

WACOMP Programme Highlights

Quarter 3 - December 2023 - Issue #15

Regional Component

West African Competitiveness Observatory: Discover the new features and launch of the beta business matchmaking module

[The website of the West African Competitiveness Observatory](#) has exciting new updates! New trade indicators have been added to the Competitiveness module, allowing our users to have better insights on how their tariffs and prices compare to their competitors. Data have also been updated to offer more accurate and up-to-date trade information.

Moreover, a beta version of our business matchmaking module is now live! It will allow companies from across West Africa to promote their products and services, find each other, connect, and collaborate. Explore the revamped website and take advantage of these exciting new features right away!



West African Competitiveness Observatory

Join forces and improve the region's competitiveness together

With our state-of-the-art tools, find regional buyers and suppliers, reach global markets and make better informed decisions.

THE WEST AFRICAN COMPETITIVENESS OBSERVATORY HAS EXCITING NEW UPDATES!

wacomp-observatory.org

WACOMP



Journeys of Growth: West African Organization Embracing Changes

In the dynamic landscape of West Africa, following the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) milestone last quarter, it is now the Federation of West African Employers' Associations (FWAEA), which have engaged in benchmarking assessments marking pivotal points in their development.

In 2019, FWAEA faced a challenging score of 33.95%, signaling room for improvement. This marked a turning point as FWAEA crafted a Performance Improvement Roadmap, outlining actionable steps to address identified weaknesses.

The 2022 re-benchmarking has shown that FWAEA had made good strides. Their overall score surged to 57.67%, marking a shift from below-average to satisfactory performance. Notable enhancements include strategic planning for Leadership and Direction, improved Resources and Processes, increased understanding of member needs in Product and Service Delivery, and a surge in Measurement and Results through measurable objectives and member satisfaction surveys.

This illustrated FWAEA's commitment to progress and ongoing development. While acknowledging their significant improvements, the report highlighted areas for further enhancement, emphasizing the need for financial sustainability and refined management.

Stories alike underscore the importance of periodic evaluations, strategic planning, and dedicated efforts toward improvement, with continuous commitment and targeted interventions.

Cross-Border Success: WACOMP's Regional and Sierra Leone SMEs Seal Deals at West Africa's Food & Beverage and Expo



Following the participation In June 2023 of 14 export-ready Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) from eight ECOWAS countries at the Food and Beverage West Africa Trade Fair held in Lagos, Nigeria, an assessment has been conducted and revealed about USD\$125,089 in total worth of potential sales.

The event fostered significant business opportunities, resulting in notable trade deals established through connections forged during the fair such as in Nigeria, Odihiagro Enterprises capitalized on the opportunity and commenced negotiations to enter into a contract with Tropical Sun for the purchase of a 40ft container of gari, with a value amounting to USD\$13,350. Additionally, Across the border in Ghana, Fruveg Farms Ltd. Co. negotiated an agreement with SONO Industrial Ghana for the delivery of 100 tons of fresh pineapples, worth USD\$12,426 while also expressing intentions to explore opportunities for mango trade.

This achievement stands as a good example to the collective growth and promise of West African industries, demonstrating the transformative power of targeted support and exposure for SMEs in the region, [read more here.](#)

West African Businesses of WACOMP Regional and Sierra Leone Make Strides in Regional Exports at FIARA 2023



During the trade fair and study tour, these SMEs conducted 213, B2B interactions, securing contracts and direct sales totalling over USD\$1,280,000. All participants expressed satisfaction and reported enhanced knowledge of the regional market, product opportunities, and requirements. “Both the B2B and the trade fair were very essential to our

individual businesses as we had positive connections with potential buyers and companies." stated Sinava Women Agricultural Development Association.

Their interactions at the fair prompted positive changes in their business practices, increased company visibility, and expanded their international buyer network Moawoma Cooperative emphasized the power of a positive mindset and social interaction in creating more business opportunities. The mission was a fruitful endeavor, strengthening business ties between West African countries, fostering shared experiences, and improving business practices for a more competitive future.

