



DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER

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About the TFWA Program

The Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program is an initiative driven by multiple development partners that aims to improve existing trade facilitation measures in West Africa. The program strives to reduce the time and cost of trade borne by the private sector, especially by improving the movement of goods along selected corridors, and supporting small-scale traders – including women and other key stakeholders – with trade facilitation reforms and programs.

The TFWA Program brings together key development partners, including European Union, USAID, Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Government of the Federal Republic of

Germany to support countries in the region and regional bodies (the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions) in the implementation of a combination of targeted interventions and measures.

The TFWA Program is managed by the World Bank Group and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ) – the program's implementing partners – with strategic oversight and guidance provided by a Steering Committee, chaired by the ECOWAS Commission and supported by the UEMOA Commission as deputy chair.

FUNDED BY



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands



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ECOWAS Commission Launches Empowerment Program for NTFCs



The ECOWAS Commission successfully launched the ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program Training for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs). This initiative is a regional online capacity building program to empower NTFC members to effectively perform their duties and move their trade facilitation agendas forward—equipping them with knowledge of international and regional trade facilitation standards and practices. The initiative was recently launched in Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, marking an important milestone for trade facilitation in the region.

The ECOWAS Online Empowerment Program Training for NTFCs uses multi-layered networking and an interactivity approach. Course materials are offered in three languages (English, French, and Portuguese) and utilize a wide range of formats, including webinars, recorded videos, quizzes, an e-book, a final exam at the end of each module, and suggested further reading. The platform showcases best practices while providing a dynamic and effective way for NTFC members to learn.

As part of the sequence of activities deployed to support West African NTFCs' maturity, the TFWA Program has contracted UNCTAD to roll-out its Empowerment Program among all 15 NTFCs in the region. As identified during the NTFC maturity self-assessment, this initiative is one of the ways the TFWA Program is responding to the need to support NTFC members' knowledge on the TFA and trade facilitation in West Africa.

TFWA Program Presents at the 1st World Trade Congress on Gender



From December 5 to 7, the TFWA Program joined thirty top researchers from around the globe at the WTO's first international research conference on trade and gender. The biennial event took place in Geneva under the theme "Gender Equality for Sustainable Trade and Recovery". The gathering aimed to debut research conducted by trade and gender experts, showcase new research initiatives, and promote innovative research in the field.

The three-day event was officially opened by the WTO Director General, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, along with high-level speakers from governments, the private sector, and international organizations. In her opening remarks, DG Okonjo-Iweala noted the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is in line with the TFWA Program's research and findings in West Africa and which were presented at the event.

Carmine Soprano represented the TFWA Program and released a paper titled "Assessing the Pandemic's Impact on Women Traders in West Africa: Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program Survey Results and Key Recommendations." Findings show that the pandemic severely affected small-scale cross-border traders (SSCBTs), especially women. With border closures and mobility restrictions, these traders faced increased transport costs and dramatic declines in demand for their products. In fact, 42% of these traders reported decreased revenues in excess of 50%. Being largely informal, many women traders were left out from cash transfers and other government COVID relief measures, mainly due to low awareness.

The findings present an opportunity for policymakers to better understand gender-specific barriers to trade and begin designing policies that provide tangible benefits for women. The TFWA Program was happy to present its findings at the forum and will continue supporting the trade and gender agenda through its work and research.

ECOWAS, GIZ Train Journalists on Trade Agreements



Training in Abuja



Training in Dakar

The ECOWAS Commission, with technical support from GIZ, organized a four-day regional workshop to improve the knowledge and capacity of journalists to effectively report on trade facilitation agreements and instruments, including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The workshop was held from November 29 to December 1 in Abuja, Nigeria and brought together 30 journalists from across 10 ECOWAS countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo).

