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Overview of **WACOMP**

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) was adopted under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) of the Regional Indicative Programme for a total €116m. 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).

Celebration of The World Metrology Day (WMD) 2021 in ECOWAS Member States



May 20 is World Metrology Day (WMD), commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the Metre Convention in 1875 by representatives of 17 nations. This treaty provides the basis for a coherent measurement system worldwide. The Convention set the framework for global collaboration in the science of measurement and in its industrial, commercial and societal applications.

The theme for World Metrology Day 2021 is Measurement for Health. This theme was chosen to raise awareness of the important role that measurements play in health, and therefore in the well-being of all the human beings.

Indeed, more widely metrology, the science of measurement, plays a key role in scientific research innovation, industrial manufacturing and international trade, in improving the quality of life and in protecting the global environment.

The World Metrology Day celebration is coordinated at the international level jointly by the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM) and the International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML).

The BIPM is an international organization established by the Metre Convention, through which Member States act together on matters related to measurement science and measurement standards. The BIPM mission is to work with the NMIs of the BIPM's Member States, the RMOs, and strategic partners world-wide, and to use our international and impartial status to promote and advance the global comparability of measurements.

The OIML develops international recommendations, which aim to align and harmonise requirements worldwide in the field of measurement and measuring instruments. The OIML also operates the OIML Certification System (OIML-CS) which facilitates international acceptance and global trade of regulated measuring instruments.

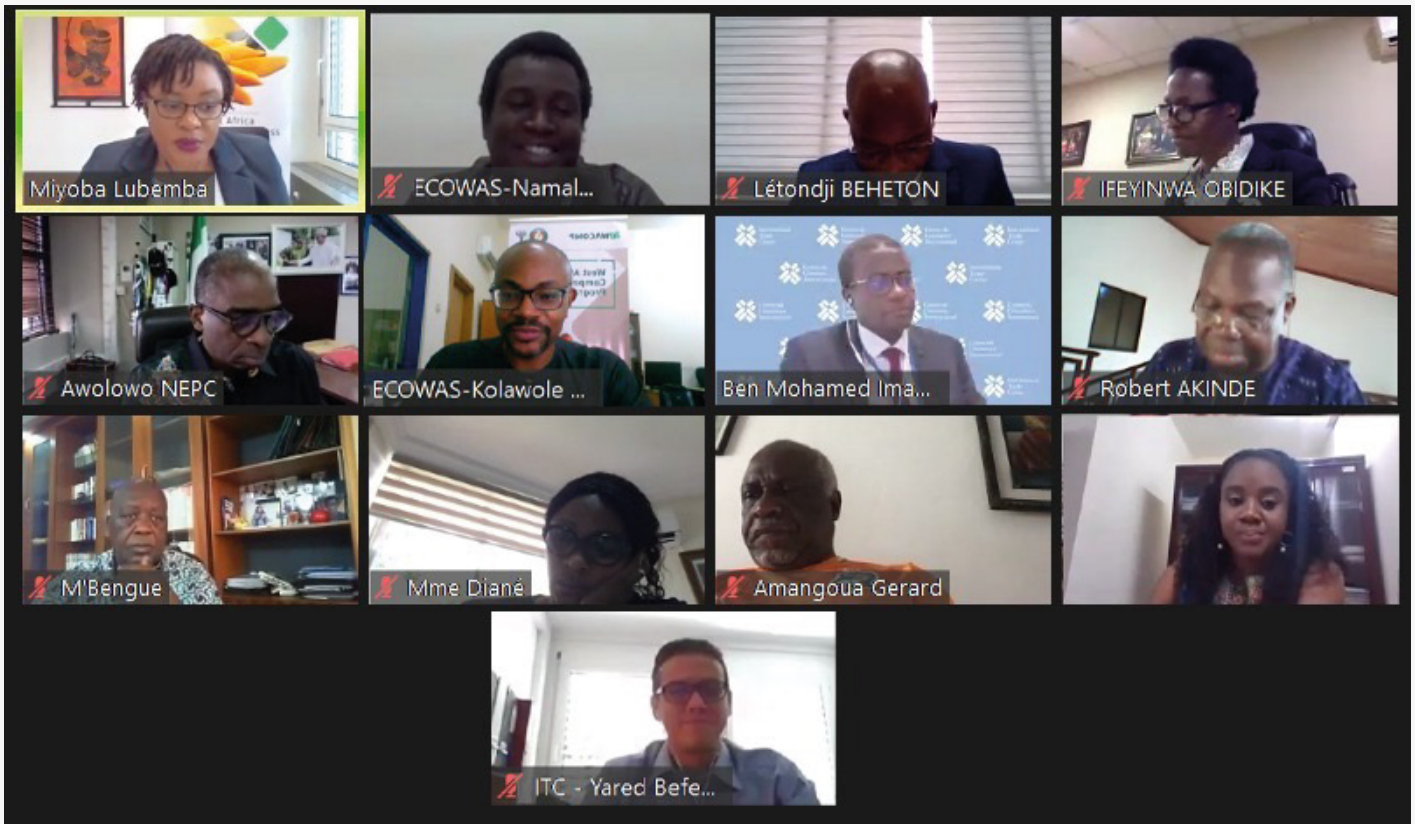
Following the awareness raising activities carried out during the implementation of previous regional quality programmes, national metrology organizations (NMOs) in ECOWAS Member States seized the opportunity offered by WMD 2021 to raise awareness among the population and the business communities on the importance of measurement in health sector and their well-being through promotional events.

The promotional events carried out by these countries were focused on the following topics:

1. Free verification of measuring instruments in hospitals (weighing instruments, thermometers, tensiometers, etc.);
2. Workshops for the launch of future NMIs or metrology laboratory (calibration laboratories) at national level;
3. Awareness-raising sessions on radio and television stations;
4. Publication of the declaration of the Minister in charge of quality (newspapers, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp's Groups);
5. Physical or virtual awareness workshops on the importance of metrology;
6. Interviews on the importance of metrology.

In West Africa, the WMD 2021 was celebrated by the following ECOWAS member States: Benin (Agence Nationale de Normalisation, de Métrologie et du Contrôle Qualité (ANM)), Burkina Faso (Agence burkinabè de Normalisation, de la Métrologie et de la Qualité (ABNORM)), Cabo Verde (Institut pour la gestion de la qualité et la propriété intellectuelle (IGQPI)), Côte d'Ivoire (Laboratoire National d'Essai de qualité, de Métrologie et d'Analyses (LANEMA)), The Gambia (The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) and Weights and Measures Bureau), Ghana (Ghana Standards Authority (GSA)), Guinea (Institut Guinéen de Normalisation et de Métrologie (IGNM)), Niger (Agence Nigérienne de Normalisation, de Métrologie et de Certification (ANMC)), Nigeria (Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON)), Mali (Agence Malienne de Métrologie (AMAM)), Sénégal (La Division de la Métrologie), Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB)), Togo (Agence Togolaise de Métrologie (ATOMET)).

West African Trade promotion organisations to establish regional TPO network



Following several consultative meetings held progressively, the heads of member organisations of the trade promotion network gathered for a two-session meeting held via videoconference on 30 March and 22 April 2021.

The chief executive officers of national trade promotion organisations (TPOs) from ECOWAS member countries have agreed to establish and operationalise the ECOWAS TPO Network. With the establishment of the regional TPO network, TPOs gain a solid platform for collaborative engagement and increased support towards regional value chains, business linkages and a boost in both 'intra' and 'extra' regional trade. The meeting achieved consensus on technical documents including the memorandum of understanding, the terms of reference as well as the statutes and internal regulation of the network.

During the second session, the president and vice president were unanimously elected: Mr Olusegun Awolowo, Executive Director of the Nigerian Export Promotion Council as president and the Director General of the Association for the Promotion of Exports of Côte d'Ivoire (APEX-CI), Mr. Guy M'Bengue as vice-president. Members also initiated the consultative process to establish technical committees focusing on finance, trade policy and strategy, trade promotion events, as well as communication and marketing.

To begin its work, the network will define its workplan and initiate activities with support from the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the ECOWAS Commission through the West African Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP).

