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WACOMP Programme Highlights

March 2021 - Issue #5

Regional Component

ITC shares views on export promotion best practices in key WACOMP value chains



Last year in quarter four, ITC contributed to a series of three informational webinars on key value chains for the WACOMP programme organised by the ECOWAS Commission. Experts Martin Labbe, Haram Sidibe and Frederine Derlot gave introductory presentations highlighting ITC’s trade related technical assistance in West Africa and best practices in the ICT, Textiles and Mango value chains.

Each webinar gathered over 70 participants from the public and private sectors and provided an inclusive platform to discuss the type of support needed by West African SMEs to access foreign markets. One of the purposes of the webinars was to develop a well-crafted capacity-building offer and include input from project beneficiaries ahead of the upcoming Meet the Buyers event which will take place annually in 2021 and 2022.

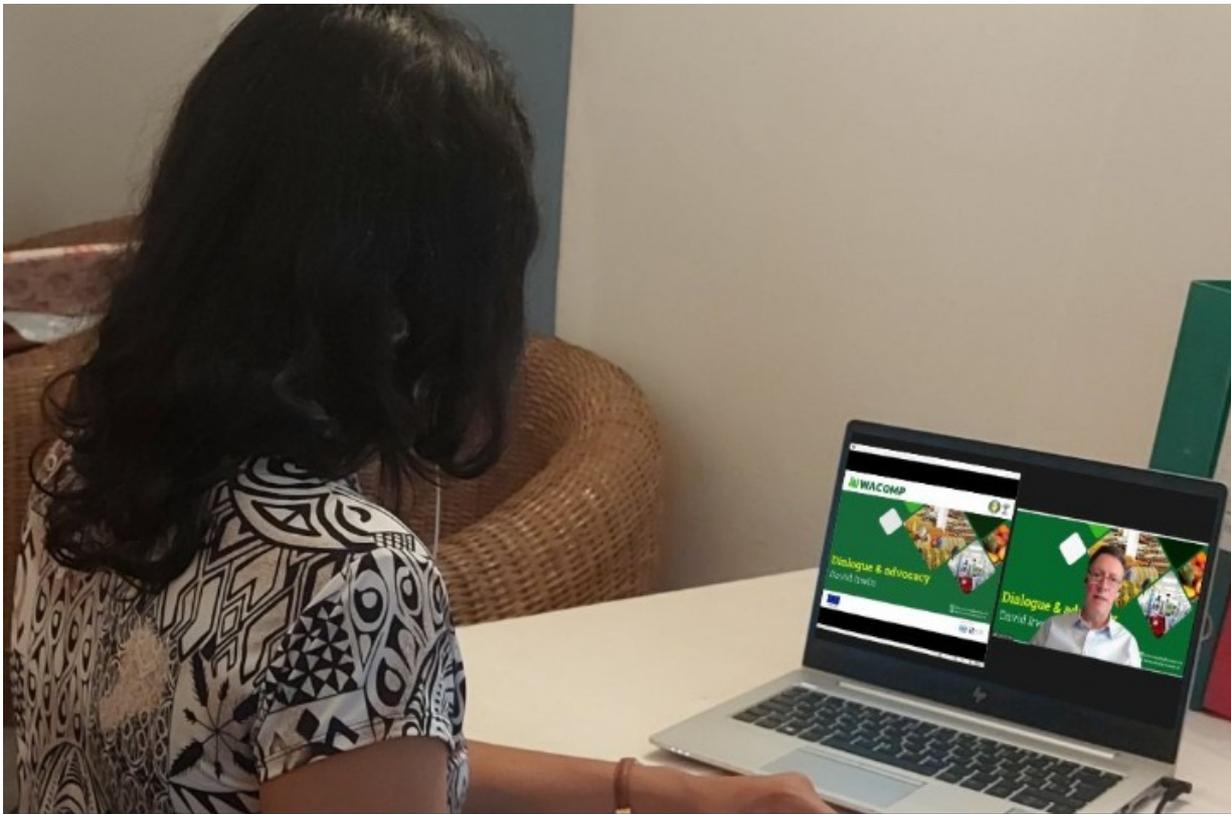
The presentations highlighted the need for technical training on enhancing online presence, understanding requirements for target markets and preparing

business-to-business matchmaking events. Recommendations provided by ITC were to improve the export performance of value chains and by that increase production capacity meeting buyers quality demands, encouraging local actors to organise product supply, as well as upskill women and youth entrepreneurs by providing business plans and models.