"The ECOWAS Commission is convinced that access to up-to-date information by journalists on the TFA and the AfCFTA is essential to the success of these agreements. The role of the media and specifically of journalists is critical to make progress in the areas of trade and integration developments. The aim is to contribute to building a network of trade journalists across the ECOWAS region. Therefore, the successful implementation of the TFA and the AfCFTA relies heavily on a good communication system that should contribute to informing and sensitizing all actors in the economy and society, in an approach that is both participatory and inclusive, with the ultimate objective of ensuring their ownership of the Agreements," said Mr. Seydou Sacko, Principal Program Officer, Informal Cross Border Trade at the ECOWAS Commission.

The workshop concluded with positive feedback from participants, who greatly appreciated the insights and experiences shared during the workshop. Hawa Njie, a journalist from The Gambia, said that the training enhanced her knowledge of the AfCFTA and other trade instruments. She said that she intends to use her role as a journalist to enlighten traders on how they can maximize the benefits of the trade agreement.

The workshop also took place in Dakar, Senegal from November 7 to 11 for selected journalists from five-member states in the ECOWAS sub-region (Benin, Cabo Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali). During the session, Mr. Matthieu Segard from GIZ stated that the TFWA Program and its funders have been working with stakeholders to improve trade and investments in the sub-region. He added that GIZ's support required journalists and private sector actors to better understand and engage with new trade agreements and protocols—helping them understand their implications for economies across the region.

At the end of the workshop, participants affirmed that they would share the knowledge acquired to improve reporting on trade issues while also helping engaging public actors and policymakers on regional trade facilitation policies and agreements.



Training in Dakar



Training in Dakar

TFWA Program Participates at the 2022 WCO Technology Conference



On October 19, the TFWA Program participated at the 2022 World Customs Organization (WCO) Technology Conference and Exhibition in the Netherlands. Under the theme "Driving Customs Performance with Data and Technology in the Changing Landscape of Global Trade", the conference provided a platform for participants to explore technology-supported solutions enabling customs to operate digitally and create an operating model based on data captured from across the trade ecosystem. The event was attended by representatives of the WCO, customs administrations from across the globe, and border management agencies.

TFWA Program representative Maiko Miyake joined a breakout session to discuss the importance of customs-to-customs data exchange to facilitate trade and prevent fraud. In West Africa, sharing data on transit operations is a priority for customs administrations and economic operators. The main objective is to simplify and secure the movement of goods across borders. Against this backdrop, Ms. Miyake discussed the Interconnected System for the Management of Goods in Transit (SIGMAT). Developed by the ECOWAS Commission with TFWA Program support, SIGMAT is an interconnectivity system designed to automate transit procedures between ECOWAS Member States. SIGMAT offers huge benefits to customs officials, traders, businesses, and governments:

- Improved efficiency and transparency of customs operations and procedures;
- Improved risk analysis capabilities; and
- Increased regional trade (by lowering the cost of trade operations).

Ms. Miyake added that SIGMAT has already been successfully deployed across key trade corridors in West Africa as well as along road/rail components. She also noted WCO's support, including training IT experts to develop message specifications based on the WCO Data Model (a global standard) organized to simplify complex customs and border regulatory processes and, ultimately, enable seamless data exchange.

Before the session closed, Ms. Miyake highlighted other ongoing SIGMAT related activities supported by the TFWA Program, including: developing a mobile version of SIGMAT; supporting the expansion of interconnection within the region; and supporting training sessions for customs officers, freight forwarders, and other relevant stakeholders. The TFWA Program will continue supporting SIGMAT's rollout and its uptake by customs authorities across the ECOWAS region.





TFWA Program Holds Inclusive Project Management Workshop



From November 21 to 22, the TFWA Program piloted its Inclusive Project Management workshop for NTFCs in Benin. The two-day session gathered 41 participants (from civil society and the private and public sectors) who learned key principles of project management and gender aspects of trade—both essential tools for NTFCs to conduct a robust and inclusive stakeholder mapping.

