oil, Cassava and Cocoa and WACOMP Togo on Pineapple.

The participants praised the achievements made and the measures taken by these two National components to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 on the projects, which are implemented with the support of UNIDO and ITC in Sierra Leone and “Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit” (GIZ) in Togo.

Participants commended the achievements and actions taken by the two national components to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the execution of the programme.

The steering committee made recommendations to improve coordination, collaboration, visibility and reporting to ensure a smoother implementation.



Engaging the private sector in the sustainable implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)



Due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) process and the prevalence of the private sector's role in its implementation has prompted the ECOWAS Commission to initiate private sector sensitization activities within the framework of the WACOMP, including a sensitization seminar for regional private sector support organizations.

At the meeting, held on 2nd September 2020, these organizations reaffirmed their willingness to support the AfCFTA implementation process, aware of the benefits it offers to companies in the region. Furthermore, they requested the ECOWAS Commission to strengthen its role in coordinating the position of member states within AfCFTA to preserve the ECOWAS acquis, address trade barriers that hamper the participation of the private sector in AfCFTA negotiations and implementation, take action to establish the ECOWAS Business Council and finally establish a framework for consultation between the Business Council and the ECOWAS Commission to ensure that the needs and expectations of the private sector are taken into consideration.

Supporting and strengthening the private sector response to the COVID-19 pandemic in West Africa

Last July, the WACOMP programme organized a public-private consultation meeting to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the private sector. The meeting aimed to develop a regional strategy and action plan to help businesses get back on their feet.

In the presence of representatives of ECOWAS Ministries of Trade, Finance and Economy and regional business support associations, discussions focused on actions to be envisaged by the private sector to both mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic and ensure sustainable economic recovery from the health crisis. Member States shared experiences on their different responses to the pandemic in their countries, noting that the main beneficiaries are micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and households.

All reported specific monetary and fiscal policy initiatives and efforts to distribute and promote the use of personal protective equipment in public and private places, including the workplace. Despite these measures, the private sector has reported the severe impact of the pandemic on its enterprises and the adaptation measures taken in collaboration with the private sector.

From their discussions, participants drew relevant recommendations, such as:

- putting in place actions for increased sectoral support across regional value chains,
- supporting Member States in the implementation of the SME institutional and governance framework,
- establishing a regional quality infrastructure and harmonizing quality standards,
- promoting regional value chains and their competitive export potential for an enhanced regional trade,
- encouraging and supporting the creation of regional networks across sectors/sub-sectors.



WACOMP connects with key players of the textile sector to boost the sector competitiveness



The textile and clothing industry has experienced rapid growth in recent decades. The sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the structural transformation of our economies and to create value along the entire chain - from cotton production to fabric printing. Composed of a majority of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, this industry has the capacity to generate millions of jobs, especially for young people and women.

As part of WACOMP's efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of the textile and clothing industry, the ECOWAS Commission organized a virtual coordination meeting to connect sector and programme stakeholders to coordinate targeted actions to strengthen the value chain, link implementing partners with key operators in the sector at the national level, and share the results of studies carried out with programme stakeholders to discuss future interventions.

The meeting made it possible to take stock of the activities of the technical partners in support of the textile and clothing sector and then to discuss the working approach to be envisaged in order to continue the efforts aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of the sector.

The recommendations that have emerged are:

- developing training modules adapted to the needs of selected MSMEs;
- developing a regional investment profile for textiles and clothing;
- using the ECOWAS certification mark on products and the use of information and communication technologies to improve the productivity of MSMEs;
- carrying out a feasibility study on the creation of support centres for the pooling of key production/processing activities;
- strengthening of training centres in order to ensure better dissemination of knowledge and good practices in the targeted value chain.



VALUE CHAINS AND REGIONAL INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

WACOMP strengthens the leadership capacity of the Federation of West African Businesswomen (FEBWE)



With the support of the International Trade Centre, WACOMP organized a leadership training for the Federation of West African Businesswomen (FEBWE) and its members. The seminar resulted in the identification of key actions to implement good governance practices in order to strengthen the credibility of the organization. Participants worked on consolidating a support programme to improve the structural development of the organization.

The training also focused on building the technical capacity of FEBWE staff to sensitize them to the importance of coordinating strategic approaches, prioritizing the value of its service delivery and developing a sound and sustainable business model.

ITC and West African TPOs make progress on establishing a regional TPO network

In preparation for the establishment of the ECOWAS TPO network of trade promotion organizations (TPOs), ITC conducted a series of consultations with representatives of the region to consolidate a document defining the network's composition, structure, mandate, business model and a preliminary programme of activities.