The webinars also explored areas the programme could build on previous initiatives implemented in the selected value chains such as the EU-funded Fight against fruit flies West Africa project and the West African Regional Mango Alliance. By giving project beneficiaries the opportunity to tap into ongoing regional programmes in West Africa for increased ownership and sustainability.



Regional Business Associations address challenges linked to policy reform



ITC took regional business associations (RBAs) and their national members through key challenges in policy advocacy and research capabilities during a 3-part webinar series on the 15 to 19 February 2021. The training series underscored the importance of a policy's foundation, as each policy builds on the groundwork laid by its predecessor. "RBAs should look for opportunities at international gatherings if and when they start again since they can often be a good place to network and lobby," said trainer David Irwin.

Over 45 attendees were introduced to a five-step approach to persuade policy makers on how to reflect private sector challenges. The steps begin with identifying and framing the subject, followed by subject research, then explaining the policy position, thereafter engaging with policy makers for its establishment and finally, evaluation and follow up.

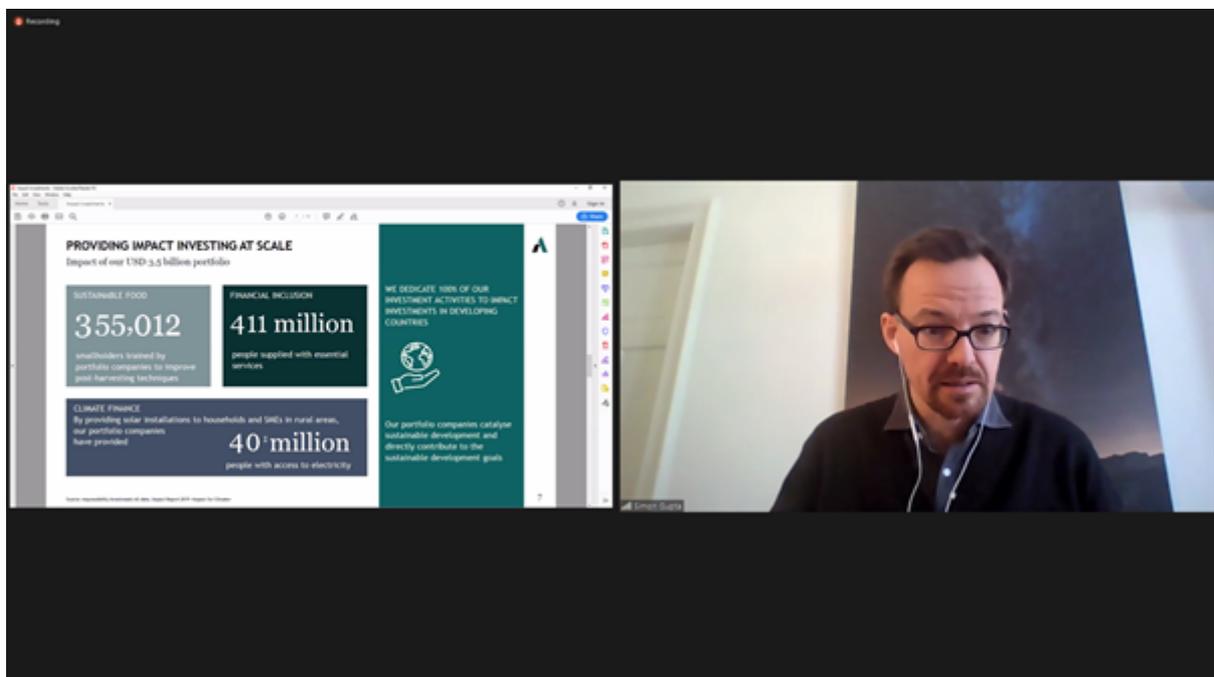
In order to drive policy reform, representatives were advised to pursue member participation in government task forces. "Governments can demonstrate that they are willing to listen to the private sector, but they should make it clear that they have certain expectations. These include: (a) that proposals will be supported by objective evidence; (b) that they will engage in dialogue and; (c) that once the arguments have been aired, the private sector has to accept it is up to government to make the final decisions," said Irwin.

The training also outlined the need to develop policies seeking to reduce the burden on businesses as well as developing proposals for policy reform. After

the training series, participants described the sessions as interactive and useful to address challenges faced by business associations. Participants included representatives from regional associations as FEWACCI, FEBWE, FWAEA, FEWAMA, AIPAWAS, NEPAD as well as national member associations.

The workshops along with the upcoming bilateral consultations to be held with West African RBAs will set the stage for practical working sessions on identified topics to fuel dialogue in the ECOWAS Business Council once established.

