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WACOMP Programme Highlights

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Regional Component

West African finance institutions attend sustainable finance workshop



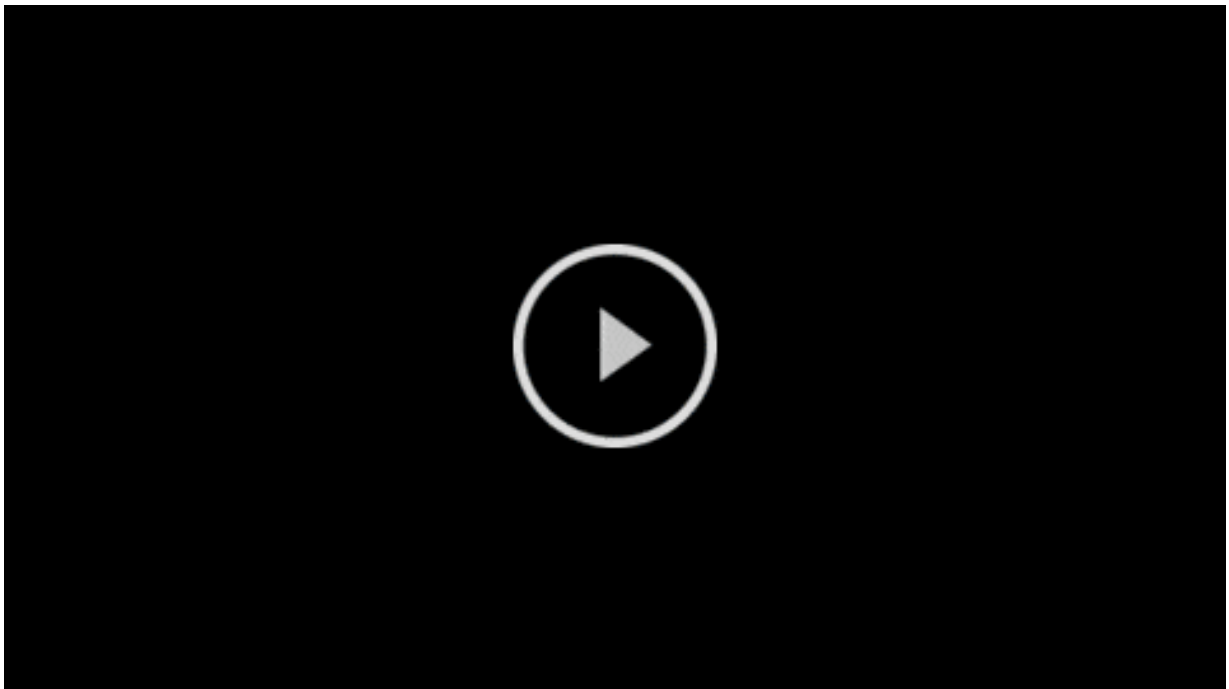
As part of the access to finance webinar series, finance institutions in West Africa attended a workshop on sustainable finance on 6 and 7 July 2021. The two-day session aimed to provide these institutions with the expertise to access sustainable financing from investors seeking to promote sustainable businesses by furnishing access to capital on concessionary terms. Trainers took over 70 participants through the fundamentals of sustainable finance, its contribution to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as the benefits of integrating sustainable mechanisms to organisational and financial systems.

Participants also learned the key role finance institutions play in making green bonds and loans attractive to small businesses. This also included a look at the environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues related to future return on investment. Reemt Behrens, a Trainer and Senior Investment Officer at BlueOrchard Finance Limited, underscored the need for finance institutions to raise awareness amongst small businesses on the benefits of green investments. This includes “how to quantify the energy saved, carry out an

energy audit or how to incorporate energy costs into the decision to buy a new machine,” said Behrens.