Draft terms of reference, outlining the network's Memorandum of Understanding, are currently being reviewed by TPO representatives. The finalization of the document will soon take place at a task force meeting.



WACOMP to facilitate access to market intelligence for operators in the region

International Trade Centre

TRADE IMPACT FOR GOOD

ECOWAS TRADE INFORMATION SYSTEM (ECOTIS)
Trade Map

<https://ecotis.projects.ecowas.int/>

WACOMP
West Africa Competitiveness Programme

ECOWAS

UEMOA

Funded by the European Union

UNIDO

United Nations

In order to optimize access to intelligence at the regional level, ITC has integrated its TradeMap tool into the ECOWAS Commission's website. Through ECOTIS, the new trade statistics and market price intelligence portal (<https://ecotis.ecowas.int/trade-statistics/ecowas-trademap/>), public and private sector operators will have access to data on export and import flows that they can analyze through user-friendly tools.

ITC is currently seeking to identify a technical supplier to develop a turnkey solution that will provide a wealth of intelligence on markets such as trade regulations, consumer preferences and logistics arrangements.

Once finalized, this system will provide an automated solution for private sector members, while sharing personalized intelligence with subscribing companies. An online workshop on the ECOTIS portal will be organized for ECOWAS member countries to provide them with a detailed overview of available trade data.



REGIONAL QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

WACOMP launched its first ever online training of trainers in West Africa



Within the framework of the WACOMP, the ECOWAS Commission, UNIDO and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITC-ILO) have launched a joint training of trainers to build a pool of qualified trainers to help support the creation and growth of enterprises in West Africa.

This new initiative consists of a training of trainers to deliver the ILO training kit "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)". Training institutions in the 16 countries of the region will undergo a full cycle of trainer development. Given the current restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the SIYB training of trainers is conducted in a virtual format, which is the first of its kind in West Africa.

The online training programme will strengthen the capacity of training institutions to deliver entrepreneurship training in the region using modern, innovative and accessible technologies.

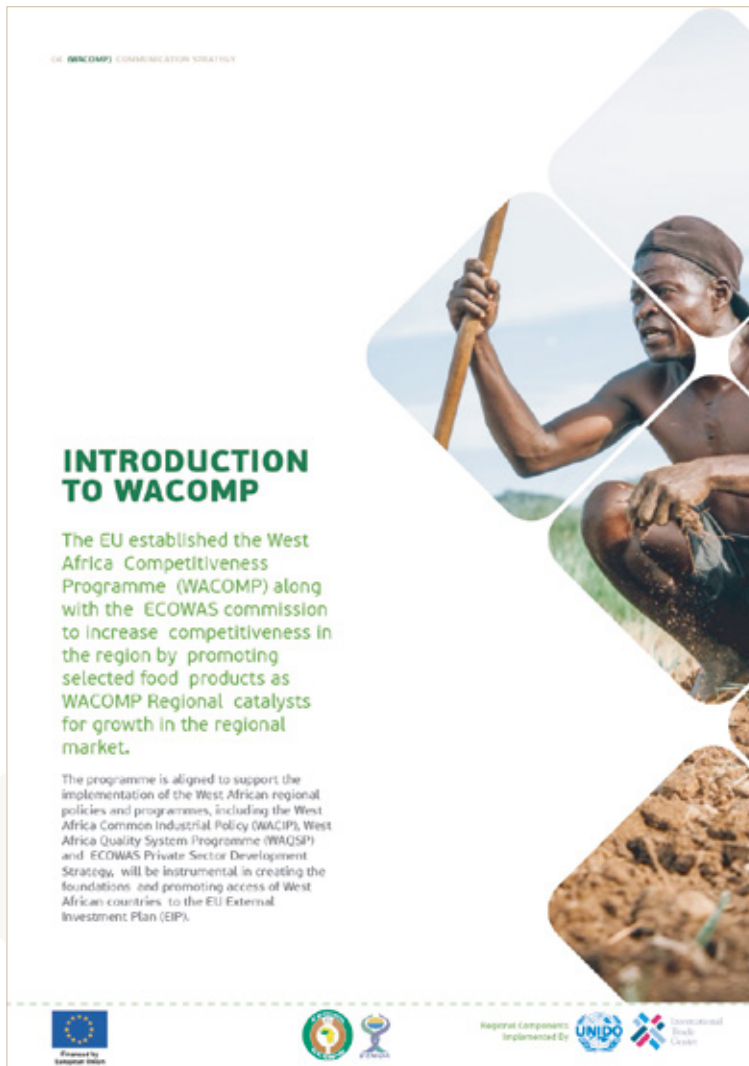
"This initiative makes the best use of online education to equip training institutions with solid training skills that will contribute to the development of entrepreneurs and start-ups in West Africa," said Bernardo Calzadilla-Sarmiento, Managing Director in charge of digitalization, technology and agribusiness at UNIDO.

