

WACOMP Programme Highlights
Quarter 1 - March 2024 - Issue #17

Regional Component

Advancing West African Business: Strengthening Competition Policies



Representatives from regional business associations across West Africa recently convened in Abidjan from March 21 to 24 for a workshop hosted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in collaboration with key stakeholders like the Federation of West African Employers Association (FWAEA) and the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI). This pivotal event aimed to enhance competition policy and foster regional competitiveness, providing a platform for meaningful discussions on fair market practices and tailored support for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), crucial drivers of economic growth and innovation in the ECOWAS region. Participants exchanged insights and explored policy options to promote MSMEs under the ECOWAS and AfCFTA competition frameworks, emphasizing the importance of creating a level playing field for businesses across the region. Candide Leguade, President of the Federation of Business Women and Entrepreneurs (FEBWE), highlighted the significance of the workshop, stating, "This workshop presents an excellent opportunity to prepare and capitalize on the benefits offered by the AfCFTA for MSMEs, especially women-led MSMEs, by gaining insights into regulatory and policy mechanisms and learning how they are applied." Moving forward, stakeholders are committed to advocating for policies that promote fair competition and support MSME growth, leveraging the collective expertise and resources of the private sector and policymakers to unlock new opportunities and drive sustainable economic development. [Read more from the Press Release.](#)

National Components

Empowering Sierra Leonean Agribusinesses: ITC and SMEDA Forge Financial Access



In an effort to bolster financial access for agribusinesses in Sierra Leone, the International Trade Centre (ITC) partnered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDA) to host two pivotal events in Freetown from February 6-8, 2024. These collaborative efforts, under the umbrella of the ITC West African Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP), aimed to equip business leaders with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of accessing vital funds. Through workshops and discussions, participants were introduced to practical solutions like ITC's Business Diagnostic and Benchmarking Tool, customized to address the specific needs of Sierra Leonean businesses. Testimonials from participants underscored the significant role of these initiatives in empowering MSMEs and fostering their growth trajectory, laying the groundwork for sustainable economic development in the region.

Furthermore, SMEDA spearheaded the activity titled "Unlocking Access to Finance for Agri-based Enterprises in Sierra Leone," which brought together key stakeholders from agribusinesses, financial institutions, NGOs, and UN agencies. Discussions during this event not only shed light on the challenges faced by small businesses in agricultural value chains but also proposed tangible solutions to mitigate them. A noteworthy outcome of the collaboration between ITC and SMEDA was the introduction of the Financial Sources Guide, consolidating various funding avenues for small businesses. By advancing financial inclusion and fostering economic growth in Sierra Leone's agribusiness sector, these initiatives signify a crucial step toward empowering local enterprises and driving sustainable development.

Moreover, the events convened 26 stakeholders from the Agricultural Sector and Support Sectors, including researchers, financial service providers, development partners, entrepreneurs, business development services providers, and government agencies. The proceedings commenced with opening remarks from the Chief Director of the Ministry of Trade, followed by addresses from the CEO of SMEDA, the ITC WACOMP National Coordinator, and the ITC Access to Finance Specialist.

Overall, the presentations of the Financial Sources Guide developed by ITC and SMEDA, along with the ITC Diagnostic and Benchmarking Tool, were well-received by all participants, who expressed eagerness to learn more about these instruments for potential use within their institutions. The panel discussion on "Agricultural Value Chains Financing - Challenges and Opportunities" was highly valued, as it delved into various aspects of the challenges and opportunities in agricultural value chains financing. Five panelists shared their experiences in the domain to identify key constraints and collectively find solutions. Additionally, presentations of AgriFinancing Products by Bloom Bank (Africa), APEX Bank, A Call to Business, and the United Nations Capital Development Fund enriched the discussions and provided valuable insights into available financing options for agribusinesses. [Read more from the Webstory.](#)

Advancing Sierra Leone's Cocoa Sector: ITC's Key Role in Policy Development and Collaboration



In a recent technical roundtable convened by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to bolster Sierra Leone's cocoa sector, the International Trade Centre (ITC) emerged as a pivotal player in shaping the industry's trajectory. Led by ITC's National Coordinator, Shikha Kawa, the discussions focused on key challenges and opportunities, including traceability, establishing a living income reference price, and enhancing trade inspection rules.