Workshop participants greatly appreciated the information and insights received from the facilitators and from one another. At the end of the workshop, Mr. Pognon (Director of External Trade at the Ministry of Trade and Industry) and Mrs. Karuretwa (Principal Private Sector Specialist at the World Bank, Benin) awarded certificates to the participants and encouraged them to apply lessons learned while coordinating trade facilitation reforms for the benefit of the business community and civil society.

This activity forms part of the TFWA Program Capacity Building Framework for NTFCs. The Benin NTFC identified it as a priority task through a Maturity Self-Assessment (completed in September 2022) and through its NTFC Action Plan.



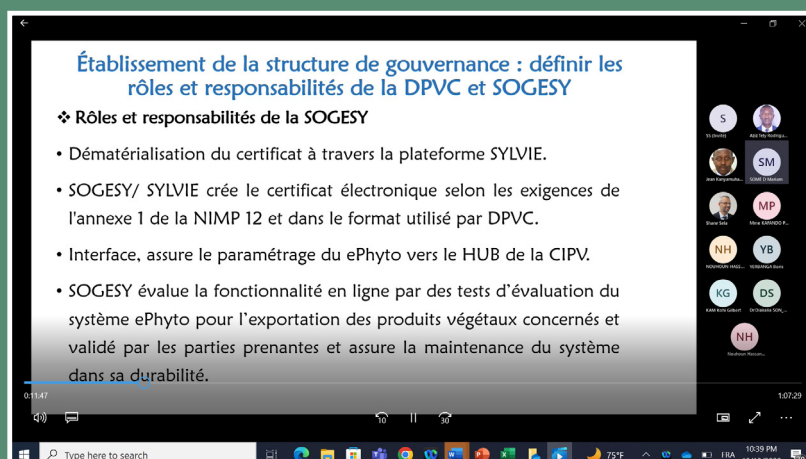
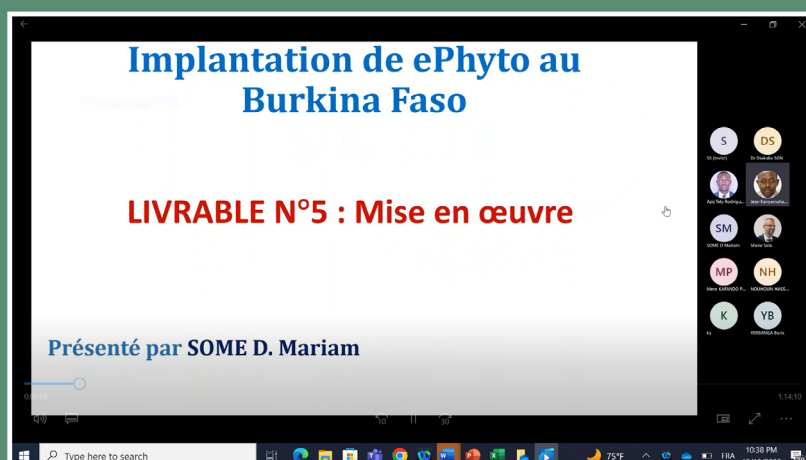
TFWA Program Supports ePhyto Implementation Plan Validation Workshop

On October 27, the TFWA Program supported a virtual workshop to validate Burkina Faso's ePhyto implementation plan. This workshop forms part of the technical assistance granted to the Ministry of Agriculture under the TFWA Program, for which an expert in pest risk management has been recruited, with the technical support of the Société de Gestion de la Plateforme SYLVIE (SOGESY). The meeting was attended by representatives of SOGESY, DPVC, TFWA/WBG, and consultants.

During the session, facilitators presented key activities to be carried out in the plan:

- Establishing the governance structure: define the roles and responsibilities of the CPVP and SOGESY;
- Performing tests (test environment);
- Identifying users that will be part of the pilot project;
- Identifying products for the pilot project;
- Drafting the training materials and planning of workshops;
- Contributing to the development of a change management plan; and
- Drafting the roadmap for implementation.