The success of the mission underlines the valuable role of such international events in the growth and development of businesses in the region, [read more here.](#)

Empowering Market Insights: Refresher Course on MIMS for ECOWAS and WACOMP Beneficiaries

On 29 September 2023, a comprehensive refresher course on the Market Information Monitoring System (MIMS) was conducted, focusing on equipping ECOWAS communication focal points with essential knowledge to fully harness the potential of MIMS. This collaborative initiative, orchestrated by experts from the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Digimind, aimed to improve the comprehension and utilization of the MIMS platform.

The ECOWAS Market Information Monitoring System (MIMS) offers real-time updates on market intelligence. It caters to a spectrum of sectors, including Cassava, Mango, ICT, and Textile & Garment, providing insights into global opportunities and emerging trends.

The information shared via MIMS is poised to facilitate informed decision-making, thereby paving the way for potential economic growth within the region.

Around 400 contacts were added to the Market Information Monitoring System Newsletter by the end of August.

These contacts comprise companies operating in the cassava, mango, ICT, clothing and textile sectors, as well as Business Support Organizations (BSOs). This integration further expands the reach of market intelligence, connecting an even wider network of stakeholders and fostering an environment conducive to potential growth and innovation.

National Components

Empowering SMEs in Freetown: Packaging Training and Coaching Yield Promising Results



Thirteen small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and cooperatives in Sierra Leone underwent a transformative journey in the field of cassava processing. Fifteen SMEs and Business Support Organizations (BSOs) received comprehensive training and support, including Access to Finance Bootcamps, Value Addition and Product Diversification Trainings, and specialized Branding and Marketing Training sessions.

These activities encompassed vital areas such as food safety, product costing, customer care, and market requirements, and provided personalized coaching on packaging strategies. The overarching objective was to empower these businesses, enhance their branding and marketing efforts, and promote cassava's contribution to industry and regional trade. You can read more on individual story [here](#).

Following an assessment survey, the results of these efforts have been highly encouraging as a direct result of the training and support, these businesses significantly expanded their production capacity, diversified their product offerings, and invested in new equipment.

They transitioned from traditional cassava products to a broader range of high-value items, leading to increased profitability. Daniel H. Saidu, CEO of Magbenyani, highlighted the transformative potential of cassava, stating, "We learned that all parts of cassava can be put to useful industrial purposes."

Additionally, these businesses learned how to maintain accurate records of stock, sales, and banking. They also expanded their market reach through networking and successfully showcased their products at key trade fairs in the sector, connecting with potential buyers and partners from across Africa and beyond.

The feedback from all the companies involved has been highly positive, with increased capacity and readiness to seize new opportunities, marking a successful expansion journey.



Empowering Sierra Leone's Business Ecosystem: Enhancing Support for Export-Oriented Institutions

Sierra Leone is committed to improving its business landscape and fostering key value chains, all while mindful of social and environmental considerations. From June 2021 to May 2022, selected Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) in Sierra Leone, including SLIEPA, SMEDA, and SLECAD, actively engaged in a focused training and coaching program.

The primary objective was to bolster the capabilities of these institutions in better assisting businesses involved in exports. The program honed in on client management, market assessments, and strategic decision-making, ultimately leading to enhanced service delivery.

Fast forward to a post-training evaluation conducted from March to May 2023, which found a great application of knowledge and skills in the day-to-day work such as:

- Assessing target market while identifying opportunities
- Identify buyers and specific market entry requirements
- Assessment of needs for export readiness
- Managing memberships

Respondents conveyed how they applied these newfound skills and knowledge to engage with clients more effectively, comprehending their needs and adjusting their organizational service delivery accordingly.

Yet, challenges surfaced, impacting the participants' ability to apply these newfound skills. These hurdles encompassed limited financing, logistical constraints, institutional infrastructure limitations (particularly regarding ICT and internet connectivity), and resistance to change from internal and external stakeholders. Some evolving toward the ideal business maturity levels necessary to absorb advanced services, particularly in terms of achieving export readiness.

However, the programme's intervention 'Trade Support Service Portfolio Development and Delivery for BSOs' effectively achieved its goals, elevating the capabilities of participating institutions and their staff. The blended approach used for program delivery, while not without its challenges due to the pandemic-related constraints, successfully equipped participants with valuable skills.