In his opening remarks, ITC's National Coordinator Shikha Kawa highlighted the outcomes of ITC's efforts to strengthen the cocoa value chain in Sierra Leone under the WACOMP. During the Panel discussions stakeholders emphasized that the regulation CAP 185 is outdated and needs alignment with current policies. Mr. Shikha explained that ITC, in collaboration with the Produce Monitoring Board, is supporting the revision of CAP 185, which follows recommendations formulated during the Public-Private Dialogue program organized by ITC early 2023. With its extensive experience in enhancing West Africa's cocoa competitiveness, ITC played a crucial role in crafting essential policy documentation, such as the revision of the Produce Inspection Rules (CAP 185), to ensure regulatory enhancement and industry alignment with current standards.

In Senegal, ITC is supporting the establishment of a Digital Agricultural Services Center



ITC has started a national consultation to establish a digital agricultural services center in Senegal. A workshop on 30 January gathered over a hundred individuals from various organizations including the Ministry of Trade, Consumer Affairs and SMEs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Equipment and Food Sovereignty, the Executive Secretariat of the CHADA National Commission for Senegal, the European Union Delegation in Senegal, business support institutions, decentralized technical and administrative departments overseeing agriculture, and agricultural cooperative societies. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear the views and contributions of national stakeholders, leading to a consensus on transforming e-RSCOOP into a multi-service digital platform to support the professionalization and competitiveness of cooperative societies. This digital agricultural services Center will facilitate access to economic information and statistics, as well as services to build capacity and contribute to the emergence of a sustainable agri-food system in Senegal.

In Senegal a dedicated financing mechanism for agricultural cooperative societies



As part of implementing its support program dedicated to agricultural cooperative societies, ITC has established a co-financing and grant fund within the framework of WACOMP-Senegal to support the production and marketing activities of agricultural cooperative societies, their members, and their unions. With a budget of one million (1,000,000) euros, this new financing mechanism will be operationalized in partnership with the Ministry responsible for Trade and the Agricultural Bank of Senegal. During a workshop presenting this co-financing and grant fund to beneficiaries and business support institutions, held on January 31st, the Coordination Unit of WACOMP-Senegal gathered feedback and recommendations from participants on eligibility criteria and financing arrangements. They also raised awareness among cooperative societies on the necessary steps to comply with requirements in order to access funding.

Support for the marketing of agricultural cooperative companies' products

In anticipation of the imminent marketing of onions and mangoes produced by agricultural cooperative societies, ITC has organized a series of meetings with cooperatives established in the Niayes area to discuss the modalities and requirements of collective marketing led by the cooperative societies. During visits to six cooperatives in Dakar and Thiès, the WACOMP-Senegal delegation presented the marketing support strategy for onion and/or mango production to elected representatives and cooperative members, provided information on the project to create a label and a collective trademark, and assessed the supply chain.

Following these meetings, further action will be taken to obtain a reliable estimate of the actual volume of production intended for marketing and the potential prices that should be charged on the market.



Technical capacity building for cooperative members



With a view to building the capacity of producers in the Niayes area in market garden production and protection techniques, the International Trade Centre has held training sessions in collaboration with the National Agricultural and Rural Advisory Agency (ANCAR)

Through these workshops, 250 cooperative members from 10 cooperative societies in the Thiès, Louga and Saint-Louis regions are being trained in good farming practices, agroecology and the production of Bokashi compost. The objective of this initiative is to provide technical support to producers in the Niayes area to improve agricultural production.

Support in the development of a strategic plan for the DigitalSenegal platform

The International Trade Centre is supporting the Digital Senegal cooperative in formulating a strategic plan. The main aim of this strategic plan is to ensure the viability of the platform promoting the digitalsenegal.org digital ecosystem through the implementation of a well-defined impact strategy, including the value proposition for positioning and raising the profile of Senegal's IT/BPO expertise in Africa.

The DigitalSenegal platform has as objective, to improve access to information and market opportunities, facilitate interaction and exchanges between actors in the ecosystem and encourage entrepreneurship in Senegal's digital sector.



Empowering Senegalese Youth

ITC, in partnership with SenStartup and OPTIC, is implementing a school-business work-study program for young people in Senegal's digital sector, with a view to enhancing their employability and facilitating their integration into the professional world. For its first cohort, the program involved 52 learners, the IHE and ISI training schools and 20 ICT companies, members of Sen Startup and OPTIC.

On 18 March 2024, the second cohort already involved 25 learners, who will be trained in 3 modules. This initiative will provide support for between 75 and 100 young graduates in the digital professions.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

WACOMP ITC



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

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

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

Street address: ITC, 54-56, rue de Montbrillant, 1202 Geneva,
Switzerland

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

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

[Unsubscribe from this list](#)