The workshop greatly contributed to a broader understanding of ePhyto. At the same time, the virtual platform provided an opportunity for participants to engage in lively discussions and reaffirm their commitment to making the project a success while also reflecting on the challenges of ePhyto implementation.



Feuille de route pour l'implantation (Suite)

N°	Activités	Responsable	Indicateur/Livrable	Période de mise en œuvre	Date limite
6	Établir un plan de travail de mise en œuvre	SOGESY/DPVC	Plan de travail approuvé par DPVC	Novembre	
7	Définir clairement les besoins de gestion du changement de DPVC et des parties prenantes	DPVC	Établissement d'un plan de gestion du changement	Novembre	
8	Développer le module ePhyto dans SYLVIE sur la base de l'Annexe 1 de la NIMP 12	SOGESY	Module établi	novembre	
9	Organiser des sessions de présentation du module ePhyto sur SYLVIE intégrant toutes les étapes de la délivrance des certificats électroniques	SOGESY	Nombre de réunions tenues, Rapports de réunions	Octobre -Novembre	
10	Valider le module ePhyto sur SYLVIE par les parties prenantes	SOGESY	Nombre d'ateliers et de rapports	Octobre -Novembre	



Validation Workshop of SPS Technical Assistance Report

On November 8, the TFWA Program supported a workshop to validate the final report from SOFRECO's technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) risk management. Held both online and in Ouagadougou, the hybrid session was attended by 25 (in-person) and 3 (virtual) participants from various public institutions and the private sector, including mango value chain operators (production, processing, and export) and freight forwarders. The workshop reviewed all activities conducted over the past two years, and presented completed deliverables, including:

- Complete list of priority pest risk profiles for imports;
- Updated list of quarantine pests;
- National Action Plan to strengthen the SPS risk management system;
- Capacity building program for the improvement of the existing SPS risk management system and curriculum;
- Functional specifications to serve as a basis for the establishment of a database for phytosanitary controls;
- Revised protocols for the SPS control of mango at export and the categorization of producers;
- Protocols for the SPS control of imported rice and the categorization of importers based on risk level; and
- Action Plan for the strengthening of the pest risk management system for the mango and rice value chains.

At the end of the workshop, participants expressed the need for additional support for the recommendations made and the implementation of the capacity building plan.





Burkina Faso Signs Decree to Establish the OCOD

On November 14, Burkina Faso signed the draft Protocol on Extra Legal Work between the Private Sector and Customs. This represents a key step toward the establishment of an Observatory for the Customs Clearance Operations Celerity (OCOD) in Burkina Faso. The draft was signed by Adama Nana (customs representative), Saïdou Diakit  (first Vice President of CNPB) and Mahamadi Savadogo (Director General of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) on behalf of the private sector.

The OCOD's mission is to monitor the speed of customs clearance operations in order to contribute to the fluidity of traffic, particularly at borders, dry ports, and airports. It also aims to ensure compliance with the commitments made by customs and the private sector as part of the improvement of customs clearance operations. In this regard, the OCOD is set to handle complaints from users such as harassment, delivery delays, and customs blockages, as well as other challenges faced during customs clearance processes. In addition to the commitments made by both parties, the protocol also fixes a grid of fees to be paid for extra-legal work, collected once and lower than the average of those currently paid.

The process of establishing an OCOD in Burkina Faso kicked off in 2019. The team undertook several key pre-work activities, including a study tour in C te d'Ivoire, which was conducted by a team of customs officers and freight forwarders from Burkina Faso. It also included the establishment of a steering committee in charge of planning the establishment of the OCOD in Burkina Faso. The committee led a broad consultative process of OCOD legal and regulatory texts across the country involving various stakeholders—customs management, staff and brokers, freight forwarders, import-export operators, transporters, and truck drivers, among others.

This consultative process ultimately resulted in the signature of the above protocol and consensus on the draft ministerial order to be signed by the minister of finance to officially establish the OCOD-BF.



