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WACOMP Programme Highlights

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Regional Component

West Africa SMEs learn to improve Mango and Cassava production processes



In its continued activities to upskill the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the WACOMP programme held an online training for ECOWAS MSMEs involved in Cassava and Mango Processing. The training

gave the region's MSMEs key skills and knowledge to enhance the production and processing in these agro-food industries.

The training took place from 6 March to 12 May 2023 and provided trainees with information to improve their processing using improved planning and organisational approaches. It also sought to improve the investment institutions approaches in financial management and business planning, with an overall goal to ensure small businesses improve their capabilities in securing financial investments and accessing international markets.

“During my individual online session with the coach, I was receiving a lot of insightful ideas on my business and the steps to follow to make it more successful,” said Daniel Mason, Bofams Agrifield Limited. Additionally, Dayo-Adepoju, Worldquest Multipurpose Concept Limited thanked the WACOMP programme as “being an avenue of solutions to the most ravaging problems of production and profitability”.

Overall, the training underscored the need for increased coordination and collaboration amongst ECOWAS MSMEs, as well as the benefits of strengthening their partnerships for joint initiatives. Trainees learned to conceptualise new and innovative products, methods to increase profitability by streamlining operations and key elements needed to establish consumer loyalty and valuable brand.

West Africa TPOs Equipped to Support Private Sector through Trade Promotion Initiatives



ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organisation (TPO) Network staff recently received a training on how to plan and execute Business Generation (BG) events. The training held on 23-27 January 2023 focused on equipping TPO staff with the necessary skills to identify and engage potential buyers, create networking opportunities, and facilitate the export of products from small businesses in the region.

Through the BG events such as trade missions, trade fairs and matchmaking meetings, small businesses in the ECOWAS region will have access to export markets, which will help them generate more revenue and create job opportunities. Additionally, the TPO staff will help these small businesses with market research, product development, and quality control to ensure that their products meet the requirements of the international market.

“During the week we had the opportunity to understand in detail all the information concerning trade promotion issues that without doubt will make all of us be better prepared with relevant operational and management skills to plan and implement trade Promotion in general. It was truly interesting to realize both training and various exercises. We are sure that the objective of the training was reached, we came out of it richer to implement the tools in our respective countries,” describes Isabel Duarte, from the Export Promotion unit of Cape Verde TradeInvest.

The training for TPO staff in the ECOWAS region on BG events is a significant step towards promoting exports from small businesses in the region. The tools learnt during this training will help TPO staff improve their work and enhance the competitiveness of small businesses in the ECOWAS region. The training enables TPO staff to implement activities that strengthen their countries' export sectors and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

BSOs learn to identify specific trade opportunities using market information tool



To continue its training for West African business support organisation (BSOs), the WACOMP held trainings on the use of selected ITC market analysis tools and the ECOWAS Market Information Monitoring System (MIMS) -. Participants learned to analyse trade flows, access market information on trade agreements and methods to set up service platforms for trade information.

“Trade Information Services in the ECOWAS region have a critical role to play in unlocking the potential of SMEs to perform competitively in foreign markets. That is why we are striving to make information more visible and available. This is

where Trade Support Institutions can excel by undertaking the mission of connecting people to information,” said Martin Lopez, ITC Programme Officer.

The training was held sequentially during the 6-8 and 13-15 December 2022, with 35 and 38 participants attending the first and second edition respectively. The first edition was oriented to English speaking and the second one for French speaking participants.

“This workshop is timely, especially with the implementation of the AfCFTA, where traders and other individuals face problems with accessing trade information in Africa,” said Mohammed Nurudeen Baba, from the Ghana Export Promotion Agency (GEPA).

By increasing BSOs expertise in using the wide selection of tools to support trade analysis, the WACOMP programme aims to enhance transparency and predictability for business operators in the region.