The role of the government in promoting green finance and granting tax benefits to green investments will provide further incentives for small businesses as well as reduce initial business costs. The training also highlighted the benefits of businesses integrating renewable energy to their business as this strengthens opportunities in securing green funding. At the end of the session, participants were also linked to four international sustainable financiers.

ECOWAS launches trade promotion organisation network in region



On 16 and 17 July 2021 representatives from the ECOWAS Commission launched the region’s ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organisations (TPO) Network with support from ITC. The regional TPO network is led by the public sector and will work alongside the ECOWAS Commission to spur inclusive trade development across the region.

During the inaugural annual general assembly, newly elected president of the TPO network and CEO of the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, Olusegun Awolowo expressed his appreciation to ITC for its support in establishing the TPO network. “It is imperative that through the ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organisation Network, we work assiduously towards facilitating the ease of trade

for our MSMEs within the ECOWAS region and Africa at large and build a body of exporters to boost intra-African trade,” said Awolowo.

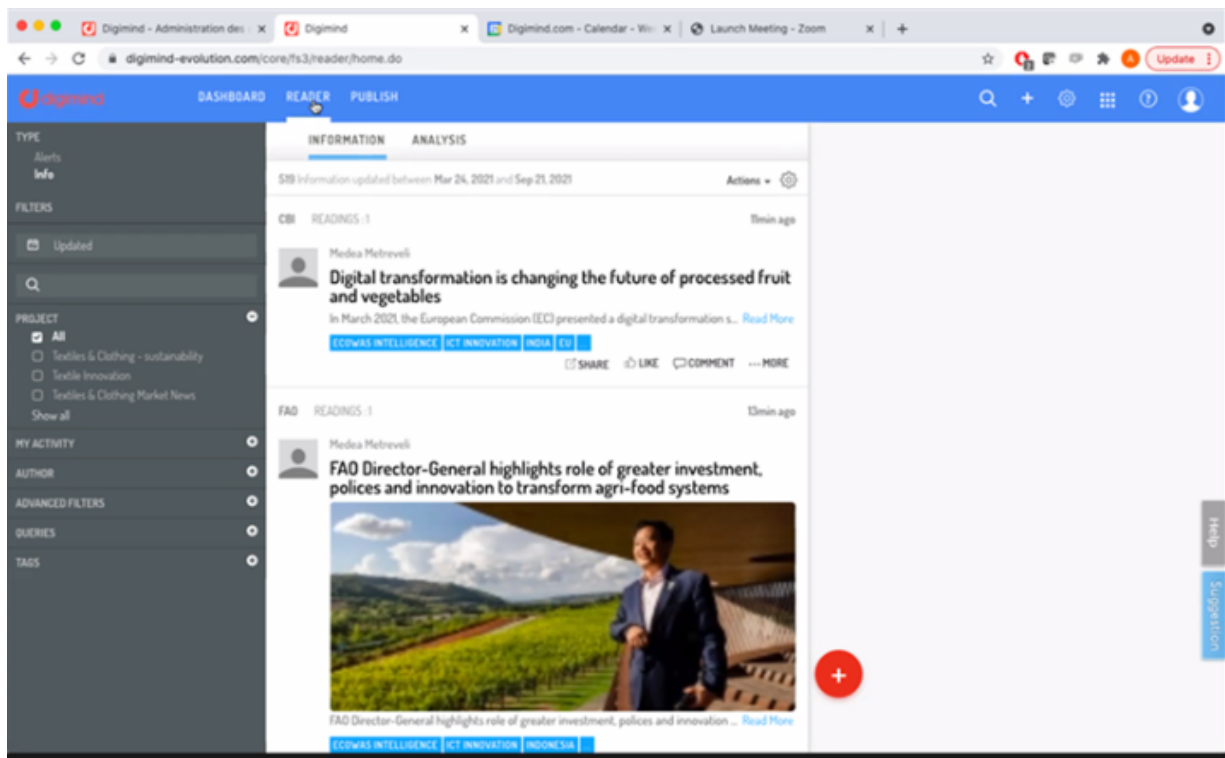


Before launching the TPO network, ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement, Tei Konzi highlighted the role TPO networks play for businesses seeking to access new markets. While ITC ED, Pamela Coke-Hamilton underscored the major

milestone West Africa had achieved by establishing the regional promotion network. The launch of the TPO network was also commended by Cecile Tassin Pelzer, representative of the European Union. During her opening remarks Pelzer reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to strengthen the competitiveness of African small businesses through programmes such as the West African Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP).

