



## Contents

### Introduction

#### Feature articles

- a. COVID-19 Impact on Business Support Organizations
- b. Resilience of BSOs remains essential for economic recovery from COVID-19
- c. Can small businesses make it through the COVID-19 period?
- d. West Africa has its first internationally-accredited testing laboratories
- e. West African quality infrastructure entities offer a credible response to the need for expertise in West Africa
- f. REFILA: A contingency plan to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

#### Programme management and coordination

#### Values chains and regional intermediary organizations

#### Regional quality infrastructure system and business environment

#### Communication & visibility

#### National components

**2**
**8**
**9**
**11**
**15**
**16**

## INTRODUCTION

### Overview of West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP)

**T**he 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:

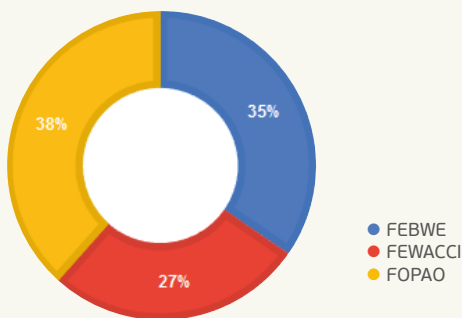
- improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of selected value chains, and
- improve the business climate at national and regional levels.

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).

# COVID-19 Impact on Business Support Organizations

The COVID-19 Impact survey was conducted in late June 2020 by the WACOMP, through the support of ITC, with the objective of gathering views of Business Support Organisations (BSOs) on the present and future (potential) impact COVID-19 (may) have on their organisation and delivery of their services.

This report is based on the feedback received from 23 representatives from 21 BSOs in the ECOWAS region, who are members of the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI), the Federation of West African Employers' Associations (FWAEEA) or the Federation of Business Women and Entrepreneurs (FEBWE).



## Measures Taken by Business Support Organisations

Despite the challenges, BSOs were eager to provide new solutions and opportunities to their business members. BSOs transitioned to home-based work and put in place health measures in their workplace.

Many have leveraged online options for service delivery and for maintaining regular contact with their members.

BSOs have also adopted new strategies to help their members manage ongoing challenges related to the pandemic.

Notably, BSOs are providing essential information to companies on solutions available to them and on containment measures taken by the government. They are assessing the business impact of the crisis and are advocating intensively for governments to take initiatives to address emerging challenges.

## Strategies adopted by BSOs to cope with the crisis



## Challenges faced by BSOs



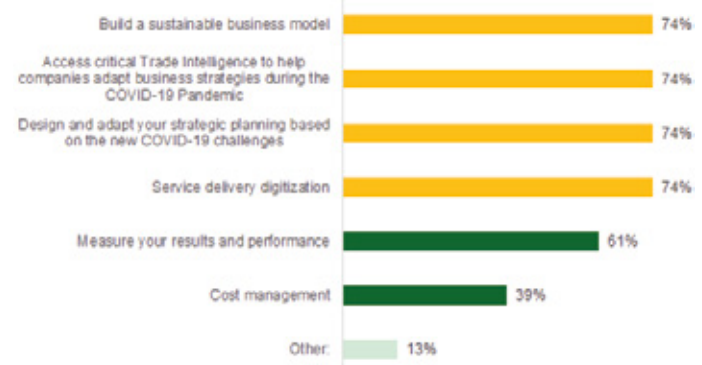
## Support Needed

The WACOMP project will support regional BSOs through targeted capacity building to enable them effectively represent and stimulate ECOWAS private sector recovery.

BSOs need to support small businesses, producers and entrepreneurs' resilience and recovery more than ever. They must be proactive, despite disruption and anxiety they are personally facing, and occupy a frontline role.

Under the project, Regional Business Associations will receive support in the areas of strategy and service portfolio consolidation to ensure an effective COVID response, robust business modelling and service delivery digitalisation.

## Urgent BSO Needs



## Resilience of BSOs remains essential for economic recovery from COVID-19

### WACOMP seeks to strengthen the capacity of regional business support organizations to help the private sector to better rebuild itself.

During the first half of the year, political and economic leaders struggled to grasp the contours of the coronavirus pandemic and the socio-economic crisis it has generated: a crisis unprecedented in its suddenness, uncertainty and scale.

According to the International Trade Centre's (ITC) SME Competitiveness Outlook report, plant closures in the European Union and China could result in losses in the global industrial supply chain of more than US\$ 2.4 billion for African exporters. 60 percent of African firms surveyed in ITC's "Impact COVID" survey reported significant negative impacts, including reduced sales and difficulty in accessing inputs.

In West Africa, the primary sector was the most severely affected, with nearly 75 percent of firms surveyed threatened with imminent closure within six months, while 50 percent reported a decline in their clients' revenues. According to a study by the Permanent Conference of French-speaking African Consular Chambers (CPCCAF), the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the central role of consular chambers in supporting businesses and advising public authorities.

### Can a weakened coach lead an Olympian to the top of the podium?

A recent ITC study on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for business support organizations (BSOs) in West Africa reveals that these entities are severely affected by the pandemic, with a consequent sharp decline in their capacity to support the private sector during and after the crisis.

Businesses interviewed for the WACOMP survey conducted by the Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS) reported significant challenges in sustaining revenue flows. Under normal circumstances, BSOs have difficulty collecting membership fees from their members. In these times of crisis, the situation has been exacerbated by the low revenues of enterprises, forcing them to prioritize their operational costs such as staff salaries. More than ever before, these enterprises have valued the support of the BSOs, but have not been able to pay their membership fees. 78 percent of BSOs reported that less than half of their members have paid their annual dues for 2020.

Typically, BSOs also rely on revenues from fee-based services such as training, business meetings and networking events, trade shows and space rentals. Government health and safety protection measures such as social distancing, bans on physical gatherings and travel during the pandemic prevent BSOs from organizing face-to-face activities.

West African BSOs should deploy a cost-cutting strategy, focusing exclusively on financing actions that can generate immediate tangible results for businesses. These entities should look to the future and invest their expertise and finances in innovative, high-impact, high value-added solutions that respond quickly to the problems that companies are facing as a result of the crisis. In this way, they will prove to be reliable partners and cultivate loyalty. By extending the scope of their services beyond their members, BSOs will increase their base and the future revenues of their members.