Addressing Organisational Gaps and Strengthening BSO contributions to increase Regional Exports



The Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) Strategy and Governance Work Session held on 6-8 February 2023

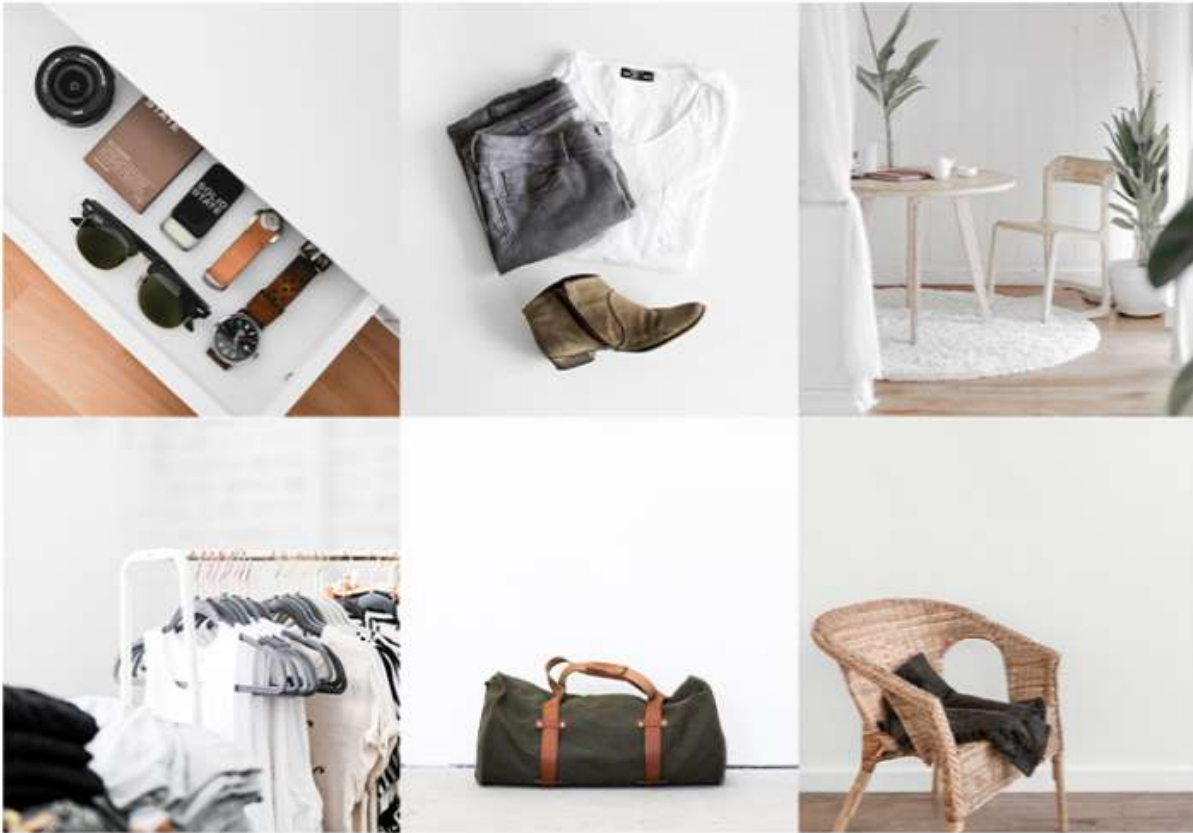
was aimed at addressing strategic weaknesses and challenges around the FEWACCI governance instruments. The work session brought together senior staff of FEWACCI member chambers to review and discuss the organization's strategic plan and governance structure. Preliminary bilateral consultations had taken on board the views of other stakeholders including policy makers and the ECOWAS Commission.

One of the main objectives of the work session was to ensure a bottom-up approach to building a strategic plan. "The implementation of this strategic plan will allow FEWACCI to be a major player within West Africa and also a tool for the integration of the sub-regional economy," said Patricia Badolo, Assistant Director General, Burkina Faso Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This approach aimed to involve all stakeholders in the development process to ensure a consensus around the provisions of the new strategic plan and that it reflects the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders.

Another critical objective of the work session was to adhere to global good practices for strategy development and good governance constitution amendment. "For Chamber of Commerce and Industry to effectively execute their mandate, they must have imperatives such as appropriate governance systems for credibility; appropriate resources and capabilities for effectiveness; result-oriented services for shared value with their clients and stakeholders; and a robust business model for sustainability," describes Miyoba Lubemba, ITC Senior Programme Officer- Institutional Strengthening.

Therefore, this work session was essential for the organization as it seeks to strengthen its governance structures and processes with an aim to better serve its members and contribute to the economic development of the region.

Expanding opportunities for West African fashion businesses



The WACOMP regional programme held a training to help match ten small businesses in the fashion industry with financial institutions that provide grants, loans, and social impact investment programs. Fashion entrepreneurs attended six webinars between 8-17 November, gaining insight on the different types of financing tools available and methods to ensure their businesses meet the financial requirements and qualify for loans.