The establishment of the ECOWAS TPO network was also recognised at the last ECOWAS Council of Ministers meeting held virtually on 3 June 2021. The support received by the WACOMP programme to establish the regional TPO network was also acknowledged as well as the central role of the network in strengthening the region's performance at the continental level within the framework of AfCFTA.



PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Sixth technical steering committee of the WACOMP regional component



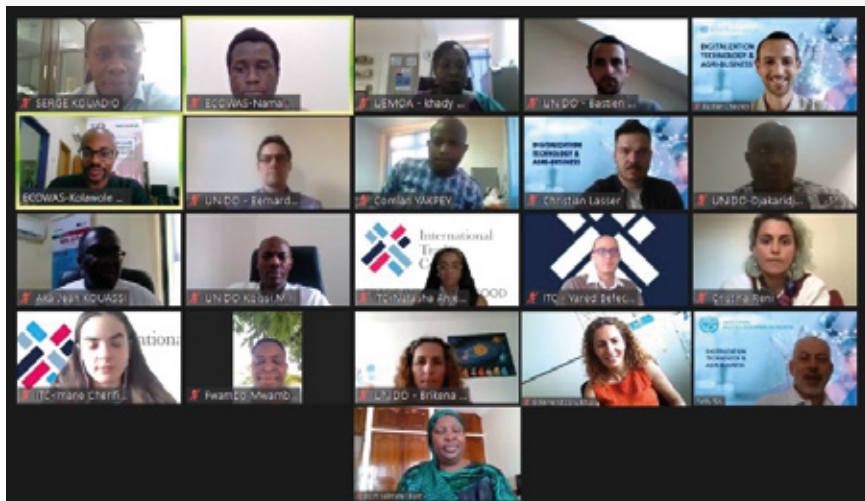
The sixth meeting of the technical steering committee of WACOMP regional component was held on 24 June 2021 to review the progress of the activities under its scope, the implementation of earlier recommendations and the identification of corrective measures for any problems raised or encountered.

The meeting first addressed progress in the area of quality, such as the development and harmonisation of standards and technical regulations, support to laboratories and the implementation of the ECOWAS certification mark (ECOQMARK). Also discussed were market information systems, the trade obstacle alert mechanism, regional investment profiles for key regional value chains and private sector support activities.

The steering committee particularly welcomed the decisions made by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers last June on the procedures for the harmonisation of ECOWAS technical regulations, the rules of the regional certification mark, the establishment of the regional network of trade promotion organisations and on the modification of the status of the ECOWAS Business Council.

Participants also recommended accelerating the operationalisation of ECOQMARK and taking steps to ensure timely communication on programme activities. The meeting was attended by representatives of the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions, implementing partners (ITC and UNIDO) as well as the EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS. All stakeholders agreed to take necessary actions to reach the targeted objectives by involving National Components in regional activities.

Strengthened collaboration between programme partners to ensure objectives are met



During the last quarter, the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions met with the implementing agencies to assess the alignment of the WACOMP's mandate with the specific needs of the region and to ensure that results are adequately achieved at both national and regional levels.

Areas covered included support to regional business support associations, the establishment of the regional trade obstacle alert mechanism, the updating of the logical frameworks of the regional component, the organisation of the "West Africa Connect" event and the establishment of the regional network of trade promotion organisations.

These meetings should enable the regional component to achieve WACOMP's objectives and to identify ways to optimise collaboration with the programme national components. Through these meetings, the regional component was able to identify collaboration opportunities with and between National Components and committed to take actions to ensure synergies in the implementation of the Programme

The ECOWAS Commission meets with WACOMP national components to assess progress

With the support of UNIDO, the ECOWAS Commission organised a series of meetings with stakeholders of the national components of WACOMP to ensure an optimised monitoring of activities and a better understanding of the national contexts, as well as to identify ways to establish synergies between the national components.

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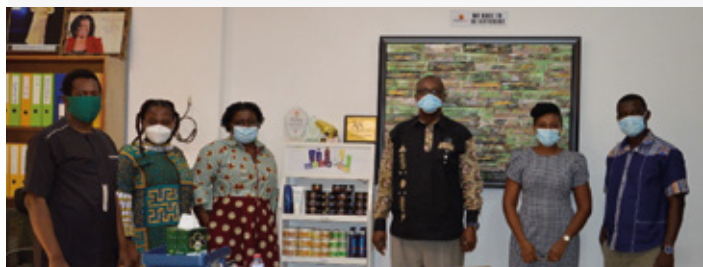
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Meeting with WACOMP Ghana stakeholders

Last April, the programme coordination team met with the representatives of the Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), UNIDO, the Ghana Commodity Exchange as well as with Beauty Secrets, a programme beneficiary operating in the cosmetics industry.





In terms of synergies, WACOMP Ghana has been working with the University of Development Studies in Tamale, Northern Ghana, to build the capacity of their laboratories to provide accreditation services to economic operators in the region. This will reduce transport costs and save valuable time as they will no longer have to send their samples to laboratories in the capital to receive quality services.

With regard to communication and visibility, the WACOMP Ghana focal points recalled the use of the component's website and social media platforms for disseminating information and connecting with stakeholders. They also highlighted the creation of a WhatsApp group as a means of exchange between stakeholders and to optimise joint work.

During their visit to the Ghana Commodity Exchange, the WACOMP focal points presented the programme and the various initiatives underway at the institution. It was also an opportunity for them to better understand their mechanism for collecting information on market prices on the ground, connecting to the market, facilitating and securing transactions between commodity buyers and sellers on the various markets in the country.

Finally, the WACOMP delegation met with the Executive Director of Beauty Secrets in Accra and visited the company's factory. Beauty Secrets produces a wide range of shea butter-based cosmetic products for women and men. At its plant, the company has set up a small laboratory to carry out preliminary tests, while other quality assurance tests are carried out by the Ghana Standards Authority.

Through these monitoring meetings, the WACOMP delegation was able to assess the progress made by the national component in Ghana and take note of the recommendations that focused on the need to take measures to ensure ownership and sustainability of the programme's results, and to strengthen collaboration and synergies between the national and regional components in areas such as communication.

Meeting with WACOMP Côte d'Ivoire stakeholders

In April, the WACOMP coordination team met with a range of Ivorian stakeholders from the public and private sectors to review the implementation of the national component. The meeting was held at the Ministry of African Integration in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

First, the exchanges focused on a presentation of the Ivorian component of WACOMP, which aims to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthen intermediary organisations and improve the business climate.

In this context, the national chapter of WACOMP plans to organise the Côte d'Ivoire-European Union forum by the end of 2021. This event will facilitate market access for the country's economic operators. In this regard, participants were informed of the signing of a contract with the company "Orange" for the digitalisation of the selected companies. However, there are still some constraints to overcome, such as the access of SMEs to the Orange counter or the adaptation of small businesses to new technologies and the impact of COVID-19. Finally, WACOMP Côte d'Ivoire plans to hire the services of a specialised communication agency to support the development of information and visibility materials.



The meeting ended with a series of recommendations on strengthening synergies between the regional and national components such as supporting access to funding for MPMPEs and the promotion of the Côte d'Ivoire-EU Business Forum at regional level. The two parties agreed to take actions to identify better ways to address the needs of the private sector at national level.

Meeting with WACOMP Mauritania stakeholders



Last May, the WACOMP coordination team held a meeting with the Mauritanian component of the programme to discuss the modification of the terms of reference for the recruitment of an expert to support the implementation of conformity assessment activities at national level.

The meeting emphasised the importance of quality in the selected value chains. Launched two years ago, the national component focuses on hides and skins, gum arabic and poultry.

Discussions also recalled the importance of food security as the main support expected under the project. In this respect, cooperation with the Belgian Federal Agency for Food Safety is foreseen in order to create a general, autonomous and independent framework to establish synergies for an effective and efficient management of these aspects. Other actions will strengthen the technical capacities of stakeholders, including field laboratories.

At the end of the consultation, recommendations emerged concerning the strengthening of synergies between the different components, particularly in the field of quality and information sharing. The regional component committed to provide support to address the main obstacle to the implementation of the WACOMP at National level.

Meeting with WACOMP Liberia stakeholders

In May, the WACOMP coordination team met with stakeholders of the Liberia component to review the status of activities under its mandate.