The technology gap prevents BSOs from offering their services digitally. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has highlighted the vital role of digital technologies in ensuring business continuity during the crisis. However, the ICT development index for most ECOWAS countries is below 5. Many BSOs in the region lack IT equipment, such as laptops, to organize work from home. They do not have access to functional local area networks (LANs) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems or have not optimized online services to facilitate shared access to organizational information and customer records. The limitations of ICT infrastructure in countries, erratic and costly internet connectivity and untimely power outages make the task more difficult. In addition, the companies that are supposed to benefit from these services also suffer from the lack of equipment and infrastructure needed to deliver these ranges of services digitally.

As a solution, BSOs can make simple and inexpensive changes to their website, including creating a blog focused on solutions to the new challenges posed by the pandemic, and downloading a catalogue of support measures put in place by governments and other institutions. By using artificial intelligence such as chatbots to answer repetitive questions about the pandemic, the BSO becomes a source of reliable and easily accessible information. Inquiry forms also allow clients to share their views and contributions on advocacy policy issues, while various platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams and Skype, and training will continue to ensure the visibility and relevance of the supporting organization through thematic webinars.

### WACOMP maintains its support to West African BSO

Through the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP), regional BSOs such as the Federation of Businesswomen and Entrepreneurs (FEBWE), the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) and the Federation of West African Employers' Associations (FWAEA) will be strengthened through targeted capacity building to help them stimulate the recovery of the ECOWAS private sector.

To achieve this, the programme gives priority to consolidating the strategy to ensure effective services that strengthen the competitiveness of enterprises for a strong comeback after COVID-19. WACOMP will ensure robust business modelling for sustainability and the deployment of appropriate digitization to support the extension of business accessibility while mitigating risks.

## Can small businesses make it through the COVID-19 period?

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) have found it difficult to adapt to changes in doing business. In West Africa, SMEs leaders are determined to pursue their activities despite the strict business conditions imposed by the current economic climate. SME development agencies are the first point of contact for small enterprises seeking information on business and financial services. In these times of pandemic, the support of these agencies is even more vital.

In an International Trade Centre (ITC) survey on SME development agencies in West Africa, Mali's Decentralized Financial Systems Refinancing Facility (MEREF-SFD) reported that it has facilitated access to trade information and financial services to more than 500 small enterprises in the past year. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, it was generally observed that SME managers did not have business plans or were unaware of the existence of available financing mechanisms. These difficulties are ranked among the four main challenges facing SMEs in Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

SME development agencies enable business leaders to grow through training, mentoring and financial support. Before the crisis, they were committed to supporting small businesses in their countries. Today, the spread of the impact of the pandemic is hampering the implementation of previously adopted capacity-building strategies.

The shocks to the region's businesses quickly became evident. For example, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) reports that nearly 90 per cent of Nigerian SMEs suffer from congestion in seaports and 78 per cent of them cannot cope with high transport and terminal costs. In Cape Verde, the chamber of commerce also confirmed that all enterprises were severely affected, with a particular focus on commercial and essential goods. The volume of imports, on the other hand, has not been as severely affected, which is detrimental for a country like Cape Verde that generally imports more than it exports.

In addition to quickly adapting their business models to meet the changing business environment, business leaders must continually inform themselves about new economic measures that may affect their income or support them in the short term. Consequently, agencies must quickly propose immediate, short- and medium-term actions. In Mali, MEREF-SFD is currently subsidizing the additional costs of pandemic response measures for SMEs. The agency is also carrying out preliminary risk and needs assessments, debt rescheduling and strengthening its liquidity provision.

SME development agencies in Cape Verde and Nigeria have identified sectors requiring vital support during the crisis. The current drop in oil prices in Nigeria is a factor justifying this type of support. In order to provide cushioning to its affiliates, NEPC plans to provide distance learning, advice on website design and updating, and encourage its exporters to expand their services export skills.

In Cape Verde, the Chamber of Commerce is working to digitize its services for the benefit of small businesses and to ensure online accessibility. It also offers discounted training and access to government financial support programs. In order to offer compensation mechanisms to Ivorian SMEs, the General confederation of enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI) is setting up a project focusing on collective investment, the development of a financial education programme and the launch of a regional thematic workshop.

Following a workshop on access to finance, the agencies discovered mechanisms that will optimize their service offering to SMEs during the global pandemic. "We look forward to expanding our knowledge and discovering new practices proposed by the WACOMP programme to develop SMEs and strengthen the economic and industrial fabric of the least developed countries". These initiatives ensure that small businesses receive adequate support to navigate the new normal generated by the pandemic," says Madani Koumare, National Coordinator of MEREF-SFD.



## West Africa has its first internationally-accredited testing laboratories

Having a product tested by internationally recognised, accredited laboratories adds value to a product because they guarantee quality - an essential factor in gaining consumer confidence, increasing the competitiveness of companies and integrating new markets.

In West Africa, developing quality infrastructure is a priority measure to strengthen regional economic integration. In this spirit, the EU and UNIDO have been supporting the efforts of the ECOWAS Commission to promote a quality culture in the region for almost 20 years through various programmes.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the support to the Environment and Agro-Food Laboratories (ENVAL) has enabled the private entity to develop: "In a few years, we have succeeded in setting up seven laboratories each excelling in its field," said the Director General of ENVAL. "The support of quality support programmes in West Africa has been instrumental in this success".

In particular, the organization has supported laboratories in the accreditation process according to the ISO/IEC 17025 standard. This accreditation certifies the full competence of laboratories to conduct tests and other calibrations while generating valid results. To date, two ENVAL laboratories have received accreditation and Côte d'Ivoire now has centres with a sufficiently broad scope of competence capable of providing quality advice and support for new product development.

For the Director General of ENVAL, "The impact of the programme is reflected in the improvement of our laboratories' practices, the development of customer loyalty and the conquest of new markets such as Carrefour,"

The Quality Manager of the Carrefour Group in Ivory Coast highlighted that they "have chosen to entrust the testing of our products to the ENVAL group. This choice is due in particular to the reliability of their analyses, the competitive cost of the tests, their optimal delivery times and the good management of their relationship with Carrefour",



In Mali, the mission of the Centre for Research and Training in the Textile Industry (CERFITEX) is to ensure the training of qualified human resources in the industry in general and the textile industry in particular. As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECOWAS Department of Industry and Private Sector has mandated the ECOWAS Standard Harmonisation Mechanism (ECOSHAM) Committees to develop, as a matter of emergency, a regional standard for the manufacture of masks for non-sanitary use intended for the general public. This initiative was welcomed by CERFITEX.