Trade Policy Coordination Advances in Sierra Leone



Possible options for a trade policy coherence mechanism in Sierra Leone

Enhancing public private dialogue in agricultural trade

July 2023



International Trade Centre

In July 2023, an insightful research paper authored by ITC experts was released as part of Sierra Leone's public-private dialogue in agricultural trade. The paper offers a range of options to foster public and private sector endeavours in streamlining trade policies for greater coherence and efficiency. The research involved rigorous desk research, in-depth analysis of knowledge products, and direct consultations with Sierra-Leone' stakeholders.

Through this process, the goal was to identify effective mechanisms for achieving trade policy coherence in Sierra Leone, shedding light on critical facets of the nation's trade landscape. It became evident that capacity constraints had historically impeded Sierra Leone's ability to achieve trade policy coherence, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced coordination and collaboration.

The research paper places strong emphasis on fostering coordination between the government and the private sector, presenting a path

towards a more integrated approach to trade policy development. Factors such as transaction intensity and resource availability are recognized as pivotal factors in determining the mechanism's ultimate success. An integral component of the proposal involves the revival of the National Coordinating Committee on Trade (NCCT), a strategic move aiming at nurturing cooperation between the public and private sectors, ultimately leading to more harmonious trade policy decisions.

This proposal is especially relevant given Sierra Leone's evolving role in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), making the modernization of the NCCT a vital step in adapting to changing trade dynamics. For a comprehensive exploration of these insights, you can access the full research paper [here](#).

In Senegal, ITC Provides the Cooperative Societies with Equipment and Management Personnel



To support the effective start of activities of the 28 commercial agricultural cooperative societies established with the support of WACOMP-Senegal, the ITC has provided each of beneficiaries with computer equipment, office supplies, and management personnel through the recruitment of 11 community development agents. Furthermore, as part of capacity-building for productive activities, 120 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) sets consisting of helmets, gloves, suits, and boots, 800 sexual attractants/pheromone products, and 20 backpack sprayers have been made available to the 5 mango-producing cooperative societies in the Niayes area.

Strong Presence of WACOMP-Senegal and Cooperative Societies at GSEF DAKAR 2023

Senegal was host to the 6th edition of the Global Social Economy Forum under the theme « **La transition de l'économie "informelle" vers des économies collectives et durables pour les territoires** », translated into "Transition from the 'Informal' Economy to Collective and Sustainable Economies for Territories," a first in Sub-Saharan Africa. GSEF Dakar 2023 primarily aimed to share practices and visions that would help build a more inclusive and equal world through sustainable economic development.

On this occasion, a delegation comprising the WACOMP-Senegal coordination team, 19 Presidents of agricultural cooperative societies, and 9 community development agents participated in this significant global event for the social and solidarity economy. The WACOMP-Senegal booth located in the innovation village served as a platform to showcase the achievements made by ITC in structuring value chains, creating cooperative societies, and formalizing them through the e-RSCOOP platform. In total, ITC received nearly 150 visitors, all interested in the actions carried out under the WACOMP-Senegal, especially those related to the process of creating cooperative societies.



"Tabaski du MIN" Commercial Operation with Cooperative Societies

In the context of the partnership between ITC/WACOMP-Senegal and the National Interest Market and Heavy Truck Station Operating Company (SEMIG), the commercial agricultural cooperative societies established with the support of WACOMP-Senegal participated in the "Tabaski du MIN" commercial operation organized from June 19 to June 27, 2023, at the national interest market.

Seven agricultural cooperative societies, namely COOPROFEL, KABADIE, SCOOP And Sama Lunu Bokk, COPADIN, SOCOOT, KOMANGUOLA, SCAPTC, from the Dakar, Thiès, and Ziguinchor regions, took part in this initiative. This commercial promotion action, which took place nearly ten days before "Tabaski," one of the biggest religious celebrations in Senegal, provided the agricultural cooperative

societies with an opportunity to sell their products, primarily onions and mangoes, directly to consumers at preferential prices, bypassing intermediaries.