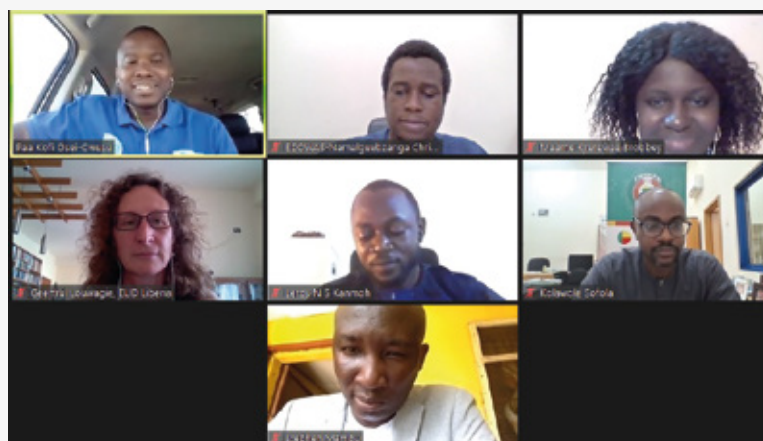
Activities reviewed include support to intermediary training bodies, support to business associations, the establishment of the regional network of trade promotion organisations, the trade obstacle alert mechanism as well as the programme communication and visibility.

The discussions also focused on the selection of the CERATH Development Organization for the implementation of the project to improve the competitiveness of the cassava sector and facilitate regional integration. The contract was finalized for a total amount of € 5 650 000.

More specifically, the project will strengthen operators' access to inputs and markets, optimise production, processing and marketing systems for the sector's products and strengthen existing businesses within the sector.

Activities will involve the Liberian standardization body, the Center Agriculture Research Institute (CARI), the Cassava Working Group and the Cooperative Development Agency of Liberia (CDA).

Communication efforts between the different components of the programme and synergies along the pipeline are also priorities to be considered. Enthused by the start of WACOMP activities in Liberia, the regional component pledged to provide all necessary assistance to ensure that the objectives of WACOMP are met and scheduled a follow-up mission.



Meeting with WACOMP Guinea Bissau stakeholders

During a monitoring mission in Guinea Bissau conducted last May, the ECOWAS Commission met with the WACOMP Guinea Bissau team to assess the progress of activities in the country. As part of its mandate, WACOMP Guinea Bissau aims to facilitate the country's integration at the regional level while improving the competitiveness of the mango sector and the business climate.

The meeting focused on a series of activities carried out after the start-up phase. Technical assistance in the field started with capacity building of operators in the field of quality. Thus, 25 trainings were provided on various aspects of quality. Synergies were established with other national components on conformity assessment. Finally, training on food safety in the mango sector was also organised.

The consultation concluded with a series of recommendations on access to ECOWAS standards for the mango sector, capacity building, market access and knowledge sharing. Faced with the challenges identified during this consultation meeting, the regional component undertook to take initiatives to support the national component in achieving the project targets.



Participation in ECOWAS sensitization seminars on the AfCFTA

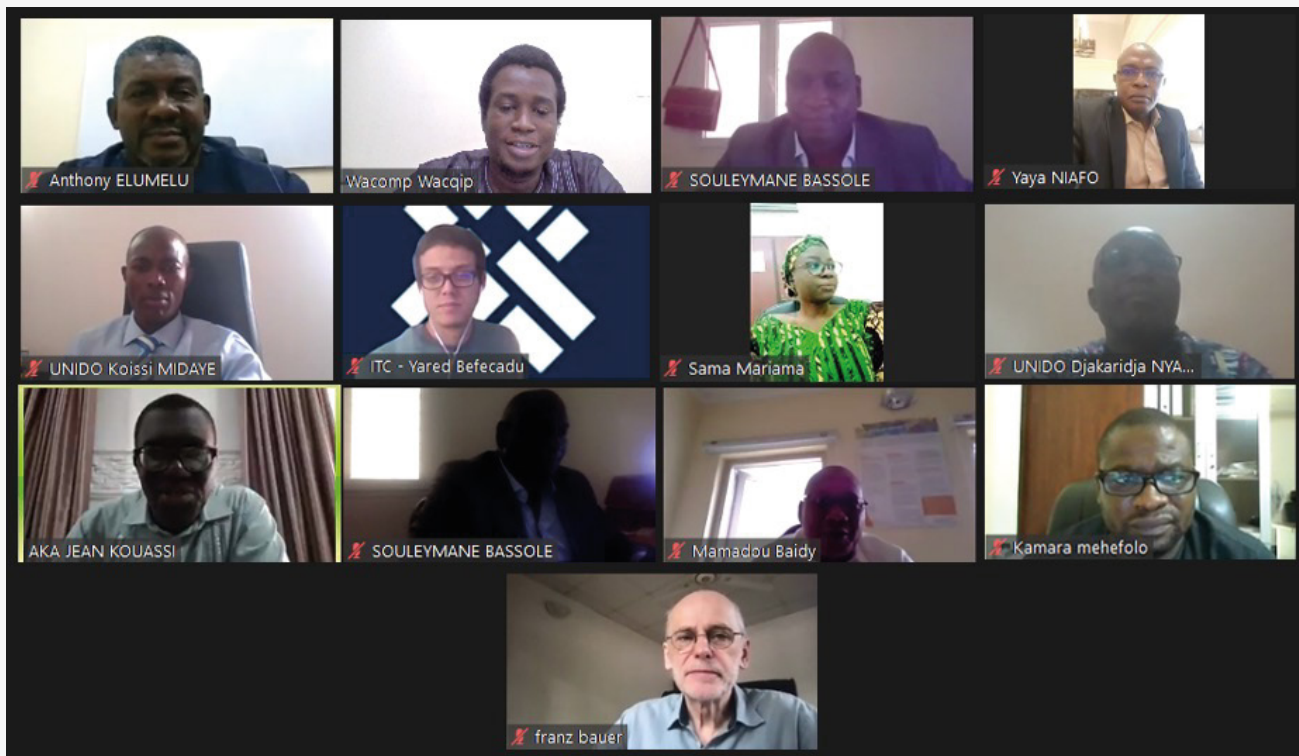
As part of efforts to raise awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) among small and medium-sized enterprises, traders and export agencies in the region, the ECOWAS Commission organised two seminars in April in Accra, Ghana and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

The workshops aimed to inform participants so that they can fully benefit from the economic opportunities arising from the AfCFTA. During the two events, participants improved their understanding of the agreement and the trade liberalisation instruments put in place by ECOWAS. The sessions also covered financing opportunities, e-commerce for cross-border trade, operational tools of the AfCFTA and exporting within the AfCFTA..

The ECOWAS Commission also took the opportunity of these two workshops to present the West African Competitiveness Improvement Programme and its objectives.

At the end of the workshops, participants recommended, among other things, to continue raising awareness about AfCFTA by involving private and public sector actors dealing with trade issues. In addition to this, ECOWAS invited participants to appropriate the trade facilitation tools put in place at the regional level in order to strengthen regional integration and derive the greatest benefit from the AfCFTA.





Promote synergies on hide, skin and leather value chain in the framework of WACOMP

The leather industry is one of the sectors that can contribute to sustainable growth in West Africa. Indeed, it is a global manufacturing sector that produces raw, processed and finished materials used in the manufacture of leather goods. Leather is made from animal skins, which are usually waste products from the food industry. When the animals used for the hides are treated and cared for properly, they are a valuable and renewable resource. The sector produces a vast amount of materials and items that are used by millions of people around the world every day. West Africa mainly produces leather from cattle, sheep and goat hides, which generates a large amount of income for the value of the hides and leather.

It is therefore necessary to find ways to better exploit the potential of this sector by creating added value through production, processing, manufacturing and exports. Recognising the importance of the leather industry for the sustainable transformation of the region's economies and the creation of income generating opportunities through connections to global value chains, access to regional and international markets, the ECOWAS Commission organised a meeting with stakeholders of the sector and the programme to share experiences and promote synergies between the national components that have chosen to work on the development of the sector.

During the meeting, each country component highlighted the support provided to the sector, namely entrepreneurship training, collection and processing of hides and skins, processing, financial education, as well as construction or rehabilitation of tanneries in Niger and Mauritania or access to finance.