The group's work led to the validation, in less than three months, of an ECOWAS Standard (ECOSTAND 082) for the regional production of face masks. CERFITEX has also launched an accreditation procedure for the ISO/IEC 17025 standard for its cotton classification laboratory. Last January, this laboratory received its accreditation by the SOAC (The UEMOA accreditation body).

Cotton occupies a privileged place in West Africa. In the UEMOA zone, it accounts for 7% of world exports with four main producing countries, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali for the 2018/2019 season. The classification of cotton bales, particularly for export, requires the use of laboratories with proven expertise. The laboratory of the Société des fibres textiles (SOFITEX) of Burkina Faso, which received its accreditation in October 2019, can now handle these calibrations.

These strengthening efforts can firmly anchor Africa on the path of inclusive and sustainable industrial development and contribute to the achievement of the continent's third decade of industrial development.

## West African quality infrastructure entities offer a credible response to the need for expertise in West Africa

The ECOWAS region now has workable quality certification structures. These are operational in most of the technical fields concerned, i.e. standardization, metrology, conformity assessment, accreditation and technical regulations.

The effectiveness of these structures was demonstrated in particular during the organisation of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the ECOWAS Commission had urgently mobilised its regional harmonization mechanism, ECOSHAM, to develop essential standards for the production of masks for non-sanitary use and hydro-alcoholic solutions for hand disinfection.

In the area of accreditation, SOAC, the UEMOA Accreditation System, had set up a free capacity-building programme for some 300 technicians in the areas of safety and laboratory accreditation.

As mentioned by the Director General of SOAC, "in line with the recommendations of ECOWAS Heads of State in the fight against the pandemic, these laboratories carry out diagnostic tests for the disease and must be able to provide reliable results. Their staff must also learn safety precautions, particularly to avoid being contaminated in the performance of their duties".



ECOWAS accreditation bodies also enjoy greater credibility in the region. Thus, laboratories previously accredited by foreign structures are now addressing the structures established in their region. At the SOAC level, 13 laboratories have started or finalised their request for accreditation to West African entities and the Nigerian National Accreditation Service (NiNAS) has 25 accredited conformity assessment bodies

What is the justification for such interest for the structures in the region? For the General Administrator of the CERES LOCUSTOX Foundation in Senegal, the laboratories are determined to comply with the regional regulations set up by the ECOWAS and UEMOA commissions. Three accreditation bodies are now at their disposal: the Ghana National Accreditation Service (GhaNAS, [www.moti.gov.gh/ghanas](http://www.moti.gov.gh/ghanas)), the NiNAS ([www.ninas.ng](http://www.ninas.ng)) and the SOAC (for UEMOA Member States and Guinea, [www.soacwaas.org](http://www.soacwaas.org)). Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which do not have national accreditation bodies, can turn to one of these three structures.

It also refers to the impact exerted by the imperatives of a common market under construction, notably with the external tariff and the Continental African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which advocates referring to regional organizations to boost its competitiveness.

The need for the accreditation system in the region to provide the confidence and trust on goods and services to be traded in AfCFTA informed the drive and commitment of NiNAS in expanding her scope to certification of persons, products and management system. In same vain, NiNAS began accreditation in inspection scopes in June 2020 and The Pan Africa Quality Infrastructure (PAQI), which coordinates the African Quality Infrastructure, has nominated, in February 2020, NiNAS Chief Executive Officer as new Chair. According to him, "Accreditation has enormous role in the fight against spread of COVID-19 because of the need for ensuring that Conformity Assessment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are reliable and trusted. Accreditation is the mechanism that ensures that these products conform to approved standards before entering our markets".

However, a number of challenges remain to be met, including the consolidation of the network of accredited laboratories, certification and inspection bodies, the development of standards that meet the expectations of the public and private sectors, the international recognition of West African accreditation bodies and the operationalization of the ECOWAS Quality Agency (ECOWAQ).

GhaNAS, NiNAS and SOAC has huge responsibility of ensuring that our sub region is not left behind in AfCFTA due to technical barriers. As accreditation provides basis for equivalence, this will significantly improve market integration and reduce technical barriers to trade in the ECOWAS region. This is a call for ECOWAS Member States to support and embrace accreditation.

## REFILA: A contingency plan to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

The REFILA “Relance de la Filière Ananas en Guinée” is the National Component of the WACOMP in Guinea and aims at reviving the pineapple industry. The project is implemented by UNIDO, in collaboration with ITC and COLEACP (Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee).

In order to ensure a smooth, effective and secured continuity of activities, the REFILA project has adopted health measures to protect the safety of its staff and actors involved in the activities. Furthermore, a contingency plan has been developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

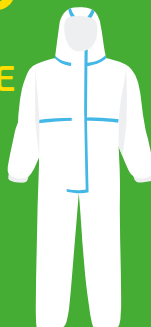
REFILA is continuing its project interventions to help in preventing the spread of the coronavirus and mitigating its negative impacts on project beneficiaries and their communities in the different intervention zones of the project. While the project contingency plan's primary objective is to mitigate the COVID-19 impact on the pineapple sector through protection measures for the respective actors and sourcing communities, it also aims to support the countrywide response efforts against the rapid spread of the coronavirus across Guinea.

Hence, one of UNIDO's interventions, which is part of the overall UN Response Framework and in line with the national response plan for Guinea, is the distribution of personal protection equipment and hygienic kits for the pineapple sectors' actors, project partners, relevant target groups and communities around the project areas. Thus, a concrete action of the REFILA project in this regard is the provision of 50,000 facemasks, 1,000 medical protective blouses, 5,000 medical gloves, 2,000 bottles of hydro-alcoholic solutions, internet access, chairs and tables for facilitation of remote online meetings for project counterparts and targeted beneficiaries. While community radio stations serve as platforms for awareness-raising among actors on the ground in project areas, interactive training sessions continue through videoconferences.



