Turning headwinds for trade into tailwinds

ARANCIA GONZÁLEZ, Executive Director, International Trade Centre

There is no doubt that 2018 has been a tumultuous year for global trade. It has been marked by trade tensions among the economies responsible for the majority of global exports and imports: China, the European Union and the United States. And by threats to weaken or even dismantle the World Trade Organization, the multilateral trade body.

Tariffs and counter-tariffs, and threats of more to come, have dominated news headlines. The measures and uncertainty are impacting those that actually make the trade world go around: companies in developed and developing countries alike.

All this is counterproductive. The effective working of the multilateral trading system was not just a critical factor in the rapid poverty reduction of the past forty years; keeping markets broadly open enabled the world to return to growth after the 2008 financial crisis. Protectionism and short-term policy is threatening to undo all this.

The United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union also left its mark on 2018. While the last weeks of the year underscored that much remains to be settled about Brexit – scheduled to take effect on 29 March 2019 – the process will continue to have profound effects on European countries in the coming months and beyond.

These events should not be allowed to overshadow the ways in which 2018 was also a good year for international cooperation on trade.

At an African Union summit in Kigali, Rwanda, in March, African leaders signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The accord shows that for most countries, collaboration and integration are seen as the most viable path towards more sustainable economic growth. (See Pages 10-12 and 14-15.)

Once it enters into force, the AfCFTA will build an integrated market for the cross-border movement of goods, services, people, capital, and ideas covering more than one billion people, with a combined gross domestic product of more than $3 trillion.

While ratification is still in its early stages the AfCFTA is a first step for African countries to speed up cooperation that will bring expanded opportunities to their businesses and citizens.

This issue of International Trade Forum is dedicated to regional integration and trade. What seems to be a common thread among contributors is that rather than being a threat to the multilateral trading system, regional trade agreements are more likely to support and strengthen the current order (see Pages 24-25). This is perhaps best exemplified in the European Union, but other regions are looking to step up cooperation too: in Asia (see Pages 20-21), Africa and the Americas (see Pages 18-19).

Headwinds are likely to continue for global trade in 2019. The hope is that more countries and people are going to come out in defence, not only of trade, but of the global multilateral system. While it is recognised that most of the institutions we have set up to ensure greater collaboration among people and countries – including the United Nations and the WTO – are in need of updating, we cannot afford to lose them.

It is only by working together – especially on trade – that we can ensure that the 99% gain a much greater share of the global economy.
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© African Union
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MAKING IT IN THE GAMBIA
Meet some of the Gambians aiming to make a difference to their country through trade.
News Brief

ITC and GroFin launch SheTrades Invest for women entrepreneurs

The International Trade Centre (ITC) and GroFin, a development finance company operating across Africa and the Middle East, announced the launch of SheTrades Invest, an initiative to increase investment in women-owned businesses in 14 countries across these regions.

SheTrades Invest will help strengthen the financial and managerial capacity of women entrepreneurs, improve their investment readiness, and connect them to impact investors and financiers. As part of this strategic alliance with the ITC, GroFin will deploy risk-impact capital into vetted and eligible small and growing businesses to create economic growth and jobs for women. Businesses in Egypt, Ghana, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Oman are eligible to take part.

ILO figures show 164 million people are migrant workers

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 164 million people are migrant workers – a rise of 9% since 2013, when they numbered 150 million.

According to the 2nd edition of the ILO’s Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers, which covers the period between 2013 and 2017, the majority of migrant workers – 96 million – are men, while 68 million are women. This represents an increase in the share of men among migrant workers, from 56% to 5%, and a decrease by two percentage points in women’s share, from 44% cent to 42%.

Nearly 87% of migrant workers are of prime working age, between 25 and 64 years old. This suggests that some countries of origin are losing the most productive segment of their workforce. This, the report says, could have a negative impact on their economic growth.

Mauritius first for online shopping readiness in Africa

Mauritius has been ranked the most prepared country in Africa for shopping online, according to UNCTAD’s Business-to-Consumer (B2C) E-commerce Index for 2018, released at the Africa eCommerce Week in Nairobi, Kenya, on 10 December.

Forty-three African countries feature in the 151-nation index but make up as many as nine of the bottom ten. First-ranked Mauritius placed 55 in the global index, which is topped by the Netherlands, Singapore and Switzerland.

The top three African countries in the index each has a distinctive strength in one of the four areas measured by the index which not only counts numbers of online shoppers but measures ease of payment and delivery.

Mauritius has a considerable 12-point higher score than the next African country. This small island developing nation scores relatively high in all four areas but particularly in the share of the population having a bank or mobile money account (90%).

Nigeria, the most populous African nation, ranks second, largely thanks to a significant increase in postal reliability as measured by the Universal Postal Union (UPU). As Africa’s largest B2C e-commerce market (regarding both number of shoppers and revenue), reliable delivery of products is critical.

South Africa is third, level with several other African countries – Cabo Verde, Gabon, Mauritius and Morocco – for its Internet penetration, with around six in ten inhabitants using the Internet in 2017. South Africa leads by some margin in the number of secure Internet servers per one million people – an indication of websites accepting online sales and payments.
IE University and the International Trade Centre announce Executive Master in Internationalization and Trade

IE School of Global and Public Affairs and the International Trade Centre (ITC), a joint agency of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, announced they would partner on the launch of an Executive Master in Internationalization and Trade to start in February 2020.

This program is a response to a changing global trading landscape. A more multipolar world is testing trade multilateralism and the global trading architecture. Growing inequalities have brought to the fore the imperative for more inclusive growth. At the same time, digitalization and technologies such as blockchain, 3D-printing, smart shipping and artificial intelligence are transforming production patterns, transportation systems, financial transactions, trade and, ultimately, economic and business models.

The academic program on internationalization and trade is designed to address those challenges. The degree, which will become a unique example of partnership between a multilateral agency and a top-tier university, will provide world-class training designed to meet the needs of today’s trade professionals.
Making it in The Gambia

EKATERINA BAGLAeva, Deputy Editor, International Trade Forum

Following the return to democracy, an increasing number of young Gambians are returning home determined to make a difference

Young people in the Gambia are choosing to ‘make it’ at home rather than go abroad. Youth in the Gambia – which make almost 64% of the country’s population – have big dreams and are willing to work for them.

‘The youth are eager and hungry to be successful, to be job creators and to help develop our country,’ says fashion designer Awa Conateh of Yaws Creations.

At the end of 2016, The Gambia went through a peaceful democratic transition. This opened the way for political and economic reforms as well as the rebuilding of bridges to the rest of the world.