The discussions focused on quality and environmental issues, improving the skills of the actors involved, optimising the business climate, promoting investment in the sector at regional level and collaboration between the national and regional components of WACOMP.

This session enabled the national components involved to perceive the interest of collaborating on several aspects, particularly in terms of leather production, information sharing on market opportunities and technical support to stakeholders. The regional component reassured the participants of its availability to support them and promote synergies in the hide, skin and leather value chain.



VALUE CHAINS AND REGIONAL INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS

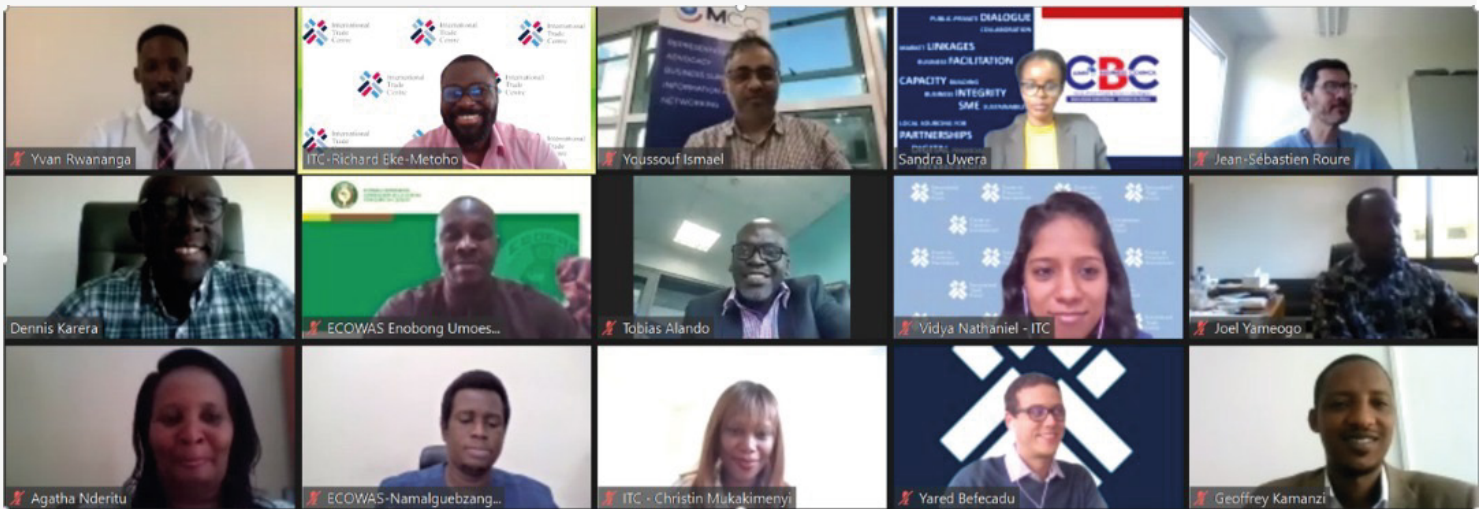
West African Employers approve new strategic plan



The Federation of West African Employers' Associations (FWAEA) secretariat, leaders and focal points of national employers' organizations have reviewed and approved the FWAEA strategy for 2021-2023. The strategy provides employers with an approach to focus on regional economic challenges in order to increase its legitimacy and improve the support it provides to its members.

The strategic plan outlined responsibilities and objectives to undergo evaluation. Members were committed to ensuring the association's sustainability and implementing the strategy's schedules. Earlier in the year on 31 March 2021, 22 representatives attended a consultative meeting to preserve the financial stability and sustainability of FWAEA activities and objectives. In accordance with the performance improvement roadmap (PIRM), representatives provided the membership with a detailed action plan which included an outline of expected actions and annual activities.

ECOWAS stakeholders engage with African business councils ahead of establishing the ECOWAS Business Council



On 31 May 2021, ECOWAS country policymakers and West African regional business associations (RBAs) joined a webinar session along with established African regional business councils (RBCs). The session was organised as part of the activities to establish and operationalize the ECOWAS Business council.

The webinar brought together over 60 participants and gave ECOWAS stakeholders insight on the gains of an established RBC to effectively support and strengthen the private sector.

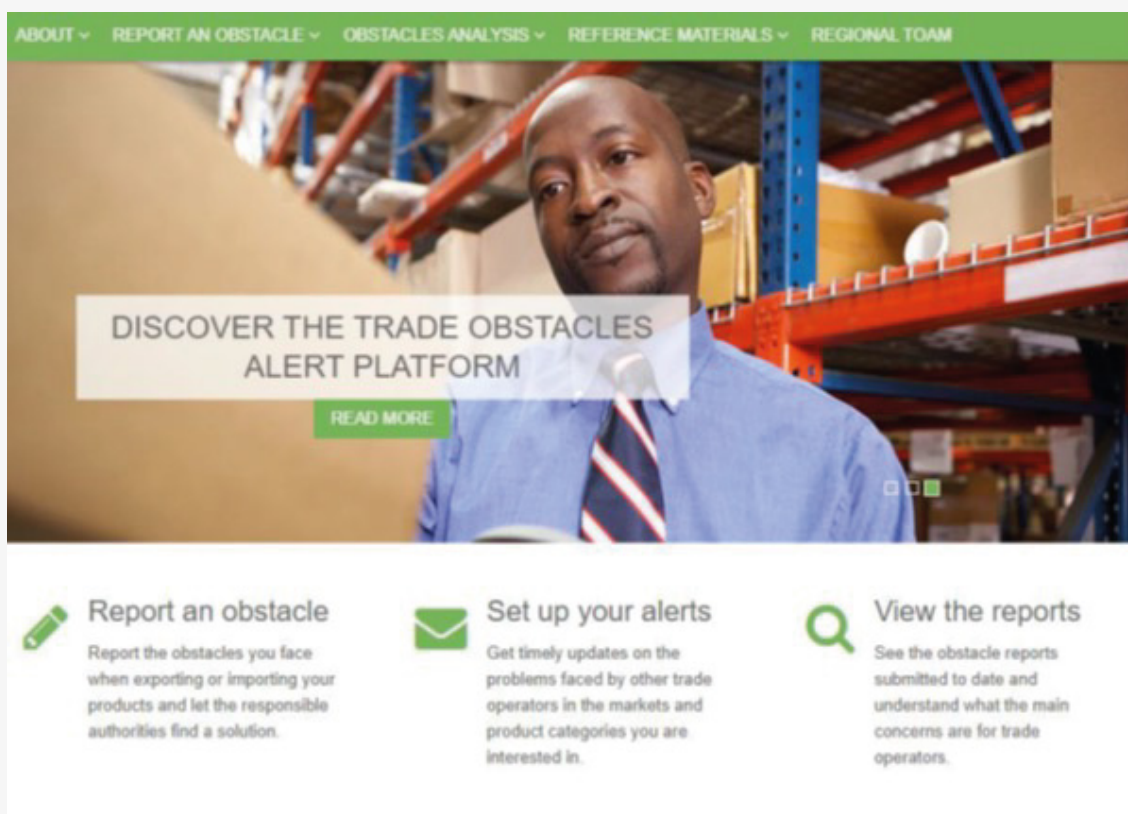
Participants from ECOWAS included representatives from the ministries of trade and finance as well as various RBAs. Business councils attending the session included the COMESA Business Council (CBC), the East African Business Council (EABC) and the African Business Council.

Webinar discussions were based on case studies on the CBC and the EABC. Representatives also discussed the mandates of RBCs representing and ensuring the inclusion of private sector interests in the regional policy making agenda such as the structure, key features, functions as well as challenges encountered. ECOWAS stakeholders received valuable recommendations from their counterparts, which included the basic requirements to successfully establish a regional business council.

West African Ministers of Trade and Industry met on 3 June 2021 to assess the region's advancements on pivotal regional industrial standards as well as developments in trade across the region and continent. During her opening remarks, the Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria and Chair of the session, Ms. Mariam Katagum underscored the progress made to establish a common market in the region and thanked national experts, the ECOWAS Commission as well as development partners for financial and technical support in the development of documents tabled for review.