“In response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project "Relaunch of the pineapple sector" has adopted health measures to protect the health of its staff and actors involved in the project by providing;

**1,000**  
MEDICAL  
PROTECTIVE  
BLOUSES



**50,000**  
FACE MASKS



**2,000**  
HYDRO-ALCOHOLIC  
SOLUTIONS





## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT & COORDINATION

### WACOMP reinforces coordination and synergies with national and regional partners

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on West African economies and the implementation of the WACOMP at regional and national levels. Consequently, the programme has taken a series of measures to support its beneficiaries.

Last April, the ECOWAS Commission chaired the first virtual meeting of the Technical Steering Committee of the WACOMP Regional component, which was attended by representatives of the European Union and the regional implementing partners, namely the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The objective of the meeting was to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the progress made in the implementation of the various activities of the programme regional component in order to make the necessary recommendations for optimal development. The recommendations mainly aimed at strengthening coordination, developing strategies to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic as well as developing communication tools for the promotion of WACOMP at national and regional levels.

### WACOMP goes digital

The current context of the pandemic has created limits to the organization of physical meetings. However, the WACOMP has adapted and used innovative means to continue the implementation of its components at the regional and national levels.

With this in mind, ECOWAS, ITC and UNIDO organised a series of online meetings and trainings, including capacity building for operators in the targeted value chains and the development of the official programme website, serving as a portal for privileged information for the various WACOMP stakeholders.

In order to foster synergies between WACOMP regional partners, shared databases were established to facilitate exchange of key information and updates. Later in May, the country and regional components became engaged and began using these methods to optimize the overall coordination of the programme.

On their end, the WACOMP communication team has developed online tools to facilitate the share of information. Thanks to their efforts, programme stakeholders can access progress updates via social media platforms and a dedicated website. WACOMP is now present on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and holds a Flickr account.

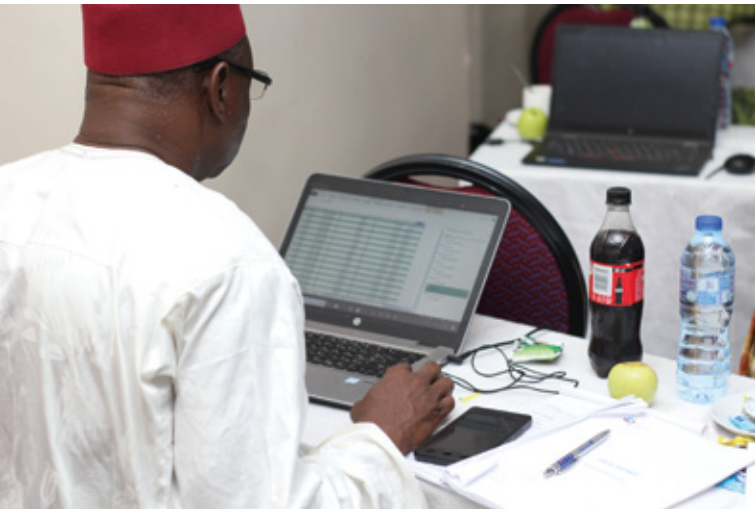






## VALUE CHAINS AND REGIONAL INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

### WACOMP introduces e-learning courses to boost West-African business support organizations



Faced with the challenge of newly-imposed non-contact restrictions on health and safety measures around the world, ITC is using its robust suite of e-learning courses from the SME Trade Academy to strengthen ECOWAS business support organizations and thereby support the private sector.

Through the SME Trade Academy, the WACOMP programme has been able to involve business support organizations (BSOs) in a series of available courses on a range of trade-related issues. Scheduled for two weeks, each course includes readiness assessments, tasks and assignments, with participants receiving an electronic certificate at the end of their training. The series of nine courses will launch in June and run for three months with the final courses in August.

BSOs have access to courses that will enable them to better understand export markets, the role of trade support institutions, women's access to public markets and how to approach banks for financing.

### West African SME development agencies in Africa strengthen their knowledge on access to finance

As part of WACOMP efforts to ensure that SMEs in the ECOWAS region receive better support from local business development agencies, the programme organised, through the support of ITC, training on access to finance to enable the agencies to better understand the portfolio of services their members require. The training focused on the development of innovative incentives to encourage members to pay for agency services as well as specific interventions to help SMEs adapt to the conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hosted in partnership with Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE), a government agency under the Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the training focused on SME promotion and financing initiatives.

'The workshop was a lively and successful session that addressed issues of major importance for African SMEs, and allowed for a rich exchange of good practices and knowledge', said a participant from the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Mauritania after the weeklong training.

The training was attended by representatives from over 30 local SME development agencies.



## Trade Promotion Organizations learn to navigate COVID-19 using trade Intelligence tools

With the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic hitting the daily functions of world trade, West Africa has not been spared. In this context, businesses must adapt and learn to navigate in the new market conditions. It is important that business support and trade promotion organizations have effective tools to best support private sector operators.

In response to this need, ITC organized training on the use of the Global Trade Helpdesk for ECOWAS business support and trade promotion organizations last June.

In addition to presenting the current challenges of global trade, experts addressed issues such as market access opportunities, export potential and applied and preferential tariffs.

Thus, more than 220 participants from 13 countries in the region were exposed to a series of relevant information on trade policy changes and new regulatory requirements related to the coronavirus pandemic.

The training was well received and generated such interest that in the weeks that followed, ITC noted that 25% of the platform's visitors were from ECOWAS countries.

