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WACOMP Programme Highlights

Issue #1

West Africa moves to form Trade Intelligence Cell



As part of its objectives to increase competitiveness of businesses in the region, WACOMP will establish a trade intelligence cell to serve as an exhaustive resource on the selected value chains: Cassava, Mangoes, ICT, Textiles and Garments.

The Trade Intelligence Cell will provide key information to the West African Trade Observatory, the region's envisioned primary resource for trade data and information. The intelligence cell will provide data on market opportunities, best practices, field information, competition analysis, norms, regulations, market requirements and client needs.

Last year, ITC engaged with stakeholders during a field mission to present the concept of the intelligence cell and ensure they prioritised the informational needs as indicated by the business community. To improve trade market intelligence flows in the region, the WACOMP programme also initiated a series

of trade data trainings for trade intelligence officers, analysts and statisticians across ECOWAS member states and Mauritania. ITC took the group of analysts and statisticians through its suite of trade data and market intelligence tools. The participants gained new approaches in extracting and filtering trade data to improve their monitoring and analysis methods.

The exchanges between ITC and the business community contributed towards the development of an action plan to implement the intelligence cell. ITC also presented its concept for the Trade Intelligence Cell to ensure feedback includes the region's business community. An identified group of West African companies also provided input on the defined sectors through a survey.

The stakeholder engagements provided ITC with constructive feedback outlining the business community's information priorities on the WACOMP selected value chains of mango, textiles, cassava and ICT. A technical guideline report was developed in February 2020 for ECOWAS giving a number of proposed solutions to establish the trade intelligence cell.



ECOWAS looks to spur investment through regional business council



As part of its deliverables for the WACOMP project, ITC is providing advisory support to form the ECOWAS Business Council (EBC). The council aims to increase investment opportunities for industrial sectors in the region; place a spotlight on trade investment promotion, policy, market intelligence and business networks.

As the approval process continues for the EBC concept note, ITC is working alongside the ECOWAS Commission and the council's prospective members to draft a strategic action plan for the business council. The plan's focus will encompass the need for advocacy, understanding training needs as well as current affairs.

Prior to this, ITC held a two-day seminar last year to define a strategy map and operational plan for the ECOWAS Business Council (EBC), with members of the private and public sector.

As the approval of the concept note continues, an assessment of the region's private sector networks is underway to begin consolidating these outcomes with the proposed ECOWAS Business Council. ITC is also contributing towards the development of thematic research papers and other promotional efforts for the business council.

To achieve the Council's aims to spur regional resources and encourage increased sustainability, ITC is also extending its support towards the development of business model.

UEMOA TPO network extends to include all ECOWAS Member States



A consultative meeting was held last year in November to establish a regional Trade Promotion Network (TPO) and to increase regional collaboration. ECOWAS member states formed a task force charged with the mandate to establish a TPO network comprised of all the region's Member States and extend the existing UEMOA TPO network. The task force also includes input from the president and secretariat representatives of the UEMOA TPO Network.

Member state representatives identified areas for development to ensure an inclusive TPO network and to boost trade across the ECOWAS region. Representatives also discussed the working parameters of a strategic framework to guide the implementation of a TPO network.

ITC is currently providing the committee with technical guidance in developing an overarching MOU for the regional TPO network while reviewing the existing terms of reference developed for the UEMOA TPO network. The task force is also outlining the TPO network's expected outputs during its initial two years.

These deliverables will outline the network's membership, structure, governance, mandate, key performance indicators as well as sustainability outlook.

Regional trade bodies validate performance improvement roadmaps



Following a benchmarking assessment of six regional business agencies undertaken by ITC early last year, the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) was identified to receive capacity-building support to improve the service mechanisms it provides local businesses.

Over 30 representatives of the region's National Chambers of Commerce took part in a training held in November 2019. FEWACCI gained a better understanding of the specific service needs of their members, and methods to strengthen their capability by reviewing the benchmarking assessment carried out by ITC.

To achieve institutional strengthening for FEWACCI as well as broaden its service delivery mechanisms, ITC developed the regional body a performance improvement roadmap (PIRM). The roadmap plans to improve the regional chamber's products and services.

ITC also met with members of the Federation of West African Employer's Association in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire to develop a performance improvement roadmap. FWAEA was also provided with methods to address its weaknesses and improve its performance and efficiency. The association's overall aim is to strengthen the value offering it provides members, stakeholders and clients based on the ITC technical analysis and implementation of the roadmap.

The PIRM was approved in March 2020 during FEWACCI's Annual General Meeting held in Senegal. Following its full endorsement from Member States, implementation of the roadmap has begun with ITC carrying out an initial analysis on the regional body's constitution, legal structure and governance.

Partners strategise collaboratively to advance programme objectives



The ECOWAS Commissioner of Industry and Private Sector Promotion, Mr Mamdou Traore and ITC's Director of Country Programmes, Mr Ashish Shah held a meeting to review progress on programme activities and agreed to increase the pace of upcoming initiatives. Prior to this meeting, ECOWAS held a three day workshop with all programme partners in Abuja, Nigeria to improve the programme's communication initiatives.

The commission formed a Joint Communication Working Group with representation from all programme implementers. The joint working group outlined ways to improve the coordination and implementation of communication activities between programme partners.

Programme representatives assessed the media landscape in West Africa. ITC and UNIDO then followed with presentations of their existing WACOMP communications plan with the aim of using these to guide the development of an overarching WACOMP Communications Strategy. The final day of the workshop

saw ITC and UNIDO jointly submit a number of proposed recommendations to improve overall communication efforts.

The working group agreed to work towards a broader engagement of the regional media by hosting a Regional Media Workshop to strengthen its communication outreach and efforts.

To learn more about the West Africa Competitiveness Programme visit:

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