



# WACOMP Programme Highlights

October 2023 - Issue #14

## Regional Component

### Boosting West African Trade: Spotlight on the Food and Beverage West Africa Trade Fair



In June 2023, West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP), proudly sponsored 14 export-ready SMEs from eight ECOWAS countries for the Food and Beverage West Africa Trade Fair in Lagos, Nigeria. These enterprises showcased a diverse range of products, including fresh mango fruits, mango-based juices, cassava-based goods, and palm oil, stealing the spotlight, and sealing substantial trade deals.

The event served as an invaluable learning experience, emphasizing booth presentation, effective product sampling, and persuasive client pitches. Most significantly, it skyrocketed the potential for regional and international trade, enhancing the reputation and opportunities for our exhibitors.

Notably, the CEO of Fruveg Farms Ltd. identified a substantial demand for Ghanaian mango seedlings among Nigerian farmers and entrepreneurs. "I realized a lot of requests from farmers and businesspeople in Nigeria." Said the entrepreneur "I will analyze its viability, explore it, and devise a win-win solution.", opening doors for a potential new market reach.

The event illuminated exciting avenues for engagement with the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector leaders, leading to lucrative contracts and expanded market presence. The SMEs are now nurturing promising leads and cultivating new partnerships, benefiting both their businesses and the broader West African trade ecosystem.

This successful event was a collaborative effort, delivered jointly by WACOMP Regional and WACOMP Sierra Leone.

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## **FEWACCI Strategy Validation and Re-Benchmarking Success**

On May 31st, 2023, the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) achieved a monumental

milestone. A validation meeting resoundingly endorsed FEWACCI's Strategic Plan, reaffirming its unwavering dedication to regional economic integration.

FEWACCI's visionary Strategic Plan, crafted with the expertise of the International Trade Centre (ITC) under the umbrella of the WACOMP, paves the way for an exciting future. According to the Executive Director of FEWACCI, "ITC's support through WACOMP was instrumental in shaping our goals and defining the path to achieve them."

On May 15th, 2023, FEWACCI conducted a Re-Benchmarking Assessment, evaluating its journey since 2019. The results painted a picture of remarkable growth and progress, all guided by ITC's invaluable involvement. Notable achievements include a fortified strategic plan, strengthened legal instruments, and a revamped website, all emblematic of FEWACCI's commitment to bolstering the private sector and advancing regional economic development with the support of WACOMP.

The increase in FEWACCI's Benchmarking score between 2019 and 2023 is a testament to the tireless efforts and dedication of FEWACCI's secretariat and its members. Together, they are propelling the region towards greater economic development.

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## **Unlocking AfCFTA Potential: ECOWAS-UNDP Capacity Building Workshop**



In a dynamic collaboration, ECOWAS and UNDP, in partnership with ITC, recently orchestrated a game-changing Capacity Building Programme - the Training of Trainers (ToT) Regional Workshop on "Maximizing Opportunities in the AfCFTA." Held from June 6 to 8, 2023, in Abuja, this event was a concerted effort to unleash the potential of the AfCFTA within the ECOWAS business landscape, with a special focus on women-led SMEs.

During this transformative event, ITC's expert team delivered comprehensive export readiness training, covering crucial aspects like export potential assessment, market research, and export strategy. The overarching aim was to equip trainers with the skills needed to prepare SMEs for successful participation in the AfCFTA. Of the 40 dedicated participants (including 55% women), many hailed from national chambers of commerce and were esteemed members of the Federation of Businesswomen and Entrepreneurs (FEBWE).

One participant, representing the Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GNCCI), shared insights, stating, "Programs like this build trainer confidence and capacity, enabling them to demystify AfCFTA concepts for SMEs looking to venture into international markets, eliminating their fears and risks."

Participants exuded unwavering commitment and enthusiasm, leaving the workshop with a strong sense of readiness to lead similar initiatives in their respective regions. This impactful endeavor aligns perfectly with ECOWAS' mission to raise awareness and enhance capacity among traders, producers, and service providers, ultimately fostering remarkable success within the AfCFTA.

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## Unlocking Investment Opportunities: West Africa and COMESA Collaborate



From June 5th to June 7th, 2023, Lusaka, Zambia, played host to the "Joint Investment Networking Workshop for West Africa Investment Promotion Agencies." This collaborative effort brought together the COMESA Business Council (CBC), the COMESA Regional Investment Agency (RIA), investment promotion agencies from the ECOWAS Region, and received support from the International Trade Centre (ITC).

This event's significance cannot be overstated; it was a key step in transforming investment opportunities into tangible projects within the ECOWAS region. The workshop united investment promotion agencies from eight ECOWAS countries, regional business associations, and influential investors from the COMESA region. Under the umbrella of the

WACOMP, it facilitated trade and investment connections between two regional economic communities - ECOWAS and COMESA - thereby contributing to the realization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area.

One of the primary goals was to enhance regional and international investments in ECOWAS, with a particular focus on the target sectors of the WACOMP program: cassava, mango, ICT, and textiles. Additionally, it laid the foundation for cross-regional collaboration in investment and trade, fostering relationships between partners, including the ECOWAS Commission, investment promotion agencies (IPA), and business associations from both regions.

The workshop provided a dedicated platform for ECOWAS IPAs to expand their network, connecting with potential investors regionally and globally. Notably, FM Denim Co Ltd, a significant textile company based in Mauritius, shared plans to invest approximately USD 300 million in the textile sector in Africa during the sessions.

On the event's final day, the ECOWAS IPAs delegation attended the COMESA Business Forum, solidifying connections and identifying investment opportunities. An impressive 95% of respondents to a post-event survey confirmed that the workshop had supported them in establishing connections to attract investments and identify business opportunities.