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Supporting ePhyto Measures



In Côte d'Ivoire, the TFWA Program continues to support the National Plant Protection Organization in the implementation of the ePhyto solution using the existing national single window (GUCE).

The program rolled out the pilot phase from February to October 2022 (a circular was posted on the PWIC for cocoa and coffee exporters). In the pilot first phase (February to April), training focused on the private sector exporting at the ports in Abidjan and San Pedro. During the active phase of the pilot (May to October), 10 exporters and their forwarders in San Pedro and four exporters with their forwarders in Abidjan took part in the exercise. As a result, 415 certificates were issued and 68 of them were replaced. During this period, the average time to obtain the phytosanitary certificates decreased by 22%.

In July, the TFWA Program conducted a virtual workshop for representatives of the DPVCQ from Côte d'Ivoire and neighboring Burkina Faso. The objective was to share experiences and lessons learned from implementation. Another workshop and webinar was hosted for representatives of the DPVCQ and GUCE. After the end of the pilot phase, the TFWA Program initiated and supported the tests (in collaboration with IPPC) between the GUCE and 13 countries.

To prepare for the country's official launch ceremony in February 2023, the TFWA Program collaborated with the GUCE CI (Ministry of Commerce) and DPVCQ (Ministry of Agriculture) to develop a communications strategy and materials to raise private sector awareness.

TFWA Program Supports SPS Implementation to Facilitate Trade



The TFWA Program is working with the Côte d'Ivoire government to transform SPS processes for traders and border agencies. This work aims to cut trade costs and time, while simultaneously safeguarding health. Recently, five texts were submitted and validated by key stakeholders to improve the management of phytosanitary risks and reduce time (delays) and costs related to phytosanitary inspections in Côte d'Ivoire.

The first signed text—DECISION n°005/MEMINADER/CAB of August 10, 2022—covers the classification of imported plants, plant products, and other regulated articles according to phytosanitary risk. This Ministerial Decision is the first official act of Côte d'Ivoire to adopt the International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM) number 32, adopted by the contracting parties of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) in 2009 and worded as follows: "Classification of goods according to the phytosanitary risk they present." The decision, once adopted, will serve many purposes:

- Among other things, the decision acts as a reference for private operators to make an informed choice about goods according to the level of potential risk presented by the pests that may be encountered, and the scientific treatment reserved by the official services;

- The categorization should help the phytosanitary administration (at the borders) to identify whether or not further analysis of the phytosanitary risk is required, and whether a phytosanitary certification is necessary for the entry of the goods into the national territory; and
- The decision aligns trade facilitation with international standards, particularly in the import of plants, plant products, and other regulated articles.

On the sanitary front, the TFWA Program team conducted private consultation in December to collect feedback on the effectiveness of current procedures to issue sanitary certificates, identify processes and steps that can be digitized, and evaluate the feasibility of putting together an eVeto module (which will eventually be on the GUCE) for the Ministry of Livestock. The meeting aimed to:

- Map the veterinary certificates (live animals, animal products, veterinary drugs, and animal feed) issued for import and export;
- Analyze the procedures for issuing these veterinary certificates; and
- Identify opportunities to optimize and dematerialize these procedures.

TFWA Program Supports Customs Activities to Streamline Risk Management



The TFWA Program recently embarked on a mission to simplify and harmonize customs procedures across its borders. On November 23, the Ivorian team, in collaboration with the WCO and customs, kicked off the Cargo Tracking System (CTS) initiative. It enables pre-arrival risk management based on cargo manifest data. With the CTS, the number of containers controlled upon arrival is expected to decrease, leading to shorter dwell time at Abidjan ports.

To improve voluntary compliance, the TFWA Program conducted five workshops (based on five foundational pillars of the voluntary compliance framework) to identify implementation activities. According to the WCO, the voluntary compliance framework aims to improve the level of voluntary compliance of traders and create the conditions necessary to facilitate voluntary compliance as the most cost effective and efficient approach. Not only does this help traders comply voluntarily and correctly with customs regulations, but the framework enables customs to be more effective, more efficient, and more transparent.