The International Trade Centre’s Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) in partnership with the European Union and the government of the Gambia supports the creation of quality jobs at home by addressing skill gaps and identifying business opportunities for youth.

‘Since I joined YEP my customer base has been expanding thanks to the marketing system we put in place. Hopefully, in a year’s time, I will be able to hire young recruits,’ shares Abdoulie Drammeh, the founder of Kara Garden.

Working with YEP, 1,250 Gambian youth have gained skills in industries including agribusiness; tourism; information and communications technology; fashion; and construction.

1. Ndeye Fatou Njie, Designer and Founder, TiGA.
4. Awa Conateh, Founder, Yaws Creations.
5. Hassan Y. Jallow, Founder, Assutech.
6. Lamin Fatty, Founder, ML’s Poultry Farm.
The signing of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in March 2018 was an expression of Africa’s belief in trade as an engine of growth, job creation and poverty reduction. It was also a bold effort to define a trading relationship among African countries in as inclusive and as sustainable a manner as possible.

African heads of state and government signed on to a package that included liberalization of trade in goods and in services; a legal and institutional framework for the implementation of the agreement; and establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism. Phase 2 of the negotiations, expected to begin in 2019, will cover investment; intellectual property; and competition policy and enforcement.

The accord will come into force one month after the deposit of 22 instruments of ratification with the chair of the African Union Commission. We so far have 13 ratifications. It is important to note that the AfCFTA is not just about trade liberalization, but is also about Africa’s integration. It is a political as well as an economic imperative, part of the journey towards an integrated African market as espoused in the Abuja Treaty, which envisages creation of the African Economic Community.
The AfCFTA supports growth, job creation and poverty reduction in Africa by confronting the barriers and hindrances that have depressed intra-Africa trade, particularly when compared to those of other regions. Boosting intra-Africa trade and deepening African integration is particularly important because of the small and fragmented nature of African economies.

FRAGMENTATION
This fragmentation has prevented African economies from developing the economies of scale and the market size necessary to attract large-scale transformative investments as well as enhance the competitiveness of African firms. The AfCFTA does this by removing tariff and non-tariff barriers affecting efficient and cost-effective trade in goods within the continent. It also addresses barriers to trade in services by ensuring services market liberalization, as well as by pushing an agenda for regulatory cooperation and harmonization in the agreed services sectors.

In trade in goods, the AfCFTA eliminates tariffs on African products within agreed timeframes, with flexibilities given to sensitive products by allowing longer time frames for their elimination, as well as the possibility of some exclusion of certain products from liberalization. This balance between ambition and flexibilities is key to the agreement’s sustainability as well as its inclusivity.

Trade agreements will always create winners and losers. The flexibilities in the agreement ensure that the winning is spread as widely as possible while the losses are properly mitigated for all parties. It is also in this regard that the African Union is working with key stakeholders like the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank). Doing so will ensure that we develop financial avenues to support the adjustment mechanisms that will be established to enable state parties adapt to short term revenue losses that may arise from their immediate liberalization commitments. The development of regional value chains, part of the AfCFTA agenda, will also contribute to development of inclusive trade in the emerging market.

NON-TARIFF BARRIERS
In the same vein, the AfCFTA addresses the non-tariff barriers that perhaps pose the greatest challenges to intra-Africa trade. The agreement includes commitments and obligations on standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT), as well as dedicated annexes on customs procedures, non-tariff barriers, transit and trade facilitation. All in all, it represents the most ambitious commitments to addressing the challenges facing intra-Africa trade that have ever been made. The accord also includes the negotiation of specific rules of origin meant to enhance the integration of African producers into regional and global value chains as well as promote value addition and the transformation of African commodities.

For trade in services, the African Union identified the priority sectors of financial services, transport, professional services, ICT services and tourism services for immediate liberalization and regulatory cooperation and harmonization. The prioritization of services is especially important because it has grown clear that without a competitive services economy that facilitates industrialization, Africa’s dream of structural transformation will remain unachievable. This is particularly relevant with the increasing automation and digitization of industrial and economic processes.

HOLISTIC APPROACH
This holistic approach is critical to the success of the AfCFTA regarding the objectives of increased growth, job creation and poverty reduction. It is reinforced by the focus on the issues of investment, competition policy and intellectual property that will be dealt with in Phase 2 negotiations.

In conclusion, the AfCFTA marks an attempt by African countries to chart a developmental integration path using trade as a tool for development. It does so through the breadth of issues addressed in the agreement and its ambitious targets, as well as the flexibilities built into the accord, to ensure that the potential benefits are maximized and challenges are mitigated.

However, like every other trade agreement, implementation remains the key to its success. African leaders have shown strong and broad political will in pushing the AfCFTA to the point it is now. With this leadership, there is sufficient commitment to ensure the implementation of the rights and obligations enshrined in the agreement on time and in full.  

The AfCFTA marks an attempt by African countries to chart a developmental integration path using trade as a tool for development.

Addressing NTMs to facilitate trade through coordinated policy interventions

QASIM CHAUDRY, Associate Programme Adviser, and RAJESH AGGARWAL, Chief, Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business, International Trade Centre

Studying and analysing trade barriers may be the best way to vanquish them

Notwithstanding the recent escalation in tariffs for protectionist purposes, there has been an exponential rise in the use of non-tariff measures (NTMs) globally. This has coincided with consumers, especially in the developed world, becoming more conscious of the quality of what they consume and buy. As a result, governments are resorting to using NTMs for their national development goals. According to the Global Trade Alert (GTA), only 15% of the harmful policy instruments since the 2008 global financial crisis were due to policy measures while the rest were related to NTMs.

NTMs may be completely legitimate and more often than not are used to address genuine social concerns of public or private stakeholders. However, they can and do become barriers to trade when they negatively impact trade flows and result in unnecessary compliance costs for traders. To make matters worse, evidence suggests that many countries are deliberately using NTMs with a protectionist intent to constrain imports. As such, any attempt to address trade barriers arising from such measures must consist of a detailed analysis of the objectives behind their implementation; their legality as per the national, regional legislations and trade agreements; root causes of the resulting trade barriers; and implementation modalities. This analysis is a stepping-stone towards developing alternate policy options to delicately balance the legitimate objectives of governments with the ease of doing business for the private sector in complying with these measures.

The main challenge faced in gaining insight into the most burdensome issues was the private sector’s perception that it has to comply with regulations and procedures without the opportunity to question them.
The International Trade Centre (ITC) is currently implementing a regional project in the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) parties in Western Balkans funded by the European Union, which aims to address or eliminate non-tariff barriers (NTBs) in iron, steel and edible-vegetables value chains to boost intraregional trade.