As part of the meeting's agenda, ministers adopted decisions recommended by trade experts which included the amendments of the statutes of the ECOWAS Business Council as well as to establish the ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organization's Network. The meeting was attended by Ministers of Trade and Industry from the ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania, ECOWAS and UEMOA Commission experts also joined the session.

National Focal Points review the Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism



On 21 April 2020, national focal points from across the ECOWAS region attended a workshop to share experiences and discuss progress made with Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism (TOAM). The 12 focal points attending the workshop used it as a platform to highlight specific aspects for continued use and enhancement of the tool developed by ITC.

Through these national focal points, ITC held several online training sessions for chambers of commerce, private and public sector representatives on the TOAM tool. Participants took part in live data entry and reporting simulations; the trainings also included information on Non-Tariff measures (NTMs).

In Cape Verde, the national focal point also emphasised the need for government to incorporate the tool in existing systems. The TOAM platform has over 770 website users in the region and 270 trade obstacles documented, 137 in the process of being resolved and 133 resolved obstacles.

The development of an ECOWAS TOAM platform is currently ongoing as well as the implementation of new features set to include reporting obstacles to trade services and giving users access to the system via mobile application.



REGIONAL QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM & BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Adoption of the ECOWAS Certification Mark “ECOQMARK”



Product certification is one of the most critical aspects in the West African Regional Quality Infrastructure Scheme. The ECOWAS product certification mark, “ECOQMARK” is the regional mark created by ECOWAS to ensure compliance with its community standards. However, its implementation requires prior adoption of its general rules by 15 ECOWAS member states. To this end, following the adoption of the draft regulation by the experts and sectoral Ministers of Trade and Industry on 27 May and 3 June 2021, the Eighty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers of ECOWAS, held on 16-17 June 2021 in Accra, Ghana, adopted the General Rules of “ECOQMARK”. This is a major step forward towards its implementation in West Africa and to ensure better quality of products and increased consumer protection in the region. Further to this, ECOWAS procedures for harmonization of technical regulations and five regional standards (ECOSTANDs) on energy performance of electrical appliances, water and sanitation have been adopted.

Over two decades, UNIDO supported development and operationalization of a Regional Quality Infrastructure Scheme in West Africa through establishment of the ECOWAS Community Council for Quality (CCQ) and its related committees (ECOCONF, ECOSHAM, ECOMET, ECORAS and ECOREG) that among other functions support the development, adoption and application of regional standards. To promote ECOQMARK, UNIDO’s approach through the past West Africa Quality System Programme and the current West Africa Competitiveness and Quality Infrastructure Project, both funded by the European Union, is targeted towards the development of sector-specific certification schemes for the products of regional value chains.

The ECOQMARK will be implemented by national certification bodies, while nine West African countries have already established their own national certification bodies, some of them having benefitted from UNIDO’s past Quality Programmes. UNIDO will further provide technical assistance in West Africa to support the seven remaining countries with the setting-up of certification bodies to support the adoption of ECOQMARK by enterprises in the West African region and to support pilot companies pertinent to the regional value chains to make use of ECOQMARK from the established certification bodies.

Visit the website of the West Africa Quality System Programme [here](#).

West Africa Connect links West African textile/garments and ICT SMEs with regional and international buyers



The first West Africa Connect event, an initiative launched by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions under the WACOMP, is set to take place on 16-17 November 2021 in a virtual format, given the uncertainties related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This event is a unique opportunity to bring together textile/garments suppliers as well as ICT service providers from West African countries and carefully identified regional and international buyers.

Organized with the support of ITC and UNIDO, this event is expected to attract over 200 West African suppliers and 50 regional and international buyers to meet through an innovative online match-making platform. Individual B2B meetings will be organized between selected textile, garments, fashion as well as IT services & solutions providers (among others) and buyers, to secure commercial transactions and establish new and durable business partnerships between value chain actors. All participants will take part in a capacity-building programme on trade fair preparation and the technicalities of the online platform to prepare SMEs for event participation.

The event will not be limited to buyers/sellers linkages, it will also give visibility to the production initiatives in the textile value chain triggered by WACOMP in response to the COVID-19 outbreak e.g. production of face masks. The event will also promote investments in the cotton, textile, garment and IT services value chain. Several Masterclass events will be organized e.g. on the importance of digital technologies to develop a dynamic and sustainable textile & garments sector with international guest speakers.

The WACOMP programme launched two call for applications for West African small businesses. Small businesses in the ICT, textile and garment sectors were encouraged to apply and take part in the regional B2B event. With over 670 applications in the textiles and garment sector, and an additional 340 applications in the ICT sector, small businesses are eager to benefit from the tailored trainings on export promotion, business plan development and an evaluation of their business' export potential. Selected businesses will need to be headquartered and registered in an ECOWAS country or Mauritania and be export ready. Additional information on the call for application that was conducted is available here (T&G) <https://wacomp.projects.ecowas.int/wacomp-textile-and-garments-smes-call-for-applications/> and here (ICT) <https://wacomp.projects.ecowas.int/wacomp-ict-smes-and-tech-startups-call-for-applications/>. Women and youth-led businesses were strongly encouraged to apply.

More info:

- Website: www.westafricaconnect.com
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/West-Africa-Connect-102308475292371
- Instagram: [instagram.com/matchmeettrade](https://www.instagram.com/matchmeettrade)
- Twitter: twitter.com/matchmeettrade
- LinkedIn: West Africa Connect group



Coordinating actions for an improved communication and visibility of the WACOMP



Being a regional programme, WACOMP emphasizes on profiling itself online, increasing visibility among the public and improving internal communication among the relevant stakeholders.

While recovering from the COVID 19 pandemic, which brought a halt to physical activities, WACOMP also extended the outreach of the programme by participating in physical events, the series of events, tagged as ECOWAS - UNDP Capacity Building Programme - Maximising Opportunities in the AfCFTA for Women was a capacity-building workshop aimed at improving inter-regional trade within Africa gave WACOMP the opportunity to reach out to a niche audience that also needed to become familiar with the programme objectives. After these series of events, WACOMP was about to reach out to over 120 participants which were predominantly SMEs, traders, and business owners.

Gearing up for the West African Business Connect event that is scheduled to hold later this year under the WACOMP, communication activities have already begun. This includes the design of a branding guideline that will properly put into perspective how the communication materials will look like, included in the activities is the drafting of a communication plan for the event.

After the final approval of the WACOMP communication strategy, the programme effected the plan to hire a communication consultant to effectively implement the approved strategies, it is this reason that a call for submission of tenders was published and sent across to the pool of consultants that expressed their interest. These calls will further give room for selected consultants to showcase their understanding of the programme and how to communicate it to the wider audience. After their submission, a careful review of each company will be carried out and the most qualified company will be selected.

WACOMP recognizes the importance of speaking in unison with implementing partners. In the bid to continue in this light, the regional implementing partners concluded at the communication working group meeting to compile media messages that will be disseminated across the programme's communication channels, after the approval of the media messages, media cards will be designed and distributed in a strategic matter to the wider audience.



NATIONAL COMPONENTS




Cabo Verde



CABO VERDE

UNDP and UNIDO jointly kick off a chapter of the WACOMP in Cabo Verde

On 31 March 2021, WACOMP officially kicked off a new country project in Cabo Verde, of which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the main implementing agency. Under WACOMP, Cape Verde benefitted from a € 5 million envelope to implement a national project. UNIDO has been entrusted with a specific component of the project, for a total budget of \$ 191,756. The project is entitled the “West Africa Competitiveness Support Project (adapted for COVID-19 crisis response and recovery) in Cabo Verde”.

The general objective of the project is to safeguard the overall socio-economic sector of Cabo Verde during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

The specific objective is to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for the most vulnerable economic actors (informal workers) and to support the recovery of the tourism sector. To this end, the Government of Cabo Verde has identified a series of measures that will provide the tourism sector with the means not only recover from the impact of COVID-19 but also to make it more competitive in the medium-to-long term.

Through a partnership with UNIDO, a simplified certification system for quality assurance will be implemented to remove trade and market entry barriers for MSMEs in the tourism sector, with the support of the Instituto de Gestão da Qualidade e da Propriedade Intelectual (IGQPI). The training and quality assurance framework will help small entrepreneurs to improve their own services, better accommodating tourists, and will lead to the improvement of the competitiveness of the Cape-Verdean tourism sector.