**Putting your plan into action: connect with potential partners**

Trade Finance Providers	Trade Promotion Organisations	Intellectual Property Offices
1	2	2

**Does your product meet the mandatory requirements?**

FOR BENIN		FOR NETHERLANDS	
Domestic Requirements	Product Requirements	Market Conditions	Pre-shipment & Inspection
4	7	1	4

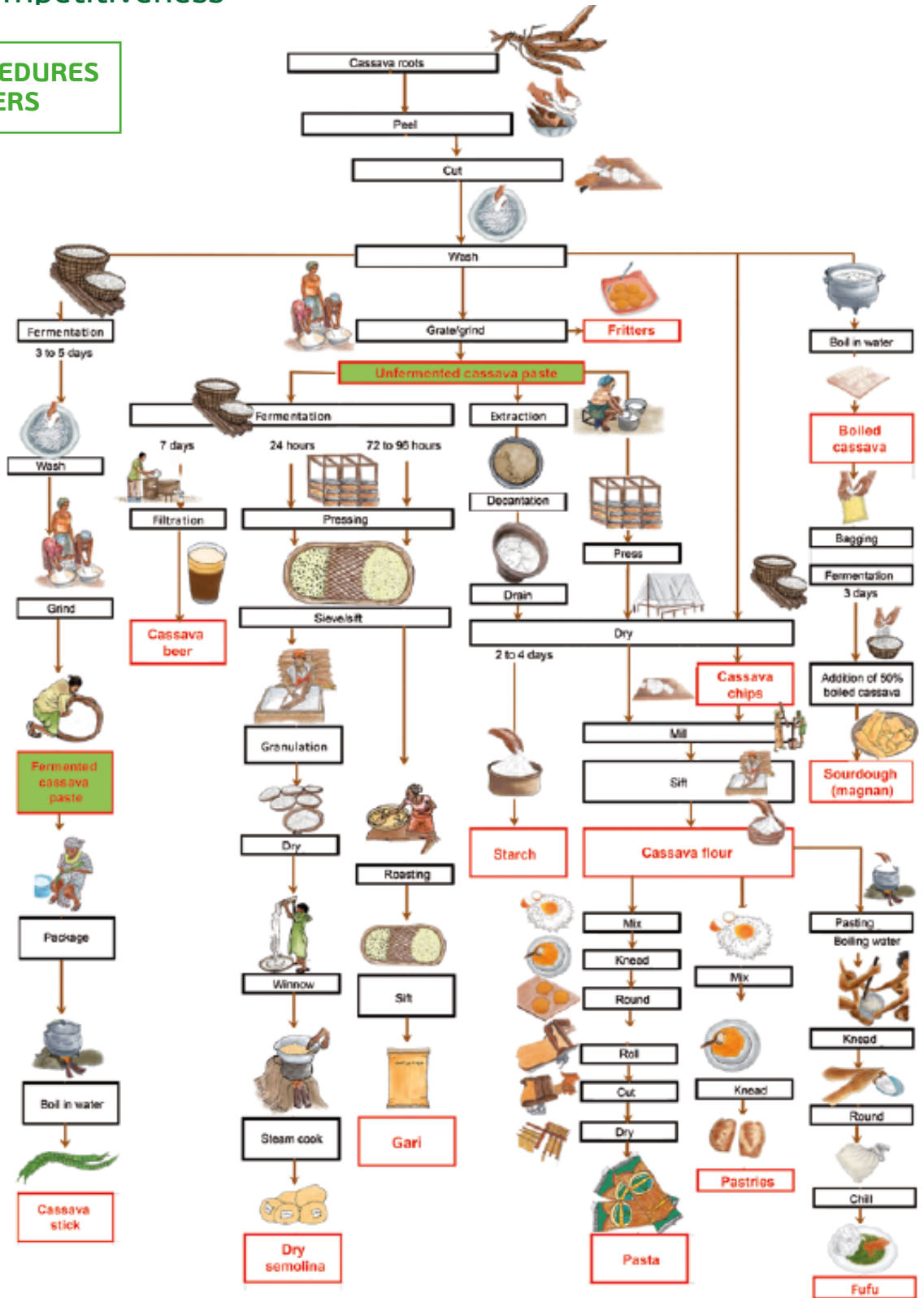


# REGIONAL QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The WACOMP studies quality infrastructure needs to boost West Africa's competitiveness