Mapping Value Chains

The first step of the project was to map the regional value chains to analyze the segments in which different CEFTA parties participate and to identify the key private-sector stakeholders, including traders, freight forwarders, distributors and trade support institutions among others. Stakeholders for each value chain were then consulted in detail to identify market access barriers within the CEFTA region along with their needs. The main challenge faced in gaining insight into the most burdensome issues was the private sector’s perception that it has to comply with regulations and procedures without the opportunity to question them. To counter this, best practices, case studies and trade facilitation indicators from other regions were used to highlight the impact of NTBs on their competitiveness.

Subsequently, regional business advisory groups were formed to prioritize the NTBs on the regional levels that were most problematic for regional integration. These were classified into three main categories: (i) quality-related issues such as no mutual recognition of certificates (related to technical measures) and lack of testing infrastructure; (ii) trade facilitation-related issues such as complex procedures and long queues at the border; and (iii) issues related to non-technical measures such as subsidies and quantity-control measures.

This follows a global trend when it comes to NTBs faced globally, where quality-related regulatory issues and trade facilitation-related procedural issues are perceived to be most burdensome. ITC business surveys in more than 25 countries showed 65% of the NTBs in agricultural trade and 77% of those in manufacturing trade are related to enforcement issues rather than strict regulations.

Policy Options

The next step in addressing NTBs is to analyze the issues in detail to assess the root causes and the responsible agencies and subsequently develop policy options, which are not as burdensome for the private sector. In the CEFTA project, various studies have been launched to identify the root causes for each category of NTBs which can then be used to devise alternative policy options with inputs from the public and private sectors.

For the quality-related issues, detailed national and regional studies were launched by ITC to assess sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and technical barriers to trade (TBT) related regulatory and institutional frameworks, which also included an assessment of the testing laboratories’ infrastructure. All CEFTA parties have the ultimate goal of joining the EU and are in the process of aligning their rights and obligations accordingly (EU Acquis). However, they are at different levels of doing so, and the main challenge was to consolidate the national findings and develop a way forward for the whole region to address and resolve the related NTBs.

Similarly, for trade facilitation-related issues, detailed business process analysis studies are being carried out throughout the region to map the export and import procedures and identify bottlenecks in customs and other international trade procedures. This will be followed by an analysis of the bottlenecks with different trade agreements including the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), CEFTA Additional Protocol 5, EU Acquis, and others to develop recommendations and policy options, which can then be taken to regional public-private dialogue mechanisms for implementation.

Trade Facilitation

The issues related to non-technical measures are being assessed against national laws and regulations and regional and multilateral trade agreements to determine their legality and to look for alternate policy options.

Finally, ITC will assist the CEFTA parties to implement the recommendations stemming out of the detailed analyses to eliminate the most harmful non-tariff measures. Even though the project focuses on specific value chains, most recommendations – particularly in trade facilitation – are cross-sectoral in nature and should go a long way towards boosting the regional integration efforts within the CEFTA region.

1. Laboratories play a crucial role in trade.
2. The port of Durres, Albania.
Winners and losers in Africa’s Continental Free Trade area

RILWAN AKEYEWALE, Chief Executive Officer, Grandir

AfCFTA accord has potential to both enhance and disrupt regional economies

Leaders of 44 African countries endorsed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in March this year. Since then more countries, including South Africa, have joined in.

The agreement is expected to favour small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which are responsible for more than 80% of Africa’s employment and half its GDP.

Obviously, any economic policy that facilitates imports and exports among member countries – with lower or no tariffs, free access to the market and market information, and the elimination of trade barriers – offers numerous benefits to SMEs. As history’s largest free trade agreement, which has a market size in the region of $3 trillion, most people are excited at the development. However, sceptics have pointed to impending challenges, especially those which affect SMEs. These must be addressed if the AfCFTA is to achieve its objectives. But first, let’s look at who stands to gain.

THE WINS

1. New markets

The AfCFTA will allow African-owned companies to enter new markets. This expands their customer base and leads to new products and services, making investing in innovation viable.

Any economic policy that facilitates imports and exports among member countries – with lower or no tariffs, free access to the market and market information, and the elimination of trade barriers – offers numerous benefits to SMEs.

2. Economic growth

Manufacturing represents only about 10% of total GDP in Africa on average, well below the figure in other developing regions. A successful continental free trade area could reduce this gap. A bigger manufacturing
African countries’ GDP
Current GDP prices in $ billion, 2018 estimates unless otherwise stated.

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*2016 actual.
**South Africa said it would sign once necessary legal processes were done.
Source: International Monetary Fund

sector will lead SMEs to create more well-paid jobs, especially for young people, thereby alleviating poverty.

3. Foreign direct investment
With restrictions lifted on foreign investments, investors will flock to the continent. This adds capital to expand local industries and boost domestic businesses. New capital enhances an upward productivity cycle that stimulates the entire economy. An inflow of foreign capital can also stimulate banking systems, leading to more investment and consumer lending.

4. Reduction in input costs
The AfCFTA will ease the process of importing raw material from other African countries. It will also enable SMEs to set up assembly firms in other African countries to access cheaper means of production and thereby increase their bottom lines.

5. Increased efficiency and sales
Global companies have more expertise than domestic companies to develop local resources. That’s especially true for businesses in the manufacturing sector. The AfCFTA will allow multinationals to partner with local firms to develop raw materials, training them in best practices and transferring technology in the process.

THE POTENTIAL LOSSES
A major potential challenge in harmonizing Africa’s heterogeneous economies under one agreement is the wide variation that exists in their levels of development. For example, over 50% of Africa’s cumulative gross domestic product (GDP) is contributed by Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, while Africa’s six sovereign island nations collectively contribute just 1%.

The AfCFTA has the greatest levels of income disparity of any continental free trade agreement, and more than double the levels witnessed in economic blocs such as ASEAN and CARICOM.

FURTHER CHALLENGES
1. Increased competitive pressure
Many emerging African markets are traditional economies that rely on farming for employment. Small family farms can’t compete with large agribusinesses in high-income African countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt and Nigeria. As a result they may lose their farms, leading to high unemployment, crime and poverty.

2. Choking of local SMEs
Consumers generally prefer cheaper products. This can lead to local producers losing huge sales to foreign suppliers because the latter can lower the cost of their products by leveraging the reduced tariffs imposed on imported goods.