"Through the initial trainings I attended from WACOMP, I was able to identify all the items we did not have. After gaining all the certification needed, the agency Sacko Couture secured financing worth \$50,000," said Mamadou Saliou Bah, Founder of Agence Sacko Couture.

Amidou Cissé of Cissé Création also expressed his satisfaction with the program. "It's been good for me and my company because there have been a lot of changes, a partner of mine based in Burkina has even sent their first order. I'm also in the process of negotiating another online partnership too. All thanks to the training we received," said Cissé.

Charlemagne Amoussou of Lolo Andoche shared his positive experience, stating, "we would like to reiterate what a pleasure it was to take part in the West

Africa Connect Event in November 2021, in particular the individual training courses in fashion entrepreneurship and export marketing."

Amoussou continued, "When it comes to preparing our collections, our sketch catalogues are more professional. The tables are well organized, with a name for each product, which our clients greatly appreciate. Our partners are now able to validate their orders before production. As a result, we no longer deal with the problem of returned items. We hope for other events that will help us, as entrepreneurs, to present our products more effectively at home and abroad."

Entrepreneurs reaffirmed the training's impact and how it has empowered them to secure financing, expand partnerships, and enhance business operations.

Regional training program successfully boosts mango and cassava SMEs' export readiness and international competitiveness



A series of regional trainings was launched to increase regional integration and international competitiveness by identifying market opportunities and

strengthening product competitiveness in the mango and cassava value chains. The WACOMP regional training program on mango and cassava took small businesses through four trainings focused on export readiness, preparing for successful physical and virtual trade fair participation, results of a market study on the European mango market and its requirements, as well as regional and international market studies for fresh and processed cassava.

The trainings provided the exporters with insights on market entry strategies, market requirements, and participation in market linkages activities, bridging the knowledge gaps of the beneficiaries to enter new markets, familiarize with international market requirements, and identify new opportunities.

“Thank you for this great initiative which will help young companies to grow gradually. I would like to propose having personalised coaching for companies to address their concerns, receive support in their export strategy, or perhaps establish an email address which can address our questions, guide our strategies, and provide swift expertise on value chains or export matters,” said Adrien Heviefo from Kocali Food.

The program also helped West African countries identify and align product-market combinations in the mango and cassava sectors. By identifying targeted markets in the region and internationally, recognising key buyer requirements, and forming intra-regional and B2B links for regional businesses and markets.

The WACOMP regional training program for mango and cassava SMEs was a significant initiative held on 27 March 2023. It helped participants understand the global and European fresh mango markets, meet key technical and food safety requirements applied to the EU mango import market, and gain knowledge on the fresh and processed market export trends.

National Components

Sierra Leone

Financial Advisors learn approaches to improve access to financing for businesses



In collaboration with the Small and Medium Development Agency (SMEDA), a two-day workshop in 11-12 October 2022 was attended by financial advisors from multiple financial institutions in Sierra Leone. The training provided insight on approaches to access capital and an overview of existing frameworks to tap into and increase growth for small businesses in the country.

Through the workshop, financial advisors gained skills to identify financial needs and potential risks in the sectors businesses are operating. Small businesses especially those working in the agri-business sector will receive tailored support to access early-stage funding.

Participants were also introduced to ITC's SME Check tool which provides business owners a quick assessment of their business and support efforts in raising capital. "This workshop has opened up new avenues for growth and development, while creating opportunities for MSMEs and financial organizations to contribute to the success of the cassava, cocoa, and palm oil value chains," said Yaya Ouattara, ITC Programme Officer.

The workshop also underscored the need for smallholder farmers to keep the status of their financial contracts appraised and ensure loan instalments are met to avoid breaching contracts with business funders. “Our involvement in this workshop is a testament to our dedication to empowering local communities and promoting inclusive economic growth in the region,” added Yaya Ouattara.

Following its conclusion, ITC is working towards finalizing the Financial Sources Guide which includes a database of financial sources and delineates opportunities identified in the country. The financial guide and the diagnostic tool will be available on the SMEDA platform.

Businesses learn market access requirements in bid to export food products internationally



Small businesses, cooperatives and farmer associations working in the cassava, cocoa and palm oil sectors attended a training from 30 January to 1 February 2023 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Participants learned to evaluate markets, understand market requirements, and identified their respective food supply chains for export.