Following the workshops, a series of five reports were prepared and submitted to customs. As a next step, the consolidated matrix of all activities will be developed into an operational plan (ready for implementation in February 2023).

As one of the pilot countries for the operationalization of the ECOWAS Supplementary Act for Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement, the TFWA Program also worked closely with Ivorian Customs to fulfill the following obligations:

- Revise and update the customs cooperation strategy in Côte d'Ivoire from diagnostics to drafting the new strategy; and
- Develop a mechanism for the exchange of transactional data between border offices with systematic reconciliation that enables the processing of statistical discrepancies both nationally and bilaterally between the two reciprocal customs offices (Ouagadougou in Côte d'Ivoire and Niangoloko in Burkina Faso), paying attention to the technical provisions necessary for the development of the mechanism. Capitalizing on the SIGMAT exchange of data between customs systems has been envisaged to build up the mechanism of transactional data exchange with reconciliation between mirroring border posts.

The Supplementary Act is a key regional tool for customs cooperation and an enforcement instrument to guide and enable the flow of information and related cooperation activities between customs administrations, the ECOWAS Commission, and Côte d'Ivoire.

TFWA Provides NTFC with Devices to Facilitate TF Reforms



The TFWA Program presented portable USB dongles (and data/SIM packages) to NTFC members in Niger. The branded devices ensure NTFC members stay connected, fully participate in online training, and effectively implement trade facilitation reforms. Additionally, the data packages reduce expenses on space and equipment rental to conduct meetings.

The TFWA Program recognizes the vital role of NTFCs in the national coordination of trade facilitation reforms, including engaging public and private stakeholders to address trade bottlenecks and simplifying trade procedures. The devices will ensure NTFCs fulfill their mandate and adapt to virtual modalities. Following the successful rollout in Niger, the TFWA Program plans to provide connectivity to other NTFCs across the region.



Team Nigeria Builds Capacity of Customs Service

From November 28 to December 2, the TFWA Program provided technical assistance to the Nigeria Customs Service. This work aimed to support project activities toward the operationalization of the ECOWAS supplementary Act A/SA/6.12/18/ of 22nd December 2018, including:

- Revision of the NCS customs cooperation strategy;
- Coordination of a workshop on the concept of customs attaché; and
- The joint elaboration of a data exchange mechanism and reconciliation between mirroring border posts with Nigerian Customs.

This initiative has the power to strengthen customs cooperation, including supporting the customs attaché in the exchange of information and data between customs authorities, risk analysis to detect fraud, and trade/investment promotion. The training was organized under the TFWA Program, which delivered several other activities related to this objective:

- Technical interviews on the customs cooperation strategy revision session held among key departments: Legal, Strategy & Planning, ICT, Trade & Tariff, Trade Facilitation, and Intelligence.
- A training workshop on customs attaché for customs officers in the Legal, Strategy & Planning, ICT, Trade & Tariff, Trade Facilitation, Intelligence Unit, and Public Relations departments; and
- Strategy and planning meetings with top management from the Strategy & Planning, ICT, Trade & Tariff, Trade Facilitation, Intelligence Unit, and Public Relations departments.



The mission was well received and participants agreed to key next steps, including a review of customs cooperation. This entails development of a diagnostic report on the current framework for customs cooperation strategy in Nigeria Customs, as well as development of a draft formal customs cooperation strategy. In particular, NCS is committed to updating, revitalizing and managing current and future bilateral customs cooperation and mutual administrative assistance agreements according to the future formalized customs cooperation strategic framework.

Participants showed a lot of interest during the session, while actively exchanging views NCS is committed to using the sample decrees from other countries for the creation of the position of customs attaché, as presented during the workshop, to develop the necessary legal text in order to formalize the position within the Nigerian Customs structure. Next steps also include a report on the concept of the customs attaché supported by the WCO's customs intelligence management tools (CEN, RILO).