3. Adverse working conditions and job losses
Labourers from poorer countries may be forced to work long hours and to live without basic amenities in order to send money to their families. Some workers might even be forced to accept lower wages and be prevented from joining labour unions under threat of losing their jobs.

Without comprehensive policy-making and preferential treatment for Africa’s most at-risk economies, the AfCFTA could prove to be a force for economic divergence rather than a force for good.

This may explain why the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), in its refusal to endorse the AfCFTA agreement, describes it as a ‘renewed, extremely dangerous and radioactive neo-liberal policy initiative.’

4. Environmental depletion
Tough competition may lead some companies to disregard the environment when it comes to making products and disposing of waste just so they can survive in their industry. Many SMEs are likely to cut costs, including those related to manufacturing and the proper dumping of waste.

5. Theft of intellectual property
Many African countries don’t have laws that protect patents, inventions and new processes. Those they do have aren’t always strictly enforced. As a result, companies’ ideas often get stolen. With the AfCFTA this could get worse, leading SMEs to invest poorly in research and development.

WHAT NEXT?
Without comprehensive policy-making and preferential treatment for Africa’s most at-risk economies, the AfCFTA could prove to be a force for economic divergence rather than a force for good. It is therefore important that participating countries build an efficient and participatory institutional architecture to avoid leaving any economies behind.

To increase the impact of the trade deal, industrial policies must also be put in place, especially those concerning SMEs and manufacturing. These must focus on productivity, competition, diversification and economic complexity.

Furthermore, individual countries under the agreement should introduce policies that address the concerns of labour unions, encourage healthy competition without killing local businesses, ensure strict adherence to waste disposal and protect intellectual property.

This article was first published on the World Economic Forum’s Agenda blog.
Tear down this wall: non-tariff measures and regional integration

PAMELA COKE HAMILTON, Director, Division on International Trade and Commodities, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Greater transparency and elimination of barriers hold the promise of deepening economic integration among countries and fostering greater trade, jobs and income growth

There has been no more opportune political moment to advance regional integration than the one presented by the current crisis in the multilateral trading system. Rising trade tensions, the backlash against trade in some corners of the developed world and the continuous attack on the multilateral trading system magnify a long-overdue need: establishing better regional integration, especially in the south.

In the current decade, according to UNCTAD data, average intraregional trade in developing countries in Asia reached 53.5% of total trade but only 18.3% for Latin America and the Caribbean and just 14.4% in Africa. This contrasts sharply with intraregional trade in the European Union (EU), which has been as high as 60.7%. This level of integration has allowed the continent to create economic opportunities to foster prosperity and the interconnectedness to preserve peace.

Regional integration should not be understood as a second-best option, nor a choice to pursue when international negotiations get stalled. It is complementary and a legitimate objective on its own. It can help countries achieve what interregional trade has thus far failed to deliver.

TRADE OPPORTUNITIES
For instance, many African countries produce a limited range of goods with exports geared more towards developed countries. The limited intraregional trade in manufactured goods, inputs and services significantly restrict the enabling of African production networks. This in turn hinders structural transformation, limiting the creation of more and better jobs, which is arguably the most effective way to fight poverty.

Increased intraregional trade can give countries the opportunity to export more and to diversify their economies in goods and services with higher value added. It can also be a major catalyst for development, helping countries, particularly the least developed ones, to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Regional integration remains a tangible and unexploited area of opportunity in the south, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Many factors may underlie this reality, ranging from trade tariffs to lack of infrastructure and finance to cumbersome custom procedures, among others. However, an often-overlooked factor is non-tariff measures (NTMs). These are policy measures other than customs tariffs that can have an effect on international trade flows, for example technical specifications required on traded electronic goods to protect consumers.
The media, especially today in the context of the trade war between China and the United States of America, tend to focus much more on trade tariffs. However, NTMs have a bigger impact on trade volumes and patterns and thus regional integration.

In many sectors the ad valorem equivalent (AVE) of an NTM is higher than the sectoral tariff. In some instances, such AVE is four or five times higher than tariffs, as in the cases of oils and fats, vegetables and animal products (Figure 1).

NTMs are also pervasive in global trade. There are over 15,000 regulations, 70% of which are technical. In 2017 alone, countries notified the initiation of more than 1,700 technical barriers to trade (TBTs) and 1,000 sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Private-sector surveys indicate that technical measures are the most frequent challenge to engaging in international trade. Perhaps not surprisingly, estimations show that technical measures have a trade-reducing effect for developing countries.

Another challenge presented by NTMs, especially technical regulations, is the differences in regulatory frameworks across countries. This divergence tends to raise costs since exporters need to comply with several different technical regulations in each destination market.

The power of regulatory convergence on regional integration and welfare should not be underestimated. It can serve as a tool to simplify and enhance trade, increasing export earnings.

For example, an United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) study on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) shows regulatory convergence can reduce trade restrictions by more than 25%. This could increase intra-ECOWAS trade by 15% and income in ECOWAS countries by $300 million annually. Moreover, convergence on international standards could further increase intraregional trade by 14% and income by $1.57 billion annually.

Similarly, another UNCTAD study estimated that by reducing NTMs welfare could increase by $21 billion in the African Continental Free Trade Area and by $23 billion in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). This is more than five times the possible gain from a full free trade agreement.

To mitigate this problem, WTO committees have recommended regulatory cooperation, good regulatory practice, standard setting and transparency.

NTMs will never disappear from the trade landscape. There are, however, specific measures that can be undertaken to ensure they do not become barriers and thus reduce their potential adverse effects on welfare and trade in regional trade agreements. Let me focus on two such aspects in which UNCTAD is actively working.

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY

Firstly, we must promote transparency on trade regulations, such as SPS and TBT requirements, and enable easier access to such information by countries and enterprises to facilitate meeting these requirements.

UNCTAD has supported this process by developing, with other partner agencies such as the International Trade Centre (ITC), an international definition and typology of NTMs. Based on this, UNCTAD has collected, categorized and made available data on NTMs. It has also collaborated with regional integration organizations such as the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and research institutes in developing, maintaining and updating its global database on NTMs.

In regional trade agreements the majority of commitments on regulatory cooperation rarely go beyond WTO agreements, remaining non-binding and thus relying on members’ best endeavour. Such approaches and the willingness of regulatory agencies to cooperate regionally can help. UNCTAD has undertaken several studies on regulatory cooperation within regional groupings, especially to assess the regulatory differences between members of a free trade agreement and the potential greater economic benefits that could arise from regulatory convergence.