“The training programs have greatly contributed to the status of my agrobusiness and myself by expanding my farm from one to three farms, or in other words, from two acres to 12 acres which means there is an increase in

production. I have also increased my profit margin from 6% to 12% respectively,” said Yankuba Samu, CEO of Mugbi Agricultural Investment.

The training took participants through the importance of food safety and underscored its importance for the food supply chain. Trainees were also introduced to methods for pricing products and preparation for successful trade fairs.

With the guidance received on food safety, product and market development, the 33 trainees are now equipped to take part in upcoming trade fairs. Five trainees were successfully able to participate in the FIARA 2023 trade fair held in Dakar, Senegal.

SLeCAD collaborates with ITC to empower cooperatives through Advocacy Training



SLeCAD, in collaboration with ITC, co-implemented advocacy trainings for cooperatives through the WACOMP Sierra Leone programme. The trainings aimed to build the lobbying and advocacy capacities of producer cooperatives

and sector associations to address the challenges and opportunities affecting the trade competitiveness of Sierra Leone's agricultural sector.

During the training session held in Bo on 24-26 January 2023, SLeCAD gradually assumed the training responsibilities, gaining valuable insights into promoting trade competition through advocacy and trade policies. The training sought to increase advocacy on increasing production in three key agri-sectors: Cocoa, Palm Oil, and Cassava - to enhance profitability.

Furthermore, the training highlighted the significance of developing a comprehensive database for cooperatives operating within these value chains to facilitate informed decision-making processes. A similar training was thereafter held in Makeni on 22-24 February 2023.

The collaborative efforts between SLeCAD and ITC, not only empowered SLeCAD but also fostered a sense of ownership and sustainability in their capacity to drive effective advocacy and trade competitiveness in Sierra Leone's agricultural sector.

ITC organizes Public-Private Dialogue with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Trade and Industry



The WACOMP Sierra Leone programme, in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, organized three impactful public-private dialogues aimed at driving consensus between the public and private sectors on crucial policy areas. These dialogues intended to encourage collaboration and achieve policy reform in support of the country's trade and agricultural sectors.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food Security, representatives convened from February 14th to 16th, 2023, to discuss integrating trade rules and regulations into Sierra Leone's cocoa policy. The objective was to gather recommendations for the National Cocoa Policy as cocoa is a major revenue source for the country. The representatives identified the need for better quality and more affordable certification to improve cocoa products.

They emphasized the importance of enhancing communication between the public and private sectors and collaborating with neighbouring countries to combat the smuggling of low-quality cocoa. This session brought together key stakeholders and will contribute to comprehensive strategies for maximizing cocoa's potential and promoting sustainable growth in Sierra Leone's cocoa industry.

From March 7th to 9th, 2023 – in collaboration with the Produce Monitoring Board (PMB), representatives met to review and make recommendations for the revision of Sierra Leone's outdated produce inspection rules (the Native Produce Inspection Rules (Cap 185)), which are not aligned with current sector policies, regional and international regulations. The recommendations aim to improve the produce sectors ability to meet global standards and requirements and facilitate access to new regional and global markets.

On March 14th and 15th, 2023 in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Chamber of Agribusiness Development (SLeCAD), representatives gathered to discuss ways to enhance the agriculture sectors access to quality agricultural inputs. Their discussions discussed improving access to high-quality seeds, fertilizers, and machinery to increase crop yield.

To address the challenges of high costs of agricultural inputs, representatives proposed practical solutions, suggesting duty-free imports for agricultural inputs.

They also emphasized the establishment of a seed bank and collaboration with research institutes to develop fertilizer use guidelines. Additionally, they recognized the need for developing machinery standards and establishing regulatory bodies to ensure quality control. The representatives further highlighted the importance of collaboration with the private sector to provide training and capacity building programs for farmers in utilizing agricultural machinery effectively.

These recommendations aim to alleviate financial burdens, promote sustainable practices, and enhance productivity within Sierra Leone's agricultural sector. By implementing duty-free imports, establishing a seed bank, and collaborating with research institutes and the private sector, Sierra Leone can foster a conducive environment for agricultural growth and development.