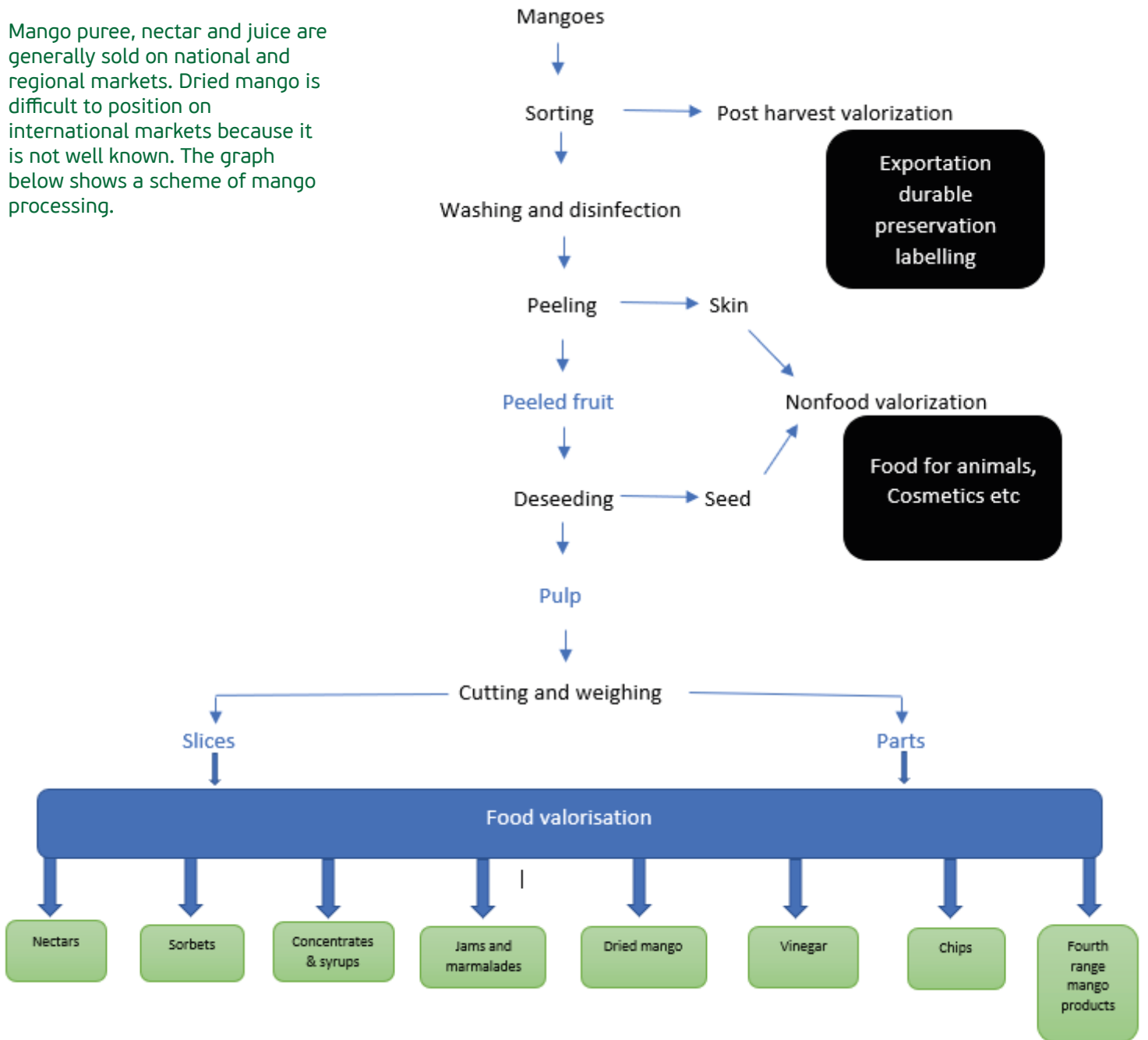
## PROCESSING PROCEDURES FOR CASSAVA TUBERS

Cassava has enormous potential due to the diversity of processing possibilities. Fresh cassava, starch, gari straw flour, cassava chips, attiéké, cassava leaves, ethanol, fufu, sweetener, agbelima, cassava semolina, placali, atoupkou, cassava broth and peelings were identified



Source: The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation

Mango puree, nectar and juice are generally sold on national and regional markets. Dried mango is difficult to position on international markets because it is not well known. The graph below shows a scheme of mango processing.



Scheme for Mango processing  
Source: Kassé, 2014

The vision of West Africa's industrialization is based on the implementation of strategic actions defined at the highest level. This includes the development of sustainable value chains by strengthening the capacity of member States to formulate and implement industrial development policies along value chains.

Priority sectors have been selected at regional level for support under the WACOMP. These value chains are cassava and its derivatives, mango, textiles and clothing, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a cross-cutting sector.

The support will focus on processing, access to regional and international markets and the implementation of the regional policy framework for the development of value chains, as defined in the ECOWAS Industrial Strategy, aimed at strengthening West Africa's competitiveness and better integrating it into the regional and international trading system.

To this end, WACOMP conducted, with the support of UNIDO, a needs assessment of quality infrastructure in all four value chains. For the purposes of this edition, the focus will be on mango, cassava and their by-products. However, major constraints hinder the promotion and marketing of these products outside the producing countries (90% are produced in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria). The lack of structuring of the sector, the uniformed quality of the products and the almost inoperability of the dedicated infrastructures are the main obstacles.

Mango is mainly sold fresh on local markets or exported to European markets (more than 400,000 tonnes). Mangoes from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali are increasingly transported by continental routes to Morocco via Mauritania and to Algeria via Niger.

Despite the various supports the sector has already received, it continues to suffer significant losses in production (25 to 70% depending on the case) due to agricultural practices, the significant lack of processing and preservation infrastructure and competition on the international market.

It is therefore necessary to operationalise the quality infrastructure at national and regional level to support these two value chains effectively, to ensure the competitiveness of the products concerned in markets requiring high quality standards. Both sectors face technical, organizational and commercial challenges. It is around these axes that support will need to be articulated by addressing the needs below:



### Cassava Value Chain



- 31 standards to be developed
- 16 technical regulations to be developed



- 23 testing methods to be harmonised
- 20 laboratories to be supported in terms of accreditation, training and equipment
- 21 training sessions requested by the laboratories



- 16 training sessions requested by inspection bodies
- 7 inspections bodies to be supported towards accreditation and provided with equipment



- Capacity building (training and support for certification) for key actors



### Mango Value Chain

- 10 standards to be developed
- 4 technical regulations to be developed

- 4 testing methods to be harmonized
- 34 laboratories to be supported in terms of accreditation, training and equipment
- 16 training sessions requested by the laboratories

- 8 inspections bodies to be supported for accreditation and provided with equipment

- Capacity building (training and support for certification) for key actors

In addition, the results of this study have facilitated the understanding of the constraints to the competitiveness of the two sectors and will enable WACOMP to better plan its local and regional interventions.

## The Community Committees for Standardization approved two new standards to combat COVID-19

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECOWAS Department of Industry and Private Sector Promotion proposed a contingency plan to develop two standards for the production of masks for non-sanitary use and hydro-alcoholic disinfectants for the region. The magnitude of the task required the rapid mobilization of ECOSHAM, the regional mechanism for the harmonization of standards. On 20 May the ECOSHAM Technical Management Committee approved the two draft standards.

The Commissioner for Industry and Private Sector Promotion has taken note "of the common commitment to achieve something useful for the community, to provide States with a reference point for the production of both face masks for non-sanitary use and hydro-alcoholic solutions for hand disinfection and their marketing within the ECOWAS area".

The two standards were then adopted by the sectoral ministers responsible for quality at a virtual meeting on 25 June after being reviewed by their respective technical experts. The ministers also recommended that the two standards be adopted by the next ECOWAS Statutory Council of Ministers.

ECOWAS intends to continue to produce harmonised regional standards with the support of ECOSHAM, in particular for products in the textile, mango, cassava and ICT value chain. More concretely, the ECOWAS Department for the Promotion of Industry and the Private Sector has begun to identify the needs for additional standards expressed by its Member States and its specialised technical agencies, particularly for products from the agriculture and agri-food, automotive, energy, construction materials, lead paint, oil and pharmaceuticals sectors.





## COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY

### Launching of the WACOMP website: A new information gateway for programme players

On 15 June 2020, The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) took another step forward with the launch of its official website ([www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)). This new platform will allow users to keep abreast of progress in the implementation of the programme but also encourage more interaction and engagement from WACOMP beneficiaries and stakeholders.