PRIVATE-SECTOR REPORTING

A second approach gaining considerable attention is the search for tools that enable the private sector to report barriers they face independently of a formal government process. One such innovative mechanism is the Tripartite tradebarriers.org mechanism for notifying barriers and encouraging member governments to address those notified. To date, 532 of 616 reported barriers have been resolved. While some protectionist measures persist, many were unintentional and thus easily removed.

UNCTAD will be supporting the African Union Commission and African countries in their efforts to collaborate on improving regulatory transparency and developing a continent-wide mechanism to report and eliminate barriers. Successful progress in both fronts, transparency of NTMs and convergence towards common standards on the one hand, and an effective tool for the elimination of barriers, hold the promise of deepening economic integration among countries and fostering greater trade, jobs and income growth.

1. Intra-regional trade among Asian countries stands at 53.5%.
Latin America: crisis of regionalism vs advancement of economic integration

DETLEF NOLTE, Associate, GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies

Recent trade discord highlights the need for creation of a free-trade area

Many regional organizations in Latin America are currently in crisis or confronted with the risk of dissolution. This is the case for the Union of South American States (UNASUR), where half of its members suspended their participation and stopped their financial contributions. The Government of Colombia even announced that it will exit the organization. However, crises may also create opportunities.

While the perspectives of high-flying political cooperation projects have been overrated, the advances of Latin American economic regionalism have been underrated. Latin American governments should capitalize more on these progresses in times of crisis. Moreover, according to Intal-Latinbarometro survey data from 2017, four of five Latin Americans support both economic integration and free trade with other countries in the region.

At present there are no less than 33 preferential trade agreements between Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries and as much as 90% of regional trade value is already under preference. Most sub-regional preferential trade agreements will have reached their full-liberalization potential by 2020. Thus, most of the adjustment costs after intraregional trade liberalization have already been paid. Moreover, since 2016...
While business can be a significant driver of biodiversity conservation, government and industry must work together to reverse the current state of biodiversity degradation.

the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur have been negotiating a closer cooperation.

Based on these advances, international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank Group make a strong case for the creation of a LAC free trade area, which would constitute a market of scale for local industries with approximately 7% of global gross domestic product (GDP).

However, such a free trade area should advance beyond liberalizing trade tariffs. It should remove non-tariff barriers, especially sanitary and phytosanitary standards and technical barriers, to trade without watering down the standards of protection for consumers and the environment.

A successful policy of integration has to combine political and economic cooperation. Regional integration should be more than trade. Still, one can also argue that regional integration projects that do not take into account the commercial dimension are incomplete. Moreover, they have lower exit costs, as the UNASUR case demonstrates. A comprehensive regional integration project must include trade as the basis for major economic regionalization which will be also beneficial for the integration into the global economy.

Until now a major challenge for the LAC region is the relatively low share of intraregional trade compared to other world regions. Exports are very much concentrated in the commodity sector. While the percentage of intraregional trade increased in 2017 and 2018, it is still below the 2010 level. In most sub-regional integration schemes it is still well below 20% – the only exception being Central America. For Latin America there exists no trade hub comparable to China in Asia; the United States of America is a more important trade partner than larger Latin American countries. As a result trade is concentrated outside the region, with the United States, China and Europe representing the region’s largest markets.

Given the structure of Latin American economies and prevailing trade patterns, one might ask whether it makes sense to invest in regional integration instead of focusing on integration into the global economy. However, geographic forces and the economic strength of a region condition the success of a country’s global integration strategies. As a result the economic performance of a country in the long run (but also in the short run) is closely correlated with that of its neighbors.

Compared to extra-regional exports, LAC intraregional exports comprise a larger percentage of manufactured products. Exports are of higher quality and have more technological content. Also, a greater variety of products are traded intra-regionally with a higher participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Thus trade connections with regional partners might produce larger growth effects than interregional trade connections.

The question then is how to increase intraregional trade. The so-called Balkanization of regional integration agreements and a multiplicity of rules hinder LAC from reaping the full potential of existing trade agreements. Moreover, the two largest Latin American economies – Brazil and Mexico – are not linked by a preferential trade agreement.

This might change in the case of a free trade agreement between Mercosur and the Pacific Alliance. The rules of origin determine what products can benefit from preferential trade agreements in Latin America. Harmonizing the trade rules between existing sub-regional trading blocs would generate prospects for increased intra-industry trade and the formation of regional value chains. It would contribute to strengthening the region’s capacity to compete in both the regional market and the global economy.

However, Latin America also lags behind other regions in terms of adequate roads and railways as well as in port and airport efficiency. The lowering of transport costs by improving the infrastructure and the interoperability of national customs systems is another prerequisite and tool to increase intraregional trade.

In the current crisis of Latin American regionalism, a strategy based on pragmatic progress seems to be most promising. Future regionalism projects there should be grounded in more regionalization in the economic realm. The existing network of preferential trade agreements provides a very useful platform for expansion and the implementation of a regional free trade area. This can be done step by step and country by country. While not all countries will (or must) participate, countries have to live up to their political and economic status and take on a leadership role. Looking ahead, processes of economic regionalization might induce new regional projects, not the other way around.

This is an updated version of an article first published in GIGA Focus Latin America.

1. Hair pins at the Paso International Los Lobertadores or Cristo Redentor pass between Chile and Argentina.
2. A market stall in Mexico City.
The ASEAN experience in using trade deals to slash trade costs

SOFIA BALIÑO, Editor, and EMILY BLOOM, Project Officer, International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development

What prospects for greater trade cooperation among Southeast Asian countries?

Southeast Asia has become an increasingly dynamic region in terms of international trade activity. This is true particularly as a coalition of 10 countries looks to become more integrated with each other, as well as with a wide community of partners in the region and farther afield. Notably, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has pursued a multi-pronged approach to slash trade costs and border lag times both within their grouping and with other countries. This includes efforts to establish and strengthen an economic community; forge regional trade agreements with other countries; and implement global trade rules.

ASEAN brings together countries of different development levels, political systems and economic approaches. The group began with just five members in 1967 and over the years its mission and membership have grown rapidly. The 10-country group includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The group is now in the process of implementing the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025, a 10-year roadmap aimed at facilitating intraregional and interregional trade and investment.

Trade facilitation, an essential component of ASEAN’s work, was one of ‘five economic thrusts’ the Singaporean presidency of the group focused on this past year.

Trade facilitation, an essential component of ASEAN’s work, was one of ‘five economic thrusts’ the Singaporean presidency...
Regional Trade Accords

Along with the efforts to build an economic community and improve TFA implementation, ASEAN has also crafted free trade agreements (FTAs) with a host of partners which feature detailed provisions on trade facilitation. These accords, sometimes referred to as ASEAN+1 arrangements, involve Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan and South Korea. This is against the backdrop of a broader web of customs and trade facilitation measures embodied in other bilateral and regional agreements concluded by individual ASEAN members.