Guinea

Guinean Producers and Exporters Gain Market Insight and Business Opportunities at Fruit Logistica Trade Fair, Germany



Guinean producers and exporters recently participated in the Fruit Logistica trade fair, the largest trade fair in Europe dedicated to fresh fruit. Held on 10 February 2023, the event provided a unique opportunity for exhibitors to understand the requirements of the European market, connect with potential buyers, and showcase their products.

ITC provided expert advice, coaching on export, and organized business-to-business (B2B) meetings between the exporters and European pineapple importers/wholesalers, as well as international suppliers. The participation of Guinean exporters and producers in the Fruit Logistica trade fair was crucial in addressing their needs for knowledge on the European market requirements and access, and on how to conduct B2B interactions with buyers.

“We are totally satisfied with the exceptional quality of the support we provided, with all the material arrangements, as well as the preparation of the meetings for the contacts that enabled us to reach many buyers and partners. Our

congratulations and thanks to the whole team,” said Camara Moussa from South Guinea’s Federation of Planters of the Fruit Sector.

Exporters gained valuable knowledge and experience on the European market, making over 80 contacts during the fair to leverage for the next export season, after several B2B meetings to establish contacts, and business deals with buyers. ITC is conducting a follow-up survey with the participants to evaluate the overall results of the participation and identify areas for improvement.

The Fruit Logistica trade fair was a significant achievement for Guinean producers, the event helped bridge the gap between the Guinean and European markets, it also provided them with valuable market insight and business opportunities.

Senegal

Wacomp Senegal empowers managers with communication and leadership skills



Cooperative societies established through WACOMP Senegal programme gathered from different regions in the country after being selected to participate in a training program designed to strengthen the managerial skills of elected officials and managers of these societies. The training focused using the Cooperative Societies procedures manual, which provides guidelines for good administrative and financial management in cooperatives.

The first session was held in Dakar from 12 to 17 January 2023 and attended by ten community development agents. Thereafter, two training workshops were held for elected representatives of the Cooperative Societies in Casamance, Niayes, Fatick, and the country's river valley towns of Ziguinchor and Saint Louis in January and March 2023 respectively.

The workshops provided training for 69 elected officials from 23 cooperative societies and ten community development agents. Building up to the training on manual procedures, the programme also provided training on governance, leadership, interpersonal communication, and conflict management. The training sessions were held in three different regions: Thiès for the Niayes region from 28 to 30 November 2022.

Agri-tech workshops promote innovation in Senegal's agricultural value chains

To promote reflection and encourage exchanges among cooperative societies and startup project leaders, the programme organized awareness-raising workshops on agriculture and technological tools. These workshops discussed the opportunities and impact of agri-tech solutions on the development of agricultural value chains. After conducting these workshops in Saint-Louis, Thiès, and Kaolack, the upcoming agri-tech days will soon bring together the agriculture and digital technology ecosystem in Ziguinchor.

These sessions reached a total of 10 community development officers and 143 elected representatives from 26 co-operative societies, including 79 elected co-operators from producer organizations (POs). Looking forward, a session for the PACAO-Senegal team in Dakar is planned to take place soon, continuing the progress made in strengthening the management capacities of co-operative societies in the country.

WACOMP Senegal and ANCAR partner to train cooperative members on mango production techniques and crop disease control



WACOMP Senegal and ANCAR teamed up to organize training workshops aimed at strengthening the technical capacities of members of cooperative societies. The workshops focused on market-oriented production planning approach and techniques to control mango pests and crop disease. The training sessions were held in three zones across Senegal: ten cooperative companies and 224 cooperative representatives trained in the Niayes Zone; two cooperative companies and 49 cooperative representatives trained in the Central Zone; and 97 cooperative representatives trained in Casamance.

Members of cooperatives learned to identify common mango pests and diseases found in the crop, know the effective means of combating these negative factors, and implement good practices in their orchards. The sessions were held in Dioulacolon (Kolda), Mangaroungou (Goudomp), Adéane (Ziguinchor),

Boukiling, and Thionck Essyl (Bignona), with 97 cooperative representatives trained to improve productivity and quality in the mango sector.

WACOMP Senegal supports cooperative societies with equipment and supplies



WACOMP-Senegal has provided office supplies and computer equipment, as well as fruit fly control equipment to 26 cooperative societies and 11 community development agents to support ongoing activities. In addition to the manual of administrative, technical, financial, and accounting procedures, these donations aim to facilitate the immediate start of cooperative societies' animation, training, and networking activities.