The project is being implemented in collaboration and close coordination with the Cabo-Verdean Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy, as well as with the Quality Management and Intellectual Property Institute, IGQPI. IGQPI is already leading the national effort on product/system certification, whose capacity will be strengthened throughout the intervention.

Being a national component under the WACOMP umbrella, the “West Africa Competitiveness Support Project in Cabo Verde” aims to foster synergies with the regional WACOMP component and the other national components.



GHANA

75 mango and pineapple producers are being trained in finance and record-keeping.

WACOMP Ghana has organised a 6-day training in finance and record-keeping for 75 mango and pineapple producers in the Eastern region. The objective was to promote sound record-keeping systems and realistic forecasting from 16-22 June 2021.

The training focused on record keeping and farm accounting, as a sound record keeping system is an essential prerequisite to help them make informed financial decisions and be able to sustainably promote their businesses.

The training was intended for the leaders of the three mango associations in the Dodowa, Yilo and Manya Krobo Mango enclave, namely the Dangbe Mango Farmers Association (DAMFA), the Yilo Krobo Mango Farmers Association (YKMFA) and the Klo Mango Farmers and Processors Association (Klo MFPA), as well as the 12 pineapple associations in the districts of Akuapim South, Nsawam Adoagyir and Upper Akyim.

The training covered the following topics

- Importance of farm record-keeping/Accounting record-keeping;
- Farm and accounting record-keeping process;
- Applicable farm records types;
- Benefits of keeping accurate farm records;
- Farm records and bookkeeping templates;
- Working capital management;
- How to calculate business profits/losses;
- How to prepare for an audit;
- How to develop crop calendars and crop budget;
- Agribusiness establishment (Requirements and procedures).

WACOMP Ghana and Tropical Starch joining forces to empower cassava processors and out-growers



Through the project, the company will purchase and distribute high-yielding planting materials to farmers, while ensuring best agronomic practices and climate-smart agriculture, facilitate extension services, provide agricultural inputs and equipment, such as a stainless steel gari processing machine and a semi-processing machine (cassava grater), and support product certification. The result will be a more efficient cluster in the central region.

As part of this support, the project will also help the company to improve its production capacity by purchasing more efficient processing technologies as well as to strengthen management skills in the areas of marketing, product

packaging, trade negotiation and product diversification.

WACOMP Ghana is supporting Tropical Starch Company Limited in establishing links with over 230 out-grower farmers of Abura Asebu Kwamankese and Nyame Bekyere, with the objective to produce and supply quality improved cassava products to the factory.

Tropical Starch is a food processing company located in the Abura Asebu-Kwamankese District in the Central Region of Ghana, specialising in the manufacture of high quality cassava flour and potato gari. In operation since 2005, the company currently has a processing capacity of two tonnes of high quality cassava flour and 200 kg of Apomudzen gari per day. WACOMP has helped the cassava cluster to strengthen the links between the producers and the processing unit by improving product quality and building the capacity of management and staff to increase production.

"This support from WACOMP-Ghana not only creates jobs for the people, but also encourages buyers to source from the cluster as the quality of our products is improved, with the obvious effect of alleviating the poverty of the people in the region," says Alhaji Musa Ali, Managing Director of Tropical Starch Company Limited.

"Since we started, more and more farmers want to adhere. Today 300 farmers are benefiting from the collaboration with the processing unit and we are working closely with the district director of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MofA). Many farmers have already received improved cassava varieties," he said.



GUINEA

Towards the establishment of a national policy on quality for Guinea

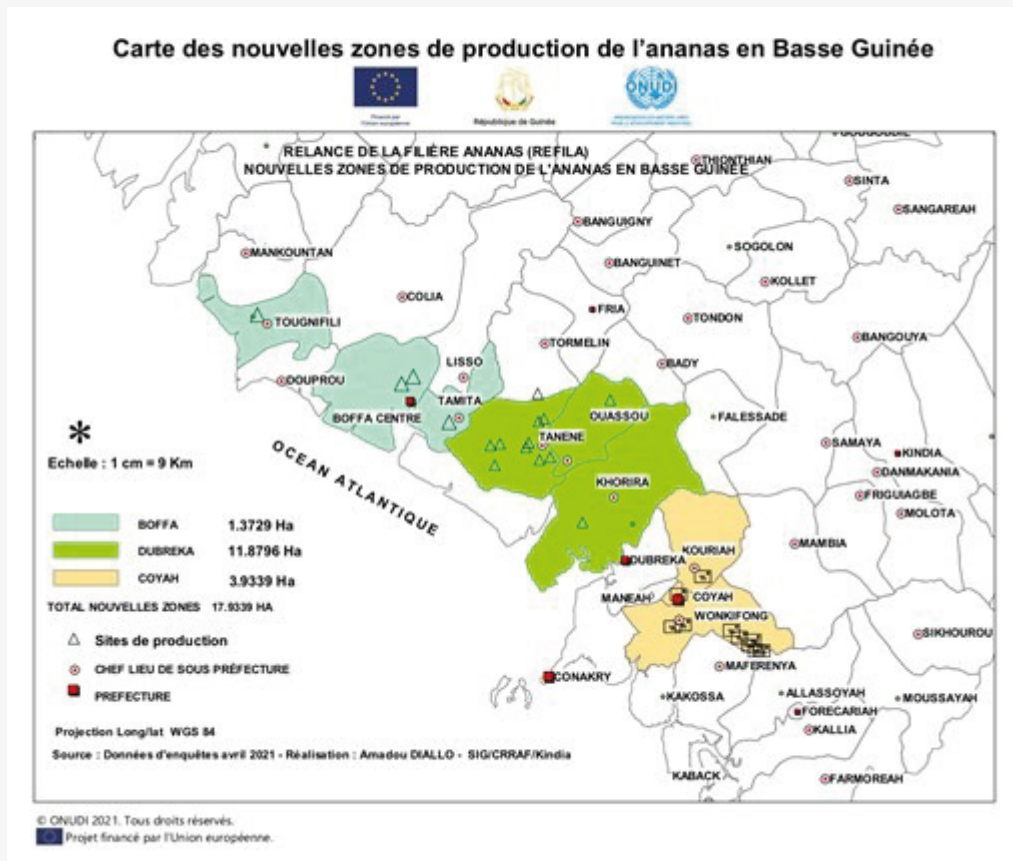
Last June, the REFILA project organised a workshop on the national quality policy in Guinea, in the presence of senior representatives of UNIDO, the Ministry of Industry and the National Federation for the Defence of Consumers of Guinea.

The workshop aimed to popularise the national quality policy document among all stakeholders in the sector, notably the sectoral ministries concerned, private companies, associations and professional chambers.

At the end of the technical work and the presentation of the quality policy document, an exchange session was held, giving rise to a framework for consultation between the participants and the project experts, with fruitful exchanges and sharing of experiences.

Technical work ensured the sharing of knowledge on the policy document, the commitment of stakeholders for its effective implementation, the prioritisation of three strategic axes accompanied by a short, medium and long term action plan as well as the identification of financing avenues for the effective implementation of the action plan. For more information, see the press coverage: <https://bit.ly/3zLhkPp>.

Mapping pineapple production areas in Lower Guinea



The sub-prefectures of Friguiajbé (Kindia) and Mafèrenyah (Forécariah) are the main pineapple growing areas in Guinea. The involvement of several agricultural projects to support the revival of the pineapple sector in Guinea, notably the REFILA project, has recently led to a significant increase of new pineapple production areas.

Faced with the lack of statistical data on the various growing areas, REFILA project experts conducted a study to map new pineapple plantations in the prefectures of Coyah, Dubreka and Boffa in April.

The findings of the study now provide Guinea with an update on the pineapple situation in each of the three prefectures targeted by the project.

By geo-referencing the areas, the project team has identified the surface area per farmer, the varieties grown, the types of irrigation used, the cultivation practices, the existence of watercourses and the production sites per prefecture.