Common provisions aimed at cutting trade costs in the ASEAN+1 FTAs pertain to greater transparency in trade policies and regulations; interagency cooperation; and harmonization and mutual recognition of technical standards.

For example, the ASEAN-Japan and ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand deals both underline the importance of ‘predictability, consistency, and transparency’ as guiding principles for customs procedures to accelerate customs clearance. Both FTAs require the designation of enquiry points for each country and include commitments to make regulations and administrative procedures publicly available.

The deal with Australia and New Zealand contains detailed provisions on customs procedures cooperation including the exchange of assistance among customs administrations; providing advance notice of changes to relevant laws and regulations; advancing technical skills of customs workers; and the application of technology. The agreements with Japan, Australia, New Zealand and India each include commitments to harmonise customs procedures consistent with World Customs Organization standards.

The ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand and ASEAN-China FTAs each contain provisions dedicated to the development of mutual recognition arrangements, enabling conformity assessments performed in country of origin to be accepted and applied in the importing country.

ON THE HORIZON

Members have also turned to mega-regional agreements to enshrine their commitment to cooperate on trade facilitation. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), six years in the making, unites all ASEAN economies and their six major FTA trading partners. The trade facilitation and customs procedures portions of the pact have already wrapped up, though the text is not yet publicly available.

The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) boasts a sophisticated trade facilitation chapter and features 11 signatories, including ASEAN members Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Viet Nam. It spans significant customs cooperation provisions including many areas of overlap with ASEAN+1 FTAs such as information sharing and transparency measures; enhanced use of technology (such as automated systems for risk analysis); provisions for technical assistance between parties; and commitments to conform with international standards.

By comparison the CPTPP surpasses the scope of the ASEAN-wide FTAs in several areas, including commitments to release goods as far as possible within 48 hours of their arrival and to provide for electronic processing and submission of customs information in advance. The CPTPP also contains digital trade facilitation provisions, including encouraging interoperability of electronic authentication methods. On paperless trade, the CPTPP incorporates a soft commitment to make trade administration documents available to the public in electronic form and to accept trade administration documents submitted electronically as the legal equivalent of the paper version.

The entry into force of the CPTPP is imminent, though Singapore and Viet Nam are so far the only ASEAN members to have ratified the deal. RCEP negotiations are set to continue into 2019.
Brexit: trading uncertainties for third countries

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What Brexit means for trade relations between third countries, the UK and the EU

The simple answer to how the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’s proposed withdrawal from the European Union (EU) will affect trade is increasing uncertainty. As we know, markets do not like uncertainty, nor do policymakers. All European Union (EU) trade partners are on the alert. However, specific consideration is needed for developing countries. Brexit could significantly impact their economic development through its impact on their trade relations.

Until 29 March 2019, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland continues to be an EU member and thus current EU trade and regulatory regimes apply. However, economic operators and traders have started adjusting their activities in anticipation of Brexit, so trade and investment flows have already been partly affected.

The United Kingdom and EU negotiators have concluded a transition withdrawal agreement covering the period from 30 March 2019 until the end of 2020, according to which the UK will remain in the custom union with the EU, but not the EU Single Market, except for Northern Ireland (the backstop plan). The transition period can be extended to a maximum of two years, i.e. until the end of 2022. This means trade relations between third parties and the UK should continue to be determined by the EU’s various trade regimes: its bilateral free
trade agreements (FTAs), unilateral trade preferences (GSP, GSP+ and EBA) and most favoured nation (MFN) tariffs at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

However, some trade partners might object to this arrangement, arguing that EU FTAs and WTO obligations apply only to EU member states, which the UK would no longer be as of 30 March 2019. The UK would not be able to adopt alternative trade regimes with these third countries as long as it remains in the EU customs union, which is the case during the transition period. The point is that third countries do not have to accept the transition agreement between the UK and EU as a fait accompli, at least with respect to trade.

Should the UK Parliament fail to ratify such an agreement, it will generate huge uncertainty: there will probably be a hard - no-deal - Brexit; or the UK could still opt to abandon Brexit and remain in the EU. In terms of trade, a no-deal Brexit means the UK will be out of the EU customs union and out of the single market, will have no trade agreement in place with the EU 27 and will have to establish its own trade regimes with third countries.

TRADE POST-BREXIT

Beyond the transition period, third countries’ trade relations with the UK will depend on the trade regime it adopts. That, in turn, depends on the UK’s trade and regulatory relations with the EU.

If the UK stays in a customs union with the EU, it must continue applying the EU common trade policy and trade regime, on which it will have no say. Other countries will not have the possibility to negotiate special trade deals with the UK and will have to consider the implications of any new EU trade negotiations or arrangements on their trade with the UK.

The UK leaving the EU single market impacts third countries’ trade relations with both the UK and EU. This is because trade flows are not only affected by trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas, but also by a whole set of regulatory issues and standards embodied in the EU single market. New compliance requirements may seriously disrupt trade, increasing time and costs in terms of administrative burden and logistics. Integrated supply chains within the current EU may be broken up if trade via the UK becomes more complicated, which may lead suppliers and traders to use different channels to reach the UK or post-Brexit EU markets. To avoid regulatory barriers, the UK may thus opt to stay in the EU single market.

The UK could remain in the EU single market but keep its trade-policy autonomy by leaving the EU customs union. This would be along the lines of the so-called ‘Norway model’ with the European Economic Area. It could also opt to stay in both a customs union with the EU and the EU single market, in which case it must continue to apply both the EU trade and regulatory regimes (to the dismay of Brexiteers).

The UK could stay outside both the EU customs union and single market, opting instead to negotiate an FTA with the EU. This has been referred to as the ‘Canada model’ as Canada’s is arguably the most advanced EU FTA to date.

Finally, if no trade deal is struck, the UK would have no special trade relationship with the EU.

The UK, trying to have the best of both worlds, has tabled proposals for a tailor-made, à la carte UK trade and regulatory convergence with the post-Brexit EU. One idea is a customs partnership whereby the UK would formally stay outside the EU customs union but would mirror EU trade policies and collect tariffs on behalf of the EU. Another is the maximum facilitation plan to facilitate, through technologies still to be developed, border cooperation and regulatory alignment with the EU. These would not cover services, however. As for the EU, its main concern remains to preserve the integrity of the EU customs union and single market.

