

## ECOWAS Agricultural Trade (EAT) program

The regional ECOWAS Agricultural Trade (EAT) program is funded by the BMZ's "One World – No Hunger" special initiative and implemented by GIZ. It started in January 2022 with a funding of 10 million Euros and will last for 5 years. The main partners are the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja and the ECOWAS member states. The main objective of the EAT program is to contribute to regional integration by strengthening intra-regional agricultural trade. All 15 ECOWAS member states are involved in regional activities, while national and local program activities focus on Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Benin, Ghana, and Burkina Faso.

### The challenges

Within the ECOWAS region, around 23 million people suffer from malnutrition. High population growth, climate change and rapid urbanization is accelerating demand for food faster than gains in agricultural production, meaning the share of food imports is increasing. The Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's war against Ukraine have recently highlighted the risks associated with a dependence on the world market.

Stronger regional coordination and more trade within the ECOWAS region could help solve this problem while increasing agricultural productivity.

However, intra-regional agricultural trade currently plays a minor role. Nigeria, which alone is already responsible for over 50% of all ECOWAS agricultural imports, receives less than 5% of its food from other ECOWAS countries, with the majority coming from the Far East and Europe.

The low volume of trade between neighboring countries owes itself in part due to insufficient infrastructure, but also to the many hurdles faced by traders – particularly women – at border crossings due to the lack of a practiced common trade policy in the ECOWAS region. High tariffs and overlapping regulations combine with long waiting times, corruption, and harassment at border crossings to significantly disrupt the ease of trade.

As a result, the majority of cross-border agricultural trade in the region takes place in the informal sector, making it difficult to account for in statistics and policies. Ultimately, regional economic integration is important for food security and livelihoods but is still incomplete in the ECOWAS region.

### Our approach

A multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach is implemented in collaboration with the ECOWAS Commission, ECOWAS Member States, civil society, the private sector and other trade actors, aiming to contribute to regional integration for the benefit of all stakeholders involved, especially disadvantaged groups. This is achieved by addressing the political, economic, gender, climate, and food and nutrition security dimensions of regional agricultural trade and improving the institutional and technical conditions for it through concrete support measures.

At the macro-level, this involves policy advice and support to strengthen the role of the ECOWAS Commission in coordinating agricultural trade policies. ECOWAS focal points in line ministries responsible for member states are supported in aligning, harmonizing, and implementing agreed ECOWAS agri-trade requirements. The program also supports public-private dialogues in which the ECOWAS Commission and its member states, as well as regional and national sector and trade associations, chambers of commerce, civil society, and private organizations agree on proposals for specific digital tools and cooperative approaches to trade facilitation through its gender, climate and nutrition dimensions. The measures will be accompanied by evidence-based knowledge products, such as analyses and studies, as well as advisory services and process facilitation.

At the meso- and micro-levels, the program provides capacity building approaches, services, advice and technical support to regional organizations and national authorities to support the implementation of specific sustainable agri-trade instruments. These will be tested at selected border control points for their regional applicability to SME traders and small agricultural traders. The results will be discussed and reviewed in the dialogues.



## Outputs and fields of intervention

EAT works on 3 outputs:

Under Output 1, "Strengthen the role of the ECOWAS Commission in the coordination of gender-sensitive sustainable agricultural trade instruments with ECOWAS Member States", the following actions are designed:

- Supporting gap analysis for regional and national policy harmonization and alignment
- Support for public-private dialogue on trade instruments with agricultural products
- Support capacity building for regional and national agricultural trade policy
- Support to ECOWAS committees or bodies

Under Output 2, "Supporting sustainable gender-sensitive agricultural trade facilitation measures and services", the following actions are designed:

- Reduce non-tariff barriers through harmonization of rules and protocols, in particular rules of origin, SPS measures and control of persons
- Capacity building of public and civil actors at regional and national levels and in border areas
- Capitalize on results for policy dialogue and adaptation

Within the framework of Output 3, "Improve regional agricultural trade promotion services and the commercial performance of traders", the following actions are designed:

- Support for capacity-building of food trade actors through information campaigns, training, coaching/mentoring, networking and knowledge exchange, with support services to traders (lobbying, information, campaigns, etc.) by regional and national associations
- Support business networks through knowledge exchange within ECOWAS and other RECs
- Cooperation with the private sector on innovations (traceability, logistics, cold storage, etc.) through PPPs or calls for proposals

## Main partners and target groups

The main implementing partner is the ECOWAS Commission with the directorates responsible for agriculture and rural development, trade, customs, free movement of people, and the Gender Development Center. Other relevant partners include regional and national trade associations, chambers of commerce and agriculture, responsible national ministries and authorities, civil society and the private sector.

The target group consists of individual traders in the food sector and SMEs or cooperators active in the food sector.

<b>Project name</b>	Strengthening the ECOWAS Commission for the promotion of regional agricultural trade
<b>Ordered by</b>	German Federal Ministry for Cooperation and Economic Development (BMZ)
<b>Implementation organization</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>Region/country</b>	The 15 ECOWAS countries; pilots in Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, other neighboring countries to be confirmed
<b>Implementation partner</b>	ECOWAS Commission
<b>Duration</b>	January 2022 - September 2026
<b>Budget</b>	10 Mio. EUR

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