On 16 January 2023, an official ceremony was held in Dakar to present the items to the identified cooperatives. The event was presided over by the Ministry of Trade, Consumer Affairs, and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises with representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Budget, Agriculture, Rural Equipment and Food Sovereignty, as well as the Delegation of the European Union in Senegal. By providing these items, the programme is equipping the

cooperative societies and community development agents with the necessary tools to manage their operations effectively.

Empowering Cooperatives: WACOMP Senegal Sponsors Entrepreneurs to Participate at the FIARA 2023



The WACOMP Senegal sponsored the participation of 13 cooperatives and 24 organizations of producers (OP) at the 23rd edition of the FIARA – the agricultural trade fair. They provided the participants with a fully equipped and furnished 100m² space, secure storage, and subsidies for the transportation of samples from 23 February to 19 March, 2023. Participants exchanged ideas with other stakeholders in the value chain, such as the beneficiaries of WACOMP Sierra Leone, DER master pack, Agropole Sud, Association Casamance en action, and Noel Jean Roux (supplier of inputs).

The trade fair provided an opportunity for cooperatives to promote their products

in the local market, with a total of 398 visitors and estimated sales at nearly one million FCFA. Participants also made new contacts, strengthened networks, and increased their visibility. WACOMP Senegal accompanied the cooperatives in their respective activities, and this sponsorship was one way to show their support.

Senegal's Agrotech Startups and Cooperative Societies collaborate during FIARA 2023 to boost sales



To strengthen ties between cooperative societies and agrotech startups, the WACOMP Senegal programme organised a meeting on 13 March 2023 during FIARA 2023. As members of cooperative societies, producers connected with agrotech startups. Following these exchanges, Club Tiossane, an online food distribution platform servicing the entire Dakar region, committed to promote the cooperative societies' products on their online platform.

Since then, elected representatives of cooperative societies continue to compile a list of priority products with quantities and prices. Negotiations continue between the two parties, and Club Tiossane aims to provide weekly supply to

producers. This collaboration will increase sales for the cooperative societies and improve access to fresh produce for consumers in Senegal.

Senegal's market of national interest explores collaboration with Cooperative Societies during visit



The general management of the wholesale market for food products of Dakar visited the Potou Niayam and Thiéppou Lompoul cooperative societies after a visit from the WACOMP Senegal team. The visit aimed to identify possible areas of collaboration between the two organizations, by reducing storage options at the Senegal's Market of national interest (MIN) and removing the payment of deposit and guarantee. Representatives visited the cooperatives farms and storage facilities.

Separately, ten cooperatives from Niayes attended the commercial forum organized by wholesale market for food products of Dakar, which provided an opportunity to market their produce. The Pout Cooperative Society was also able to make use of the WACOMP storage facility at the MIN. The cooperative was able to store 3600 metric tons of onions (roughly 35,000 sacks) for three months, through financing from the State of Senegal of \$165,791 (CFA 100 million) and the collaboration between Regulatory Body of the Merchandise Regulation System in Senegal (ORSRE).

The cooperative was able to make a profit of \$1,492,122 (CFA 900 million). The initial market price for these products was set at \$331 (CFA 200,000) per tonne, at the closing, the market price was set at \$746 (450,000 CFA) per tonne.

Awareness - sharing workshops on Agritech Solutions held in Senegal



In a bid to promote the use of agri-tech solutions in Senegal's agricultural sector, two workshops were held in Kaolack and Thiès from 20 to 21 and 23 to 24 February 2023, respectively. The events brought together 137 participants, including representatives of cooperative companies, young startup project leaders, actors of the entrepreneurial and digital ecosystem, local authorities, and agricultural producers. The workshops organized by the WACOMP Senegal

programme, outlined the opportunities and impact of agri-tech solutions for participants.

The events provided a platform to exchange of ideas and experiences, and was attended by community development agents, women's groups, universities and business schools, agri-tech startups as well as other groups supporting entrepreneurship. The workshops were a success, with representatives from eight cooperative companies and project leaders from youth startups attending to discover the various uses of agri-tech solutions and find out about the latest developments to better promote sustainable agriculture. Stakeholders also took the opportunity to network and explore possible collaborations to drive the growth of the agricultural sector in Senegal.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

WACOMP ITC



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