THIRD-COUNTRY CONSIDERATIONS

EU trade regimes will overall not be affected by Brexit as EU trade obligations and arrangements will remain in place, including its FTAs, though some WTO issues, such as tariff-rate-quotas in agriculture could be renegotiated.

However, trading with the EU without the UK will mean trading with a smaller market. This might render the EU market less attractive, affecting the balance of power and weight of tariff concessions and liberalization commitments made in the context of an FTA with the EU. Though this is unlikely to be significant for most EU partners, it might open the door to review and renegotiation of trade arrangements with the EU.

More significant will be the need or opportunity for third countries to negotiate new UK trade arrangements should it leave the EU customs union. First, it will have to set new unilateral trade policies including commitments at the WTO, which require the approval of all WTO members. Third countries may use this opportunity to encourage the UK to have a more open trade policy than the EU 28. These unilateral policies will also include UK preferential trade regimes.

To speed up the transition, the UK is proposing ‘grandfathering’ (i.e., copying provisions of current EU FTAs into new UK FTAs with only minor technical adjustments. These could then be opened up later for renegotiation.

ACP CONSIDERATIONS

Several African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries trade with the EU under economic partnership agreements (EPAs). Should the UK leave the EU customs union these will no longer apply to the UK, nor will any other EU FTA. For countries unhappy with their EPAs excluding the UK may be a positive, lessening the impact of the agreement. It may also provide a justification for renegotiating the agreements. The EPAs include a most favoured nation (MFN) provision, suggesting any preferential treatment the EU would grant the UK post-Brexit - and which would be more favourable than those under the EPA - should be extended to the EPA countries. For ACP countries particularly reliant on trade with the UK, such as South Africa and Kenya, concluding an additional FTA with the UK may become an imperative.

Trade negotiations between the UK and ACP countries, especially African countries, will face numerous challenges though. First, the UK is unlikely to prioritize negotiations with African countries while it seeks trade arrangements with more commercially important trading partners. Second, negotiations with individual countries may be seen as weakening regional integration processes in Africa. Negotiating with blocs of African countries will likely run into the same difficulties as the EPA negotiations as many of those agreements are applied only by a subset of the members of the respective African regional blocs.
Regional trade agreements: challenges and opportunities

ROHINI ACHARYA, Chief of Regional Trade Agreements section, World Trade Organization

Proliferation of trade accords has potential to increase trade – and make trade relations more complex

In sharp contrast to only 25 regional trade agreements (RTAs) notified to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and still in force, today there are 290 RTAs notified and in force around the world. RTAs have also become more ambitious over time, frequently including not just tariff liberalization between the parties but also other issues. Today over half of all RTAs notified contain commitments to liberalize trade in goods, services and investment. Moreover, World Trade Organization (WTO) members remain actively involved in negotiating new RTAs, suggesting the rapid growth of such agreements since the early 1990s is set to continue.

While RTAs are permitted exceptions to multilateral rules, the proliferation of such agreements raises new challenges for international trade. By liberalizing trade in goods and services, RTAs can increase trade between parties but also result in increased discrimination against all other WTO members. In addition, they introduce rules and regulations in related issues, such as standards, trade defence and rules of origin to name just a few. These have the potential to also increase discrimination against non-RTA partners and make international trade more complex for exporters and importers.
With regard to the first challenge, recent research by the WTO Secretariat suggests that for some provisions, the divergence may be less marked as RTAs generally tend to reiterate WTO rules. In anti-dumping, safeguards and to some extent standards and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, most RTAs maintain the parties’ WTO rights and obligations. In other areas, even though RTAs create new rules, many parties tend to follow a similar approach which is common to all or most of their RTAs. This ‘template’ approach might, to some extent, reduce the extent of the divergence.

DISCONNECT

However, where there are no existing WTO rules yet such as for competition, government procurement, environment and labour. Among RTAs notified to the WTO, 50% contain provisions that liberalize investment, over 70% have provisions on competition, 66% on government procurement, 57% on the environment and over 30% on labour.

DIVERGENCE

Thus, such agreements are increasingly defining new rules that govern trade between their parties and are not extended to all other WTO Members. Furthermore, for some of these issues, there are no existing WTO rules governing international trade. The inclusion of these provisions suggests there is increasing divergence between existing WTO and RTA rules. This is another challenge for the multilateral trading system, first because it makes WTO rules less relevant for some trading partners and second because WTO members that are not part of the network of RTAs are increasingly excluded from these rules.

RTAs increasingly go beyond market access in goods or services. They include provisions not traditionally associated with trade agreements such as competition, government procurement, environment and labour. Among RTAs notified to the WTO, 50% contain provisions that liberalize investment, over 70% have provisions on competition, 66% on government procurement, 57% on the environment and over 30% on labour.

With regard to the second issue mentioned above, it is especially challenging for developing countries, many of which find themselves outside RTA networks and production and value chains. An important exception to this is the efforts to implement the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which brings together 49 African countries and aims to liberalize barriers to trade in goods and services. While it has been ratified thus far by only 13 countries, it has the potential to significantly reduce barriers to trade, especially those affecting intra-African trade.

INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE

Research by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in November 2018 suggested implementation of the agreement would result in 1% GDP growth and overall export growth of 3%. The biggest impact would be on intra-African trade, which would increase to over 50% (and even higher for some economies) depending on the ambition of liberalization. Provisions to be negotiated in a second phase, such as investment, competition and intellectual property rights, would further strengthen regional integration in Africa.

To conclude, RTAs are likely to continue to increase both in number and coverage, while certain aspects of RTAs will continue to discriminate against trade from third parties. They therefore remain a second-best option compared to the multilateral rules which apply to all WTO members. However, certain aspects of RTAs, notably the rules, tend to be non-discriminatory and therefore can be beneficial even for non-RTA parties. Policymakers would benefit from a closer examination of the impact of both types of provisions on global trade relationships and the international trade rules.

1. Over half of all RTAs notified contain commitments to liberalize trade in goods, services and investment.
2. Despite an increase in RTAs, many WTO members are not part of these networks.
Agriculture trade: regional solutions for global challenges

AHMAD MUKHTAR, Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Why achieving food security would be easier with a local approach

While counting steps to achieve my daily walking goal in the corridors of trade-related organizations in Geneva, I have come across hundreds of negotiators, policymakers, experts and stakeholders on agriculture trade. In my encounters with this myriad of colleagues from across the world, I have come to conclude that we often share common challenges. Three challenges in particular stand out: how to achieve food security, how to move up in agriculture value chains, and how to get access to the global agriculture marketplace.