Business Support Organisations learn to access international funding and coach SMEs



 Over 50 business support organisations (BSOs) francophone representatives in West Africa, from the public and private sector attended the training on International Funding Sources and Digital Platforms on 23-25 February 2021. The webinar was held as part of the ongoing access to finance training series supporting organisations and their engagement with small businesses. The training was also delivered to Anglophone countries from the region in December 2020.

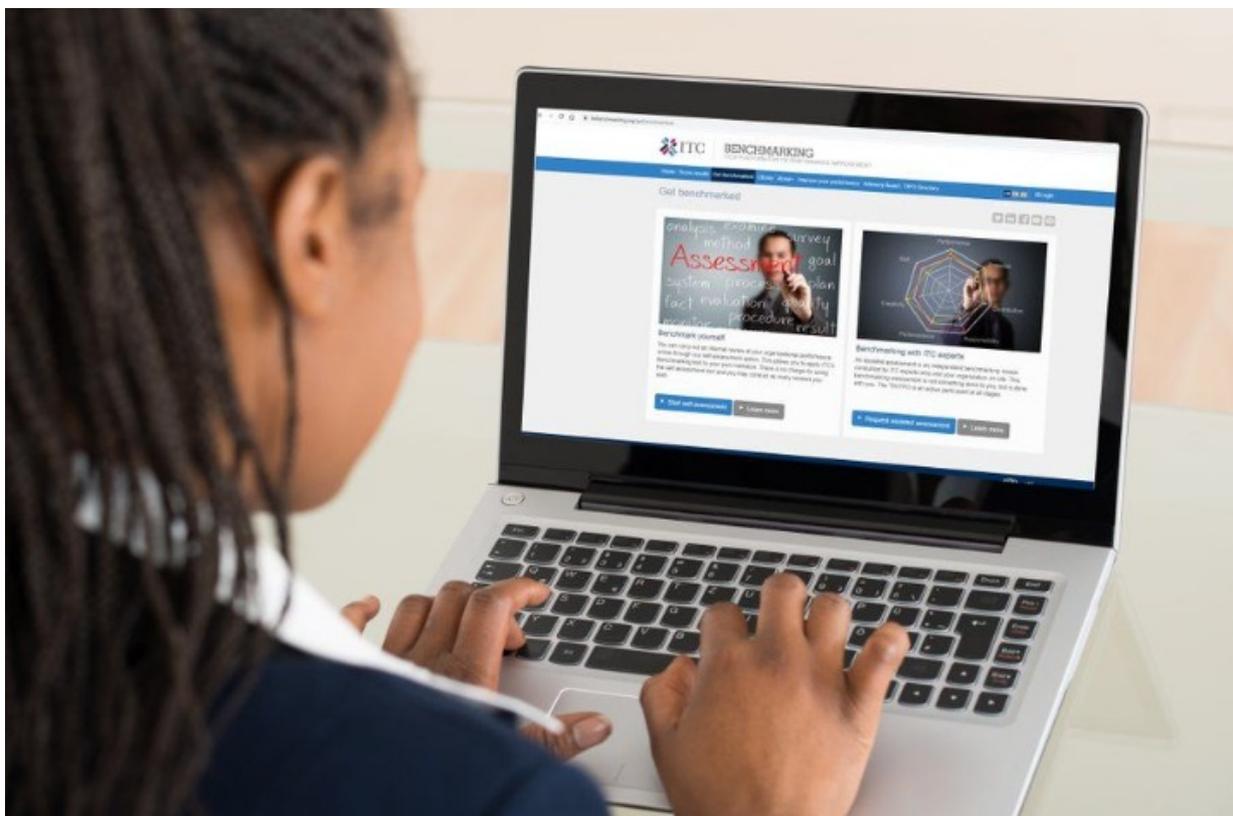
Webinar panellists helped representatives from 32 BSOs identify key sectors to source financing both internally and externally. Participants learned to secure this funding from sources such as venture capitals, microfinance, credit, and private

equity funds as well as funds linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, they reviewed approaches to sharing best practices.

The webinar session also encouraged organisations to emphasize the benefits of incorporating digital tools to small businesses practices, pursuing diaspora investments and crowd funding opportunities for seed capital. Representatives were also advised to incorporate environmental, social and government criteria into business investment decisions for sustainability.

Panellists contributing towards the training session included Najwa El Iraki, Managing Director North and West Africa at [Opportunity Network](#), Alain Nkurikiye, Founder and CEO of [Wajenzi](#) and Simon Gupta, Head Business Development DFI/IFI at [responsAbility Investment AG](#).