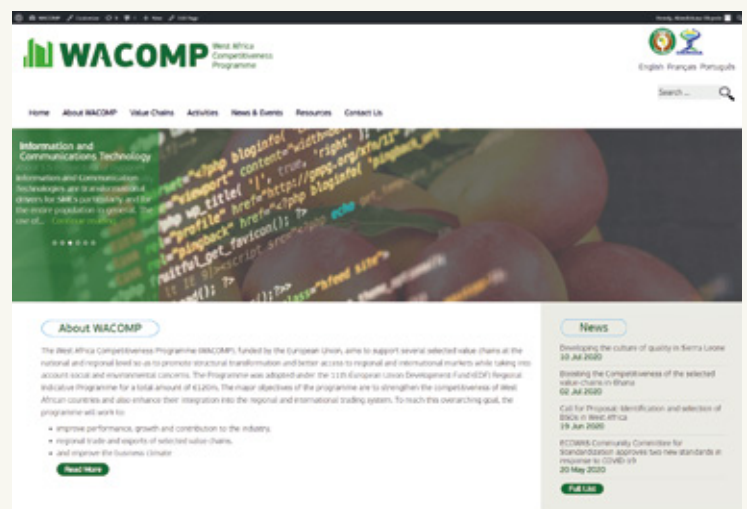
Established to provide a platform for sharing knowledge and information, the website will help sensitize the public on WACOMP activities and achievements, raise awareness among programme beneficiaries, encourage increased involvement of beneficiaries, stakeholders and partners both at national and regional levels; and share resources with our national and regional stakeholders.

The new website has been designed to offer a user-friendly experience with improved navigation and functionality. It aims at sharing relevant and engaging information with various stakeholders operating in the selected value chains of the respective WACOMP projects, such as cassava, mango, mango, textiles/garments and ICT value chains in West Africa. It also covers latest activities conducted by WACOMP national components on national value chains such as pineapple, cosmetics, skin, hide and leather and Arabic gum.

The website will focus on information related to WACOMP's activities and results, value chain of critical importance for the region, and all other relevant topics at the regional and national levels.

A section dedicated to the "News and Event" will keep the website visitors informed on latest carried out and upcoming activities, while a "Resources" section will give access to a number of highly useful tools: publications, newsletters, multimedia, etc.

For more information, visit our website available in English, French and Portuguese [www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)



**The West Africa Competitiveness programme**  
#WACOMP is empowering women entrepreneurs working in cassava, mango and textile & garment value chains by:

- Developing business coaching programmes
- Building their capacities on quality management
- Reinforcing their skills in market analysis

Find information about the project here:  
[www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)

Selected Components implemented by

**#WACOMP – Supporting integration of MSMEs in regional and global value chains by:**

- Building up Business Support Organisations capacities
- Establishing Public Private Partnership network at regional level

Find more on  
[www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)

Selected Components implemented by



## NATIONAL COMPONENTS



### GHANA

## WACOMP Conducts Laboratory Evaluation in Ghana

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for about 85 per cent of Ghana's entrepreneurial fabric and contribute 70 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

Most Ghanaian small businesses are not competitive in global markets due to non-compliance with international standards for which the availability of accredited testing laboratories is essential.

As part of its conformity component, the programme assessed identified cosmetics and food laboratories eligible for accreditation and expansion of the testing scopes.

The WACOMP National Quality Infrastructure Expert visited the various pre-identified laboratories in Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. The sites visited were as follows:

- Cosmetics and Chemistry Laboratory, Standards and Certification Unit at Ghana Standards Authority (GSA), Accra;
- Cosmetics, Food and Physicochemical Laboratory of Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), Accra;
- Food and Biochemistry Laboratory of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi;
- Food Science and Technology Laboratory of University of Development Studies (UDS-Nyankpala) / Food and Nutrition Analytical Laboratory of Savana Agriculture Research Institute (SARI), Tamale.
- Based on the laboratory assessments, bilateral online meetings and follow-ups are ongoing to put in place the corrective measure and validate the testing methods identified for accreditation.



Financed by  
European Union



Regional Components  
Implemented By





## Ghanaian SMEs in the cosmetics sector strengthen their capacity in quality management

Shea butter, coconut oil and essential oils produced in Ghana have a comparative advantage. Despite their high export potential, very often these products do not meet the international standards that would allow them to penetrate foreign markets.

In order to help SMEs to comply with national and international standards, WACOMP and the Ghana Trade Fair Company organized a conference in Tamale on quality regulations and their enforcement. The conference was organized during the 24th Ghana International Trade Fair.

Experts from the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), Ghana Standards Authority (GSA) and WACOMP presented product registration and certification processes and highlighted basic principles of quality management. One of the beneficiaries, the Managing Director of 360 Naturals, said that "I had always considered the certification processes to be particularly laborious. Now that I have a better understanding of them, I will put everything in place to implement these regulations and thus enable my business to grow".

The practical guide on procedural compliance with GSA and FDA requirements, prepared for the conference, is available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/2ZTQMf6>.



Financed by  
European Union



Regional Components  
Implemented By





## GUINEA

### Promoting Guinea's pineapple sector on the regional and international market

The Guinean national component of the WACOMP promotes through its project activities the revival of the pineapple industry in Guinea and organized on the 24th of June, via videoconference, a meeting with the aim to share and validate the markets to be targeted for the export of Guinea's pineapple.

This meeting brought together UNIDO REFILA and ITC experts and public and private stakeholders of Guinea's marketing sector.

The meeting served as a framework for reflection and consultation regarding the validation of the choice of markets to be targeted in the sub-region, for the carrying out of two market studies in favor of the main stakeholders in the pineapple sector in Guinea.

These market studies will make it feasible to collect information and analyze it in order to identify market characteristics and challenges and to promote the positioning of Guinean pineapples in these markets on the one hand, and to propose a promotion and marketing plan in these priority target markets on the other hand.

The exchanges of this meeting resulted in the selection of several markets, such as The Gambia, Mali, the Moroccan market and the European Union market (with a focus on five countries).