Other representatives attending the meeting included Vice President of Nigeria, H.E Prof Yemi Osinbajo, TPO Network Vice President Guy M’Bengue, Chief Executive Officer of Côte d’Ivoire Export Promotion Agency (APEX-CI), Jean B. Bakole, Regional Director of UNIDO, and Dr. Asare Afua Asabea, Chief Executive Officer of Ghana Export Promotion Agency (GEPA).

ECOWAS focal points receive training on market information monitoring system



In partnership with global monitoring and competitive intelligence company Digimind, ITC held a training on the Market Information Monitoring System (MIMS) developed for the ECOWAS region on 11, 14, and 17 June 2021. This tool enables ECOWAS Commission focal points to efficiently scan relevant market information available online and share it with beneficiaries across its member countries to improve trade intelligence across the region.

MIMS aims to boost trade intelligence on the four WACOMP programme value chains: Mango, ICT (information and communication technologies), Textiles and Clothing, and Cassava.

The three-day training sessions introduced ECOWAS focal points to the Digimind information platform. During the intensive two-hour training staggered into three sessions, trainees performed specific searches based on preferences, and accessed a vast selection of news and information sources. Once trainees master the system, the Commission will use the platform to provide tailored and up-to-date market information to businesses and institutions in the region.

Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism spotlights informal payment settlements in Togo



Following the introduction of the Trade Alert Obstacle Mechanism (TOAM) tool in Togo, various obstacles have been identified and addressed. Recently, an obstacle reported through the platform highlighted the country's T1 Port Office permitted goods pass inspection following the informal negotiation and fee settlement with a staff member.

Once this report was shared with Togo's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a legal analysis of the case was undertaken by authorities which was followed by an official communication to the T1 Port Office underscoring these approaches do not comply with the law and will be halted. Authorities agreed to update information regarding transit and custom tariffs at the Port on the Chamber of Commerce website as well as reinforce these approaches.

The obstacles reported and addressed in Togo by the TOAM can be found on the [country website](#).

Through the WACOMP programme the TOAM is gradually being introduced to Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. Trainings are held both virtually and in-person with the support of National Focal points, in partnership with ECOWAS.

National Components

Discovering the market potential of the Baronne De Rothschild pineapple



As the WACOMP programme works towards improving Guinea's pineapple sector, ITC developed four market studies to identify potential market opportunities as the sector grows and expand its opportunities in regional and international markets. Specific focus was dedicated to the Baronne de Rothschild pineapple variety, a unique Guinean premium product characterised by its less acidic nature, sweet and bright yellow hue.

Being a new premium pineapple with rare international export, ITC and the scientific laboratory Eurofins performed a detailed analysis to gain general information on the pineapple's characteristics, reinforce the marketing mix with tangible data and identify the nutritional traits of the Baronne de Rothschild.

To further improve export possibilities of Guinean pineapples, over 200 respondents from Morocco and France completed a survey providing consumer perspectives on the Baronne de Rothschild pineapple. Moroccan consumers highlighted the origin factor as either very or extremely important at 63%, while

74% of French respondents ranked taste as either very or extremely important when buying pineapples.

Most Moroccan consumers also held a positive view of this new premium pineapple and the majority of French respondents indicated a willingness to pay more for this type of pineapple. The consumer survey results are part of a market study on the Baronne de Rothschild and will be released in December 2021.