Funded by the European Union

Online training sessions on:

- * GAP/GMP/GHP in the mango value chain
- * Techniques of preservation of mango and its derivatives
- * GLOBALG.A.P
- * Risks Management in Food Safety Assurance

Starting Friday 28 May 2021

Via Zoom

Trainings organized by: **WACOMP** Guinea-Bissau

Projets implemented by: **UNIDO**



GUINEA-BISSAU

WACOMP trains West African mango sector operators in food safety

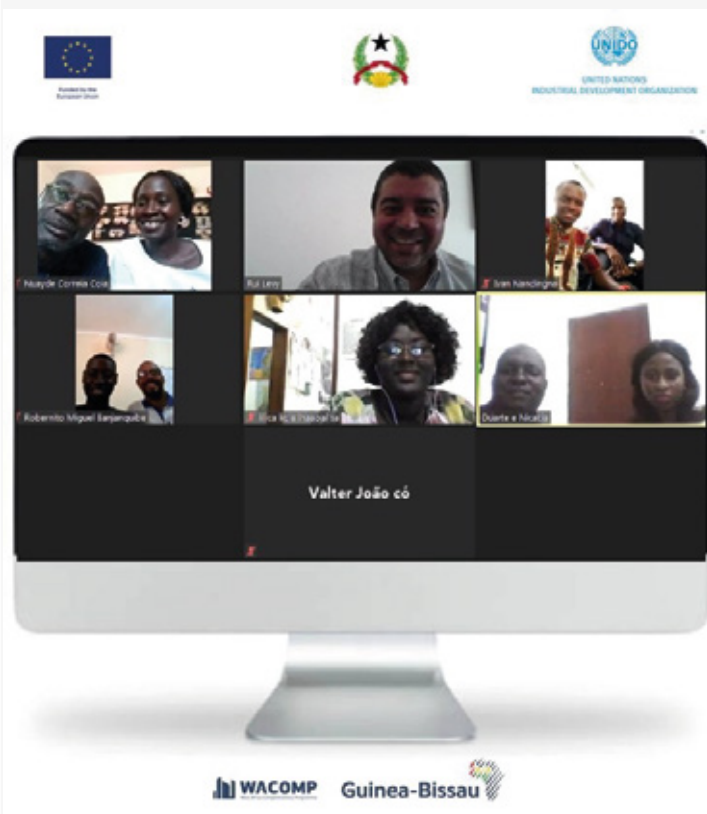
From 28 May to 4 June 2021, the WACOMP programme organised a series of online training sessions in the field of conformity assessment for some sixty operators in the mango sector in the region.

The sessions included good agricultural, manufacturing and hygiene practices; preservation techniques for mango and mango products; Global GAP, the first voluntary agricultural insurance programme; and, risk management in food safety insurance.

"I am pleased to note that two previous training events on HACCP and ISO 22000 have already been successfully completed and extended to WACOMP countries in the sub-region. These trainings are now extended to the topics of good agricultural, manufacturing and hygiene practices, in response to the needs expressed by the beneficiaries. These are essential basic references that must be respected in order to qualify for more complex certification systems, which are necessary to access markets such as the European food market," said Christophe Yvetot, UNIDO Representative in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Gambia, Cape Verde and Mauritania.

For more information: <https://wacomp.projects.ecow-as.int/wacomp-projects-join-forces-to-promote-food-safety-in-west-africa/>

WACOMP sensitizes entrepreneurship and agriculture support organisations on institutional strengthening

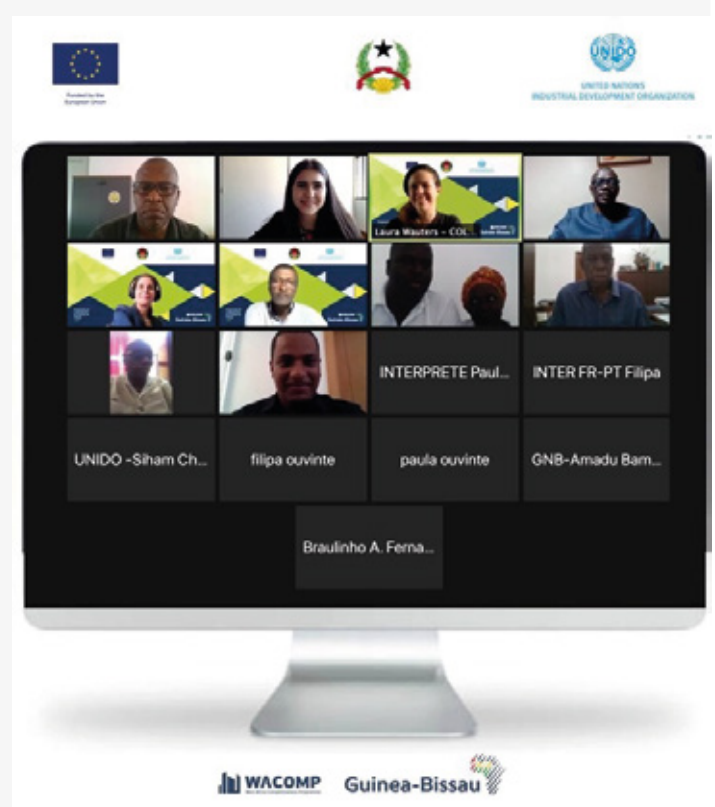


In order to strengthen the performance and sustainability of operators in the Guinea Bissau mango sector, WACOMP will support the institutional capacity building of six entities, namely the National Agency for Youth Entrepreneurship (ANEJ), the National Association of Farmers of Guinea Bissau (ANAG), the Association of Women in Economic Activity (AMAE), the Agricultural Cooperative of Young Technicians (COAJQ), the Peasant Federation (KAFO) and the Association for the Promotion of Local Development (APRODEL).

The technical assistance will focus on the elaboration of a strategic diagnosis, the preparation of specific improvement plans and, finally, the support to the implementation of improvement measures and quick wins. To this end, a consultant will be assigned to each of the targeted entities to implement the planned support.

On 6 June, a sensitisation session on institutional strengthening was organised for the consultants responsible for the deployment of the technical assistance and the focal points of the beneficiary institutions. The aim of this session was to clarify the content of the technical assistance, the different instruments and approaches envisaged to improve the performance of the institutions.

WACOMP Guinea Bissau raises awareness of mango exporters on European market access conditions



On 3 June, WACOMP organised a training session on the conditions of access to the European market for operators in the Guinea-Bissau mango sector. COLEACP was in charge of providing the training.

The workshop focused on the challenges and implications of the current EU phytosanitary regulations for mango exports as well as on the need to formalise the public-private dialogue for the process of preparing the "mango" dossier for validation by the competent European authorities.



WACOMP Senegal secures additional funding and advances its initiative to operationalise cooperative societies

After its launch in June 2020, WACOMP Senegal sought to expand its work with cooperative societies in Senegal. ITC has successfully signed an amendment to its grant agreement with the European Union securing an additional € 2 844 902 to establish and boost the selected cooperative societies, raising the total budget of the programme to EUR 6.3 million.

The programme has also set up its project office in Dakar. The local office led by national coordinator Ms. Oulimata Fall Sarr hosts a team of technical experts with a varied of skillset. The team will work to develop exports and income-generating activities with the aim of creating sustainable employment for women and youth in the country.

WACOMP Senegal aims to enhance the competitiveness of the mango, onion and ICT sectors. A key programme objective is to reinforce the mango and onion sectors through the establishment of commercial cooperative societies, which will work within the framework of the Uniform Act on Cooperative Societies (AUSCOOP). The AUSCOOP developed an approach to support stakeholders in the mango and onion sectors. Through the Act, cooperative societies use a cohesive approach to promote the economic development of rural areas and increase the country's competitiveness of mango and onion produce.

Between 15 to 19 March 2021, focal points from Senegal's 14 regions attended a training on using a digital system for the Cooperative Societies Register (RSCOOP). The digital system will boost security for its cooperative society users and improve the average registration time. With this new registration process the RSCOOP can receive registration applications, modify as well as delete information, over 480 farmer organisation have been identified for the digital registration system.