"To support business survival, recovery and re-start, the ILO's Global SIYB team and the ILO-ITC have developed a suite of online SIYB tools ("e-SIYB") to support the global network of trainers and facilitate the implementation of the SIYB programme. The e-SIYB tools was launched at a training of West African trainers to enable them to build the capacity of entrepreneurs in the region. ", added José Manuel Medina from ITC-ILO.



COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY

Fostering connection with stakeholders through an effective WACOMP communication strategy



From July to September 2020, WACOMP has developed a draft communication strategy aimed at informing all stakeholders of the programme, engaging them in events at national and regional levels to strengthen their involvement in the programme by giving them access to communication platforms and tools.

The draft communication strategy is the result of an in-depth analysis that identifies the strengths and challenges to overcome in order to improve communication flows between partners and stakeholders. A mapping and analysis of communications approaches adopted by comparable ongoing projects was also carried out in order to record some of the lessons learned.

Based on the results of the research and diagnosis, solutions and tools have been identified in the context of the prescription. The next step provided information on how the tools and approach will be deployed and SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time-bound) indicators for the implementation and monitoring of the communication strategy.

Implementation will take place in three phases. A first phase aimed at creating awareness through the development of creative content and designs. A second phase consisting of a WACOMP communication campaign for a greater involvement of partners and stakeholders along the targeted value chains. And a third phase which consists of providing relevant intelligence and engage targeted audiences in the implementation of the WACOMP.



NATIONAL COMPONENTS



GHANA

Ghanaian SMEs are trained in e-marketing to strengthen their online presence and increase sales

Last August, a six-week online e-marketing training course was launched to help Ghanaian SMEs increase their resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The course, implemented in partnership with the Association of Ghana Industries, aimed at boosting SME digital skills and strengthen their capacity to promote their products and penetrate new markets through a more professional use of social media.

The training led participants 30 SMEs through different e-marketing business models and introduced them to international best practices in online promotion and sales. A total of 30 SMEs successfully finished the course and graduated between November and December.

Participating SMEs also benefitted from group coaching sessions to help them optimize their social media presence and platforms.

Following the training some results are already visible:

- Up to 67% increase in the number of followers,
- Increased frequency of publication up to 10 posts/month,
- New Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp accounts for business set up,
- Setting up new businesses on Facebook,
- World-class content and brand messages, and Increased demand for social media sales.

In parallel, WACOMP Ghana hosted a branding and marketing training in Accra for SMEs producing shea-based cosmetics. The training, bringing together 45 cosmetics entrepreneurs, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of cosmetic companies on global markets. A business-to-business event was held alongside the workshop to foster interactions with trade attachés from export markets.

The Ghanaian cosmetics industry is currently showing good trends: the market is growing, and demand is high. "We need to invest more efforts to improve the quality of the products. On a scale of 1 to 100, only 20 percent of the products manufactured in Ghana meet high quality standards. We need to invest more efforts in quality to increase margins," said the Chief Technical Adviser of WACOMP Ghana.

He also stressed that "Another major problem we face is the ability of producers to meet the standards. The Ghana Standards Authority (GSA) has developed a comprehensive set of standards for different types of cosmetics. They are available to producers to ensure consumer safety and compliance with good manufacturing practices. In addition, if they want to sell their products, companies must also be registered with the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA). However, some SMEs do not go through these essential processes and still want to sell. This greatly affects people's confidence in locally made products and urged SMEs to take advantage of WACOMP Ghana's support in this area".



Financed by
European Union



Regional Components
Implemented By





GUINEA

WACOMP Guinea trains pineapple producers to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19

In order to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on WACOMP Guinea's interventions in the pineapple sector, the project supporting the Revival of the Pineapple Industry in Kindia and Maferinyah organized an online training workshop for trainers on delayed flowering and good agricultural practices for pineapple producers.

The training aimed at equipping producers to help them significantly reduce pineapple crop losses and improve their quality.

This first training of trainers brought together participants from the pineapple sector, UNIDO experts, representatives from the Federation of planters of the fruit sector of Lower Guinea (FEPAF-BG), Union of pineapple producers of Maferinyah (UGPAM) and the Belgian development agency (ENABEL)

The training provided the participants with information on production techniques that facilitate improved production management in times of health crisis. This training is meant to be replicated in the different project localities with the producers.

Training of actors in the pineapple sector on the UNIDO Cluster approach

The REFILA (Revival of the pineapple sector) project organized an online training course for stakeholders in the pineapple sector on the UNIDO cluster approach. The objective was to strengthen their knowledge in order to facilitate the process of setting up the first pilot clusters in the two project areas, Kindia and Maferinyah.