Business Support Organizations learn to assess performance through ITC benchmarking tool



A regional training session was held for Business Support Organizations (BSOs) on the [ITC self-assessment benchmarking platform](#) and tool on 15 December 2020. The training aimed to ensure BSOs understand managerial and operational gaps against global good practices. The tool will empower BSOs to

undertake an in-depth self-assessment and understand the specific actions to achieve excellence, while also considering their specific context.

BSOs were encouraged to compare their existing practices against the following principles: appropriate and credible governance, relevant and effective strategy, strategic resources and capabilities, client centric services, results as well as value orientation. The platform gives BSOs access to a library of case studies from around the world and provides specific successful implementation of various good practices.

70% of the BSOs that participated in the training indicated an interest to conduct a benchmarking self-assessment of their organisation using the ITC tool. After the training, three ECOWAS BSOs namely, the Ghana Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Business Women and Entrepreneurs in Togo and the Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry registered to use the ITC Benchmarking platform.

ITC will continue to raise awareness on this innovative tool to ensure BSOs become more effective in delivering their mandate, offer impactful services and establish competitive SME internationalisation by adopting these global institutional good practices.

National Components

Sierra Leonean SMEs participate in boot camp to access financing opportunities



More than 25 small and medium-sized enterprises in Sierra Leone took part in an intensive 3-day business boot camp aimed at strengthening the capacity of agribusinesses in the cocoa, cassava, and palm oil sectors.

Under the guidance of ITC local financial advisers, boot camp participants focused on the fundamentals of business financing, including financial planning and management as well as business plan development and product costing.

“The training made me learn more about business planning around the value chain, doing a SWOT analysis, understanding legal compliance issues and above all, tracking my expenditure against my income”, said Fatmatta Kallon, a female agribusiness CEO.

On the final day of the boot camp, participants worked alongside mentors to develop and agree on company-specific action plans and a timeline of future activities. The strategies provided agripreneurs with a guided course of action to include in their business over the next few months and prepared them to attract investors and access finance.

The boot camp is the first of several activities lined up by ITC to bolster the potential of SMEs in Sierra Leone. Another will be organized this month for more MSMEs from other districts in Sierra Leone. Future exercises will include the use of financial and non-financial diagnostic tools, the creation of links between SMEs and capital providers, as well as business plan implementation.

Guinean Pineapple sector reinvigorated to enter new markets



Over 70 public and private sector representatives from Guinea's pineapple sector and implementing agencies attended a workshop to review key data and conclusions on export opportunities in this value chain. ITC presented the results of extensive studies on markets with high export potential for Guinean pineapple in the European Union, North Africa's Morocco and the sub-region of Mali and The Gambia.

The hybrid workshop took place during the 20 and 21 January in Conakry was organized in coordination with UNIDO which is the main implementing agency of the WACOMP Sierra Leone and ENABEL as part of the Entreprena project which is also developing an export strategy targeting the Senegalese market. The joint

endeavour by the three agencies was to increase cooperation in the value chain and ensure better synergy for value chain interventions.

Following the sector study several primary factors were identified to improve its export performance, these include: increasing the volume of pineapple production to ensure stable supply for export markets, upgrading export packaging, complying with the required quality standards, introducing adapted modes of transport, such as refrigeration trucks and ensuring smooth export processes by air, for premium products.

During the workshop, representatives discussed the country's main pineapple local varieties namely the Cayenne and Baronne de Rothschild, its transportation to target markets including the two newly selected markets - Morocco and France.

To further the marketing studies being prepared over the next few months, representatives from exporting MSMEs agreed to ship a sample package of pineapples to assess the sensory properties of the Baronne de Rothschild variety in advanced laboratories and organize tasting sessions with the support of foreign distributors.

The event was also covered by local news agencies:

[RTG TV](#)

[Évasion TV](#)

[Guinee7.com](#)

[Ledjely.com](#)

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WACOMP ITC





Contact: **Aissatou Diallo**, Senior AfCFTA Coordinator, West Africa Regional Portfolio Manager. diallo@intracen.org, +41-22 730 0284

Yared Befecadu, Programme Management Officer, WACOMP Regional, Guinea and Sierra Leone. befecadu@intracen.org, +41 22 730 0434

Thomas Bechmann, Associate Programme Adviser, WACOMP Senegal bechmann@intracen.org, +41 22 730 0293

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

Postal address: ITC, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Internet: www.intracen.org/WACOMP

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