WACOMP Senegal takes part in the Mali Digital Awards



With sponsorship from WACOMP Senegal, Senegalese e-logistics consortium Afriware attended the Mali Digital Awards. The awards were part of the Malian Digital Exhibition held from 25 to 27 March 2021 at the International Conference Centre of Bamako. The start-up's representatives Outalma and Paps made a presentation on last mile and cross-border logistics, they also highlighted prospective opportunities with the National Post Office of Mali, Orange Mali and other informal transportation networks.

The 3-day event was launched by Senegal's Hon. Mouhamad Salia Toure, Minister of Employments and Vocational training – as the main event sponsor.

A boost for the Senegalese digital ecosystem with a new dynamic platform and support for local Innovation Hubs

Since early March, ITC has been in close consultations with stakeholders from Senegal's digital ecosystem as it seeks to develop and design a platform to promote the country's ICT sector. Stakeholders have emphasised the need for the platform to be versatile and accommodate their needs to ensure they can contribute towards the content generation and value-addition of information also tapping into existing social networks. Stakeholders are also keen to establish a platform that is sustainable.



The platform will establish a central point for stakeholders to exchange views, carry out extensive mapping of the ICT sector and improve approaches to secure buy-in from domestic and foreign markets. As Senegal's digital sector peaks in maturity, an even greater need for the platform's establishment and integration to be sustainable and dynamic in its approach. The search for a local company to support the development work of the platform will begin in June 2021.

Furthermore, to achieve its objectives in the ICT sector, WACOMP Senegal launched a call for applications for innovation hubs across the country. Several applications were submitted by tech hubs, with a large proportion of these from applicants based in the country's capital, Dakar. After the shortlisting process innovation hubs will receive individual grants structured as a technical support package.

The shortlisted hubs include CTIC Dakar, Concree, Impact Hub Dakar and Jokkolabs. Each of the hubs will receive communications and office equipment, guided support on finance, accounting, digital systems, legal aspects as well as logistics. Management teams of these hubs will also take part in skills and knowledge building sessions as the capacity building feature of the grant. The four selected innovation hubs were identified to have the largest footprint in Dakar.

The WACOMP launches the MSME Resilience and Recovery Programme (P2R) towards post-COVID-19 resurgence



On April 1, 2021, the WACOMP officially kicked off a new country component in Senegal. With a budget of € 2 million for three years, the initiative is implemented by UNIDO and will run until March 2024.

The project, titled the MSME Resilience and Recovery Programme (P2R), focuses on the post-COVID-19 resurgence of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in Senegal. It aims to tackle the difficulties encountered by small businesses that suffered from harsh economic conditions due to the pandemic.

The project main objective is to support the operationalization of the Economic and social resilience programme (PRES) dedicated to enterprises as well as the Emerging Senegal Programme (PSE) Post-COVID, considering the identified priority sectors.

Specifically, the project aims to support the resilience of MSMEs and their employees to the COVID-19 crisis and to initiate a rapid and sustainable recovery in sectors such as accommodation and catering, transport, fisheries and fish farming, pharmaceuticals and food processing. The programme aims to achieve three major results:

- Capacity building of at least two hundred (200) local MSMEs (of which at least 30% of enterprises led by women and 20% by young people) in the agri-food, health care and other sectors identified as priorities, to improve production processes and adopt standards and technical regulations to meet local demand and for export to the ECOWAS sub-region;
- Upgrading of five laboratories is supported to help them adapt to the health crisis;
- Support technological innovation to develop the means to fight the pandemic by adopting the necessary processes and acquiring the necessary equipment/materials.



SIERRA LEONE

ITC begins palm oil sector study in Sierra Leone

ITC has kicked off its assessment of the palm oil sector in Sierra Leone. The study aims to improve the performance of palm oil and invigorate the country's business climate by including information directly from smallholder farmers in Kambia, Port Loko, Pujehun and Bonthe districts. To gather this information, the technical team initiated a relationship with local villages to identify locations suitable to conduct its research.

The study will indicate existing opportunities, challenges and potential market links in palm oil production based on the data from smallholder farmers. The team met key stakeholders from the sector including the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, non-governmental organizations, private palm oil estate owners and large-scale companies.

To engage with key stakeholders in the sector, the technical team met district officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, non-governmental organizations as well as private palm oil estate owners and large-scale companies. Overall, the study aims to improve the performance of palm oil as well as invigorate the country's business climate.

SMEs in Sierra Leone seek to improve funding opportunities through financial analysis of business

“

I am hopeful that the activity plan allows our business to improve its creditworthiness and competitiveness.



Since early May, 40 small businesses in the cocoa, cassava and palm oil sectors are undergoing financial and non-financial assessments. The diagnosis exercise will provide business owners with an improvement plan and coaching sessions to improve access to capital. Financial Management Counsellors (FMCs), Mr. James Koroma and Mr. Raphael Marrah have travelled across the country for the diagnosis exercise, to support business owners with an improvement plan and deliver coaching on improving the credit profile of businesses.

During the diagnosis a majority of small businesses proved to be high-potential marketers, in Sierra Leone and across the region. The financial analysis exercise was preceded by two bootcamps covering business planning, compliance with tax, product costing and forecasting held in Kenema and Makeni by the access to finance team. Small business owners will continue to receive coaching until the end of June 2021. Once completed, business owners will have created a solid financial plan for their business and will use these to pitch their business to local and international funders.

After attending ITC's 3-day boot camp training for small business owners in Sierra Leone, Fatimata Kallon owner of JMK Foods Limited learned to tailor her business plans based on the sector of her business – Palm Oil. The training took business owners through financial planning, business plan development and product costing. The agribusiness owner plans to improve the creditworthiness of her business with the hope of securing financing from microfinance institutions and banks.

She is also looking forward to having her business go through the financial analysis to better identify areas for improvement and improve opportunities to access to finance. In two years, Kallon hopes to double her production from two and a half drums a day to five by successfully securing financing for her business. Open the following link to read more from Fatimata and her business JMK Foods : <https://digital.intracen.org/issue1-21/interview-skills-are-not-enough/>

UNIDO supports Sierra Leone Standards Bureau with Mass Metrology Lab



Thursday 27 May 2021
World Metrology Day and inauguration of the Mass Metrology Laboratory at the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB)

On 27 May, UNIDO Sierra Leone celebrated World Metrology Day (officially 20 May 2021) at the Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB). Alongside this event was the inauguration of the Mass Metrology Lab which was supported by UNIDO under the WACOMP project. The lab was officially opened by Hon. Dr. Edward Hinga Sandy, Minister of Trade and Industry of Sierra Leone.

In his opening remarks, UNIDO Chief Technical Advisor Dr Shaukat Malik stated: "Metrology standards are measurement standards which assure trust for quantity, while certification and inspection provide the trust towards quality. Structure for both quantity and quality are mandatory for global trade. The Mass Metrology Lab would not only provide the calibration for industries, SMEs and industrial laboratories but also the healthcare sector labs and equipment as well."

Alongside the work with the laboratories, the project is in the process of establishing a management system certification body (MSCB) at the SLSB, a first at SLSB and also in Sierra Leone. Currently, foreign certification bodies are the only option for local SMEs, agro-processors, exporters and farmers and farmers cooperatives for certification of the systems, products and produce towards ISO9001, ISO22000 and Organic etc, leading to high costs which exclude many. Once fully established, certifications issued by SLSB-MSCB would be equally acceptable in the World as any certification body from the globe.

Establishment of an agriculture produce inspection body at Sierra Leone Produce Monitoring board

The Produce Monitoring Board (PMB) was established in Sierra Leone under the Produce Monitoring Board Act 2013 with the mandate to promote, regulate, monitor and evaluate the production and exportation of produce. The capacity of the PMB starts at field inspection, ranging up to the pre-shipment inspection, where the inspection certificate is issued.

The WACOMP in Sierra Leone project, implemented by UNIDO, is supporting the PMB towards an accredited inspection body as per international best practices and standards i.e., ISO/IEC 17020 with the accreditation scope of agriculture produce from Farm Gate up to the Pre-Shipment Inspection. This would increase global acceptance of goods exported from Sierra Leone.

The inspection body would also cover the scope of cassava, oil palm and cocoa under the WACOMP project.



Monday June 7, 2021
The WACOMP Sierra Leone team at PMB first implementation session on quality policies and formats

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



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. The mandate of UNIDO is to promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) 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.

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