Specifically, the training contributed to enhance the economic players' knowledge on:

- the UNIDO cluster approach;
- the functioning of cluster;
- the advantages of the cluster approach on the development of actors' activities and on the competitiveness of the entire pineapple industry;
- the stages of the process of setting up cluster pilots.



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Regional Components
Implemented By





SIERRA LEONE

WACOMP Sierra Leone introduced MSMEs to ISO quality management standards

WACOMP Sierra Leone organised training webinars for MSMEs on quality management standards and their benefits in improving business operations and building customer confidence. The first webinar focused on the international standard ISO 9001, which specifies the requirements for a quality management system (QMS). Organizations use this standard to demonstrate their ability to consistently deliver products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements.

The second webinar focused on ISO 22000 as a management system that audits and certifies food safety throughout the supply chain. It deals with the identification, analysis and control of physical, chemical, biological and radiological hazards to ensure that food products are safe for human consumption.

Aside the seminars, UNIDO conducted the technical evaluation of Sierra Leonian SMEs for implementing both quality management standards – ISO 9001 and ISO 22000.

Over 50 SMEs applied and were evaluated on the basis of their products and activities. Throughout the evaluation, they showed great motivation to seize the opportunity to implement both standards in their different activities. The evaluation further served as a basis to prepare tailored technical assistance for each SME.

Launch of WACOMP's Gambian chapter

In August 2020, the European Union and UNIDO signed a contribution agreement to officially launch the Gambian chapter of the WACOMP. A virtual launch event with project stakeholders is foreseen to be held in mi-December 2020.

The project aims to improve safety and quality compliance along the onion chain to facilitate market access and to support trade support organizations, particularly quality infrastructure institutions like the Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), the Food Safety and Quality Authority, the Plant Protection Services. The Ministry of Agriculture, conformity assessment bodies, and business support organizations servicing the horticultural sector.

Below are the main QI-related interventions foreseen under this project:

- Equipping the testing laboratory to be operated by TGSB and deliver technical assistance to prepare for accreditation of testing services;
- Facilitating access to basic measurement equipment and deliver training on how to use them;
- Supporting TGSB in establishing conformity assessment services in testing and certification;
- Supporting FSQA and Plant Health Services in strengthening their inspection units as per ISO 17020, the standard for performing inspections, and relevant quality management system documentation to prepare for accreditation; equip with training; furnish with sampling equipment.

As for interventions at the value chain-level:

- Pre-Harvest: strengthening cooperation between extension services and farm-based associations to promote adoption of agricultural standards (e.g., GAP)
- Harvest: establishing and operationalizing shared storage facilities
- Processing: delivering bespoke technical assistance to MSMEs to strengthen quality standards compliance; supply processing equipment / shared services to producer associations.
- Marketing: providing support to improve packaging; promote marketing platforms; facilitate linkages between value chain actors and buyers.



GUINÉE BISSAU

The WACOMP kicks off a national chapter in Guinea Bissau

Following the signature of contribution agreement between the EU Delegation in Guinea Bissau and UNIDO, WACOMP is officially launching a national component to strengthen the country's exports and competitiveness in the mango sector, and facilitate its integration into regional and international trading systems.

The project will initially focus on improving the performance of the mango sector by strengthening its contribution to local industry, regional and international trade and job creation.

To this end, attention will be placed on the development of the productive and commercial capacities of operators, their upgrading and networking. Secondly, the project will focus on improving and expanding the service offer of intermediary support organizations to the horticultural sector.

WACOMP Guinea Bissau will also focus on improving the business climate, notably by translating regional policies favourable to competitiveness into national policies.

Initially, a phase of identification of the needs of the operators of the sector in terms of skills, services and infrastructure will take place in order to better target the strengthening efforts to be provided at the different levels of the value chain.

These efforts will promote local mango processing and the development of agro-industrial partnerships and a better positioning of Guinea Bissau mango on the markets.

The project will support the adaptation of international standards for mango exports at the national level and the development and strengthening of conformity assessment bodies. In this way, mango exporting companies will gain access to international certificates of conformity.

Finally, measures will be taken to ensure the integration of regional policies, strategies and instruments to promote the competitiveness of enterprises at the national level as well as the consolidation of the project's achievements and their continuity after the end of the project.

The official launch of the project will take place on 16 December 2020 in the capital Bissau, followed by the first Project Steering Committee.

Earlier this month technical experts traveled to mango production sites in the Oio Region where they spoke to local producers about the challenges the sector is facing.



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The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. ITC helps small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and emerging economies to be more competitive in global markets.

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