Sierra Leonean BSOs strengthen capabilities in trade support service delivery and advocacy



30 representatives from the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA), the Sierra Leone Chamber for Agribusiness Development (SLeCAD) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) registered to participate in a training series on Trade Support Service Portfolio Development and Delivery. The first module, on Service portfolio Design and Delivery took place on 7 to 9 June 2021 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The second module on Export Readiness will be delivered in four sub sessions. The first session took place on 13 July 2021.

The trainings will equip participants with techniques to design and deliver result-

oriented support services for improved trade readiness and competitiveness amongst small businesses in West Africa. The training will take participants through in-class sessions, practical exercises as well as support in work sessions. Practical work involves supporting identified businesses in the Cocoa, Cassava, Palm Oil and Rice sectors, based on skills gained from the training series. In addition, participants will also complete a practical group project based on a real business case.

On 10 and 11 June 2021, participants also learned the benefits of integrating trade related advocacy and policy advocacy to improve trade competitiveness, foster a conducive business environment at the national level and highlight existing opportunities for businesses with existing international trade agreements. The two-day workshop on advocacy was held for public and private sector representatives.

Business Support Organisations (BSOs) were encouraged to develop an advocacy strategy and theory of change to identify priority issues both defensive as well as offensive to advance Sierra Leone's businesses and effectively achieve trade advocacy and dialogue objectives. Finally, representatives were also urged to create a more structured framework for Public-Private Dialogue, awareness raising purposes as well as better policy-making outcomes.

The next training sessions will cover Client Management and Post Training Coaching for Knowledge Application, the series will run until November 2021.

WACOMP Sierra Leone concludes reports on palm oil sector improvements and export opportunities in the US market



After undertaking an assessment of the palm oil sector in Sierra Leone, WACOMP Sierra Leone has compiled a report based on the field data gathered from small holder palm oil farmers across the country. The sector assessment provides a deeper understanding of impediments to the production and processing of palm oil. It also identifies existing local and international markets for export.

To improve the management of small holder palm oil production, data from the assessment highlighted the need for access to better seedlings and fertilizer. The study also indicated the low harvest rates of fresh fruit bunches by small holder farmers. As a result, the report gives recommendation to address existing challenges in production and processing. It also provides more efficient approaches and solutions to improve the palm oil sector.

In addition, a report on export opportunities in the US market recommended achieving international standards for sanitation (i.e. Technical Barriers to Trade) as well as gaining certification in social and environmental standards including SPS measures for palm oil.

The US market report highlights the need to create a roadmap for product and market development to ensure a successful approach for palm oil products export. Identifying the local and regional demands for the sector was also recommended to increase domestic supply. Targeting the US consumer conscience by formulating a marketing strategy was also proposed.

Prior to sharing the two reports publicly, key partners and beneficiaries will hold internal discussions.

Cooperatives in the cassava, cocoa and palm oil sectors undergo institutional assessment



After over 100 cooperatives applied to take part in an assessment ITC and UNIDO along with Sierra Leone's Produce and Monitoring Board organised, 33 cooperatives were selected to go through ITC's Cooperative Assessment Methodology. The institutional assessment provided ITC and UNIDO with detailed information outlining the resources needed to improve the capabilities of these cooperatives. The assessments were held from 14 to 30 June 2021 and used a variety of indicators to evaluate the quality of leadership, resources and services in each cooperative.

Cooperatives were evaluated on their capabilities and extent of connectivity as well as access to resources and reliability. The assessment determined cooperatives need improvement in leadership capabilities to effectively serve member's needs. Areas recommended for cooperatives to improve are:

- Effective Governance Framework
- Strengthening Leadership
- Strategic Vision and Planning
- Stakeholder Mapping and Market Links

- Designing a Service Portfolio
- Effective Member Management
- Revenue Generation
- Measurement and Results Framework
- Revenue Generation

To support in these identified areas, the WACOMP Sierra Leone programme will deliver trainings to the select cooperatives, the training will also include one-on-one and peer-to-peer exchanges.