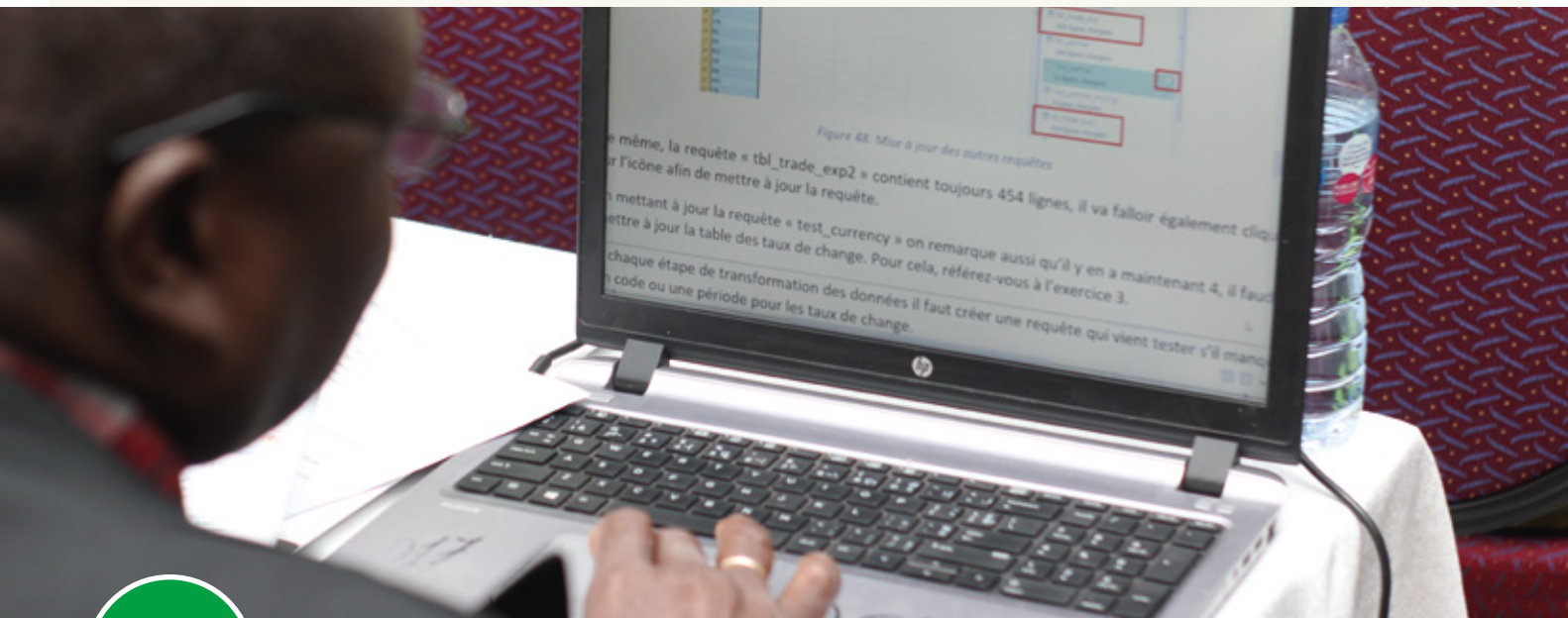
Financed by  
European Union



Regional Components  
Implemented By



International  
Trade  
Centre



## SIERRA LEONE

### Business Support Organisations optimize their market analysis capabilities

Market analysis tools improve market transparency, they enable enterprises and trade support institutions to identify export and import opportunities. To enable Sierra Leone's trade support institutions to better understand trade opportunities in regional and international markets, ITC through the WACOMP programme organised a two-week seminar on the use of its market analysis tools in June. The training compared market access conditions and helped policymakers monitor trade performance at the national level.

During the training, Sierra Leonean trade support institutions learned how to use various market analysis tools to gather data and information on international trade opportunities to share with local small business owners.

Earlier in May, trade support institutions also attended e-learning modules on the role of standards in sustainable supply chains.

### Sierra Leone seeks to establish its first internationally accredited management systems certification body

As part of Sierra Leone's efforts to develop effective and efficient quality infrastructure, the National Bureau of Standards is supported by the WACOMP to establish the first ever internationally accredited management systems certification body (MSCB) as per ISO/IEC 17021 standard.

The MSCB will boost competitiveness of producers at both, the national and international levels. At present, they often cannot respond to customer demand for quality and fail to improve internal processes.

The MSCB will also be a historic turning point in strengthening the national quality infrastructure as for the first time, Sierra Leone will certify its companies under the label "Certified in Sierra Leone, Globally Accepted". According to the Chief Technical Advisor of the UNIDO component, Dr. Shaukat Hussain, the establishment of this certification body would benefit both, the public and private sector, and it would focus on certification of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs). He also highlighted that 60% of the prerequisites had been completed and the MSCB would hopefully be in place by the end of the year.

Recognising the benefits of the WACOMP implementation at national level, the Executive Director of the Bureau of Standards, Prof. Thomas Yormah, welcomed the country's improvements in quality management: "Through the support of our partners from the EU and UNIDO, the quality infrastructure in Sierra Leone is gradually improving. The implementation and certification of a quality management system will give producers credibility and unique status, which will also result in a higher degree of competitiveness in regional and international markets."

Last May, UNIDO completed a series of training courses on the standards defining guidelines for management systems auditing and IRCA-certified auditor courses are also planned.



Financed by  
European Union



Regional Components  
Implemented By



International  
Trade  
Centre

## Partners



Established on May 28 1975 via the treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. Considered one of the pillars of the African Economic Community, ECOWAS was set up to foster the ideal of collective self-sufficiency for its member states. As a trading union, it is also meant to create a single, large trading bloc through economic cooperation. Member countries making up ECOWAS are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo



The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) is a West African organization created on January 10, 1994, whose mission is to achieve the economic integration of the Member States, by strengthening the competitiveness of economic activities in the West African region. Member countries making up ECOWAS are: Bénin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Sénégal and Togo



European Union

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders



The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) is the specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability (ISID). The mandate of UNIDO is to promote and accelerate sustainable industrial development in developing countries and economies in transition.



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.

ECOWAS Commission, 101 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro District, PMB 401, Abuja, NIGERIA

Commission de l'UEMOA, 380 Avenue Professeur Joseph KI-ZERBO 01 BP 543 Ouagadougou, BURKINA FASO

Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Europe House, European Union Crescent, Off Constitution Avenue, Central Business District. P. O. Box 280 Garki, Abuja, NIGERIA

ITC, 54-56, rue de Montbrillant, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland Postal address: ITC, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, SWITZERLAND

UNIDO, Vienna International Centre, Wagramerstrasse 5. P.O. Box 300 A-1400 Vienna, AUSTRIA

**E:** [info-wacomp@ecowas.int](mailto:info-wacomp@ecowas.int)

**W:** [www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)