This first edition was a great success and allowed the participating cooperative societies to gain visibility among the public and establish partnerships with economic actors.

DigitalSenegal: Promoting the Senegalese Digital Ecosystem



Within the framework of the ICT component of WACOMP-Senegal, ITC worked closely with tech stakeholders to establish a digital platform for promoting the Senegalese digital ecosystem. The initiative aims primarily at enhancing access to information and market

opportunities, while facilitating interactions and exchanges among ecosystem actors, and encourage entrepreneurship in the digital sector in Senegal. The platform includes several sections, such as a database of Senegalese digital actors, locally available support services, information on the national and international market, references to ICT training, information on the employment market in the sector, and a community section for member' interactions.

To ensure its management and enable dynamic, open, and inclusive participation, digital ecosystem actors, with the support of WACOMP-Senegal, established a cooperative society, governed by the Treaty on the harmonization of the business law in Africa (OHADA). The Chairmanship of the Board of Directors is entrusted to the Organization of IT and Communication Professionals in Senegal (OPTIC).

Support for the Employability of Young People in the Digital Sector

As part of the WACOMP-Senegal, ITC has implemented a school-business alternation program for young people in the digital sector in Senegal, aimed at increasing their employment opportunities. For its implementation, ITC has formed a partnership with the Organization of IT and Communication Professionals in Senegal (OPTIC). and Sen Startup. The objective of the intervention is to support between 75 and 100 young graduates, selected for their specialization in one of the targeted digital

professions, through a short-term training program (3 to 4 months) shared between a school and a company.

To date, the program involves 52 apprentices, the IHE and ISI training schools, and 20 ICT companies, members of Sen Startup and OPTIC. It remains a means for ITC, through the WACOMP-Senegal, to sustain the partnership relationships established between schools and companies, allowing the continuation of these training programs, which have significant development potential in Senegal, and to encourage hybrid learning among young people in the sector to promote professional integration.

Technological Entrepreneurship, an Initiative Supported by ITC in Senegal



Through the WACOMP-Senegal, ITC supports and assists startups and tech entrepreneurs in Senegal through dedicated support programs to four incubators: CTIC, Concee, Jokkolabs and Impact Hub Dakar.

The program, tailored to the needs of each incubator, has, among other success, enabled CTIC to mobilize experts for 8 startups to provide accounting assistance, contract regularization, connections with technical and financial partners, fundraising, and tender submissions. Jokkolabs organized 4 training sessions for 75 project leaders in Thiès, Saint-Louis, Guédiawaye, and Dakar. Impact Hub has trained 20 entrepreneurs in Market Creation Innovation and will soon provide training on technology in agriculture and agro-industry for 10 entrepreneurs.

Additionally, Concree has created a guide for trainers available on the online platform <http://www.lezgo.io/>

ITC Connects Agricultural Cooperatives and TECH SMEs/Startups to Markets

In Senegal, ITC continues its substantial support for agricultural cooperatives and TECH SMEs/startups to access more lucrative opportunities.

The Fouta2 Cooperative Society of Podor, established under the WACOMP-Senegal, signed its first sales contract for onions collected from its members with a Senegalese industrial company for the 2024 campaign, just 9 months after its establishment.

Additionally, the startup OuiCarry has signed a contract with an Ivorian company for the transportation of its products to South America, following its participation in SARA2023 in Abidjan, with the support of ITC.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

[WACOMP ITC](#)





International
Trade
Centre

contact: **Aissatou Diallo**, Chief, Office for Africa,
diallo@intracen.org, +41-22 730 0284

Yared Befecadu, Programme Management
Officer, WACOMP Regional, Guinea, Sierra Leone,
befecadu@intracen.org, +41-22 730 0284

Thomas Bechmann, Programme Management
Officer, WACOMP Senegal, bechmann@intracen.or,
+41-22 730 0284

Street address: ITC, 54-56, rue de Montbrillant, 12
Geneva, Switzerland

Postal address: ITC, Palais des Nations, 1202 Gene
Switzerland

Internet: <https://intracen.org/our-work>

[Click this link to opt-out](#)