39 small businesses receive financial analysis results



After completing bootcamp training held by ITC earlier in the year, 39 small businesses qualified to participate in an intensive post-bootcamp business diagnostic study. The study identified businesses resource management challenges, competitiveness and productivity, financial status as well as other capacity building needs.

The analysis process provided coaching through a consultant to support small businesses in revising financial approaches; it also established a result to be achieved through best practices as well as identified areas to build synergies and gain an understanding of existing missteps to achieve a specific objective. This three-step process was outlined as the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment.

The study determined small businesses are facing significant challenges in the following areas: access to finance, human resource capacity and financial management. Recommendations were made to support endeavours to access finance, improve business advisory support and increase production capabilities. Another gap highlighted in the study a lack of understanding in marketing approaches, each of these challenges hinder potential business growth and profitability.

Small business will receive training sessions to address each of these identified challenges and improve their competitiveness as well as opportunities to access finance.

WACOMP Senegal local team engages national stakeholders



Once the WACOMP local team settled in their Dakar office, several working sessions were scheduled with all relevant programme stakeholders. These

included the European Union Delegation in Senegal, the Ministry of Trade and SMEs, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Senegal, the institutional anchor of WACOMP (PACAO) Senegal, the Ministry of Finance and Budget as well as the Directorate of Foreign Trade and more.

During each of these meetings, the WACOMP local team presented the progress of project implementation and identified possible areas of synergy with government representatives and other technical as well as financial partners in the country.

As Senegal continues to devolve its state services, the WACOMP country-based team held a bilateral meeting with the Governor of the Dakar region as well as other regional offices working in the economic sector to encourage participation as WACOMP Senegal continues with its project implementation. This is the first of eight meetings the local team will organize to meet with national representatives in the country's nine beneficiary regions (Dakar, Thiès, Louga, Saint-Louis, Matam, Fatick, Sédhiou, Kolda, Ziguinchor).

Senegalese ICT companies co-develop learning programme with training institutions



ICT companies and training institutions attended an intensive high-level workshop to create a dynamic school-business partnership programme focused on enhancing the needs of companies in the ICT sub-sector. This work-study programme aims to increase the employability of youth and the competitiveness of companies. The workshop initiated crafting an implementation plan, outlined parameters for partnerships with the private sector, vocational training institutions as well as government bodies in Senegal.

Producer organisations across the Niayes region band together to set up cooperatives



The Centre for Research and Action on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CRADESC) and WACOMP Senegal held a series of three workshops in the Southern Niayes region from 28 July to 3 August 2021. The workshop aimed to inform producer organisations on the steps to form a cooperative society in line with the requirements from OHADA Uniform Act on the law of cooperative societies.

90 participants attended the two-day workshop to review the overall provisions

and expected stipulations for cooperative societies. These include the type and role of members, the allocation of shares as well as the functioning roles of the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. The workshops are also preparing the cooperatives for the general assembly of cooperative societies to be held in September 2021.

WACOMP Senegal visits FIARA 2021 and meets actors from Niayes



During the International Fair for Agriculture and Animal Resources (FIARA), the WACOMP local team met with rural producers and farming representatives on 8 June 2021. Rural Senegalese representatives and farmers involved in production promoted their goods at the fair. The WACOMP team met with key representatives from target sectors to raise awareness on the benefits of forming a cooperative and how producers are using these collaborative efforts to develop sustainable agricultural practices.

The WACOMP Senegal programme engaged with the women's college of the National Council for Rural Consultation and Cooperation (CNCR) and the "We are the Solution (NSS)" movement, a group of rural women's associations from five African countries (Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Guinea). The

NSS group expressed great interest in forming a cooperative with a business focus in line with the OHADA Uniform Act.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

WACOMP ITC



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