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## **Unveiling the Beta Version of the West African Competitiveness Observatory**



In a groundbreaking event hosted in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in May 2023, the "Trade and Competitiveness Intelligence Tools for West Africa" took center stage. Co-organized by ECOWAS and ITC, this high-level stakeholder gathering unveiled the beta version of the West African Competitiveness Observatory, marking a pivotal stride towards bolstering trade and competitiveness intelligence in the region.

Diverse stakeholders converged to explore and engage with the observatory, fostering invaluable feedback to enhance its functionality. This event, driven by dialogue, networking, and knowledge exchange, emphasized the paramount importance of regional development and the need for evidence-based policies. The observatory empowers policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders by providing comprehensive data and insightful analysis on competitiveness, trade dynamics, and value chains.

As Jesse Mathies, Assistant Director for International Trade Division at Liberia's Ministry of Commerce, eloquently put it, "The Observatory Tools introduced by ITC have the potential to revolutionize how we approach trade data." This event is a promise for an auspicious future for African trade, strengthening regional knowledge sharing and enhancing capabilities.

In essence, this event signifies a milestone for the WACOMP, propelling regional collaboration and establishing a robust foundation for informed decision-making that will elevate trade and competitiveness in West Africa.

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## National Components

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



In a transformative two-day training held on January 16-17, 2023, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, 31 dedicated SME representatives (including 13% women) embarked on a journey of knowledge and innovation. The training encompassed a wide array of topics crucial for packaging success:

- Examples of packaging systems per variety product



- Fundamentals of packaging including methodology
- Packaging Design
- Different packaging materials
- Packaging machinery
- Labelling, traceability, and barcoding

Participants delved into diverse packaging systems per product variety, gaining invaluable insights into the fundamentals of packaging methodology and design. They explored the intricacies of different packaging materials and machinery, and learned the significance of labelling, traceability, and barcoding.

Following the training, 13 forward-thinking companies, committed to implementing packaging changes within the next 2-3 months, embarked on a personalized coaching journey. In one-on-one sessions, these MSMEs meticulously discussed their existing packaging strategies, product-packaging pairings, and the challenges they encountered with their dedicated coach. The alignment of packaging systems with overarching market strategies underwent a thorough examination, with feedback offered on labeling, compliance, and packaging processes, all aimed at driving short and medium-term improvements.

In a post-training evaluation survey, every participant echoed a resounding sentiment - their understanding of packaging and labelling had undergone a transformation. Remarkably, 87% of respondents expressed a strong likelihood of applying the recommendations provided by the expert, setting the stage for enhanced packaging and market success.

This training served as a testament to the power of capacity-building and mentorship, illuminating the path for SMEs to thrive in the ever-evolving business landscape.

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## Elevating Brands: Transforming SMEs Through Marketing Kits



In a significant milestone, a training on marketing and branding, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in November of the previous year, sparked a transformation for 19 carefully selected SMEs. These enterprising individuals were provided with invaluable support to craft comprehensive marketing kits, complete with brochures, logos, and websites, resulting in a remarkable enhancement of their branding efforts. Armed with these newfound marketing assets, the SMEs took the global stage by storm. They actively participated in two major events: FIARA 2023 in Dakar and Food and Beverage West Africa 2023 in Lagos. This impressive feat was made possible through the unwavering support of the WACOMP programme.

To further boost their marketing materials and visibility, a collection of captivating photos and dedicated videos was crafted for 12 of the supported SMEs. These assets can be explored in the Videos section of the programme webpage [Videos section of the programme webpage](#) or through the following links below:

- ✓ West Coast Exports ([here](#))
- ✓ Napila Tongia Agricultural Project ([here](#))
- ✓ Nianda Agricultural and Trading Company ([here](#))
- ✓ Dibia Agriculture Helpline Ltd ([here](#))
- ✓ Motonkoh Tropical Farming ([here](#))
- ✓ Moawoma Rural Women's ([here](#))
- ✓ Rescue Goroma ([here](#))
- ✓ Lion Food Snacks & Beverage ([here](#))
- ✓ JMK Foods ([here](#))
- ✓ Salmed Cocoa ([here](#))
- ✓ Sinava Women Agricultural Development Association ([here](#))
- ✓ Women and Youth in Agricultural Development ([here](#))

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## **Unlocking Excellence in Oil Palm: A Transformative Study Tour**



In a recent stride toward excellence, the WACOMP Sierra Leone joined hands with Goldtree Mill, Plantation, and RSPO Certified Independent Smallholder Group for an illuminating Oil Palm Study Tour. This immersive field trip, conducted on April 28, 2023, in Daru Town, Kailahun District, had a singular purpose - to share knowledge and unveil best practices in oil palm cultivation and crude palm oil processing.

The significance of this event cannot be overstated, as it unfolded within the premises of an RSPO Certified plantation, a testament to top-tier standards. Participants were submerged in the world of efficient oil palm farming, gaining invaluable insights into the cultivation and maintenance of both immature and mature palm trees, coupled with optimal processing methods.

This enlightening tour marked the culmination of a series of activities that commenced with an introductory training and practical sessions. It paved the path for potential future collaborations, assisting participants in their quest for RSPO certification.

This initiative seamlessly aligns with WACOMP's overarching mission - to amplify value addition within regional and global value chains. By steadfastly supporting MSMEs and cooperatives in meeting market demands and harnessing emerging opportunities, WACOMP continues to

be a driving force behind sustainable economic growth throughout West Africa.

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To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

WACOMP ITC



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