It is rare, however, that I find any common solutions among my colleagues. One solution I would suggest, which is also cross-cutting, is to go regional.

On food security, a shared global challenge manifested through the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 2, the regional approach may provide a solution by broadening the food-supply base through the formation of regional coalitions. Regional coalitions – comprising a variety of actors such as agriculture producers, government agencies, and other agriculture – will help create synergies in production and ease pressure on policymakers regarding food availability and distribution. Due to similarities, though not in all cases, in agriculture endowments, production and consumption patterns, a regional marketplace happens to be more logical and practical than the global one. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Food Security Reserve Board and the ASEAN Rice Trade Platform are good examples. These aim at ensuring long-term food security and nutrition, to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region through intra-regional trade and sharing resources and exchanging information on production, stocks and utilization of food reserves.

To the extent that increased intraregional trade fosters economic growth and increases employment prospects and the income-earning capacities of the poor, it will enhance access to food.
Food security may also be enhanced through intraregional trade in general and agricultural trade in particular. To the extent that increased intraregional trade fosters economic growth and increases employment prospects and the income-earning capacities of the poor, it will enhance access to food.

VALUE ADDITION
The challenge of value-addition features in almost all sectors of the economy but probably the most pronounced in agriculture. This is down to low levels of investments in agribusiness and agro-industrialization at the macro level, and a lack of entrepreneurship, capital and even economies of scale at the farmer or micro level.

To help mitigate the investment and entrepreneurship gaps, a regional approach that essentially provides economies of scale and shared knowledge and investment platform, may provide a workable solution. In Africa, the Accelerated Agriculture and Agro-industry Development Initiative PLUS (3ADI+), launched by FAO, IFAD and UNIDO in collaboration with the AIDB and UNECA, in 2010, is a good example to strengthen the regional platform for regional challenges.

Liberalization in trade through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international trading arrangements has been witnessed over time but this has rarely gone beyond tariffs. And it has led to little market-access opening for developing countries. Non-tariff measures (NTMs), particularly in the form of mandatory and voluntary standards, have become a major issue, especially for agriculture exporters from developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs).

Focusing on the regional marketplace for exports may help in mitigating this situation. A single regional space offers the best possibility to addressing issues such as food safety and for the relevant standards to be harmonized and mutually recognized among the countries in that space. The regional standardization will provide better and practical platform in seeking harmonization and mutual recognition in other export destinations of higher or different set of food safety standards.

REGIONAL MARKETPLACES
The regional marketplace also requires less spending on logistics and distribution networks and provides better market for most agriculture products due to similarities in taste and food-consumption patterns. In some cases, such as rice, most trade already happens in the regional marketplace, while for some commodities – such as soybeans – producing and consuming regions are often quite distant when it comes to taste and other preferences.

Regional marketplaces also provide a platform for gradual integration in global trade. It is easier to manage unintended consequences of imports and exports at the regional level, as the results and impacts can be gauged and controlled relatively quickly. However, in most of the regional trade agreements (RTAs), agriculture trade still features as protected/sensitive sector.

In most of the RTAs, the issue of reduction in domestic support, for example subsidies to agriculture sector is not covered, while issues related to non-tariff measures (NTMs) are rarely found. The common provisions in such RTAs deal with the issues related to tariff reductions on agriculture imports, avoidance of agriculture export restrictions and safeguards against loss to national agriculture caused by sudden surge in imports.

In fact, increasing the coverage of all aspects of agriculture trade will benefit the partner countries and positively influence the future multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture as the most important issues in WTO negotiations on agriculture are the domestic support (subsidies) and increasing use of NTMs has also been brought to question in the relevant WTO Committees, especially the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee.

REGIONAL TRADE FACILITATION
The regional approach may be complemented through implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), and at the same time, implementation of the TFA would reduce existing bottlenecks and increase intraregional trade flows. For instance, improved border clearance processes, particularly for perishable items, would remove a longstanding hurdle to intraregional trade for agriculture commodities in Africa.

A regional approach towards agriculture trade will also result in more entrepreneur-ship opportunities at the regional level and gradually make it easier for entrepreneurs to enter and operate at global level. This would logically help achieve value-addition and create more employment. With rapid urbanization and increasing connectivity, consumption patterns, including in food are evolving at a rapid pace. As such, the supply-side needs to be tailored accordingly. This can be done easier at regional than the global or national level due to bigger than national and smaller than global operating scale and more effective and efficient agriculture supply chains at the regional than global level.

Agriculture has always been a sensitive area in the international trading system both for developed and developing countries. Despite delivering well for the global economy in recent decades and achieving a global benchmark for trade liberalization, the multilateral trading system is far from ideal while, at the same time, protectionist sentiments are popping up all over the globe. This situation may lead to a retreat in whatever has been achieved thus far through the WTO. One way to halt such potential retreat in agriculture trade is by going regional. This will ease pressure on policymakers and give confidence to the private sector through continued trade in and across the border marketplaces.

1. A cattle market in Sudan.
2. A good choice for cross-border trade?
Regional integration through joint trade facilitation reforms

VICTORIA TUOMISTO, Associate Expert, and Mohammad Saeed, Senior Trade Facilitation Adviser, International Trade Centre

Boosting regional trade with coordinated and harmonized implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement

Regional implementation of trade facilitation reforms can bring more significant benefits to regional economic communities (REC) and their member states rather than uncoordinated measures applied by each country autonomously. Regional approaches can ensure that traders in the same region are not burdened by differing customs formalities and cross-border requirements that hinder cross-border trade in the region. Importantly, uniform formalities and procedures conceived and coordinated at the regional level can remove bottlenecks, increase the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and enhance the competitiveness of regional value chains, thus deepening regional integration.

A healthy business environment and the ease of doing business are critical for thriving regional cross-border trade. A poor cross-border trading environment partly explains why only 14% of total African trade is intraregional compared to approximately 50% for Asia and 70% for Europe. In fact, when shipping goods between two countries in West Africa, it may be cheaper to ship them through Europe than directly. This is partly due to highly cumbersome customs procedures, high transportation costs and poor infrastructure throughout the region, which seriously hamper regional trade and integration.

The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement allows the flexibility for countries and regions to coordinate reforms according to specific priorities.
To overcome these problems, RECs have aimed to coordinate reforms for trade facilitation. A notable example is Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Single Window initiative, which connects and integrates the national single windows of its member states, allowing border documents to be exchanged electronically among countries and expediting the time required for clearance. In Africa, RECs such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) are actively developing joint border post initiatives, which eliminate the need for goods to stop twice for border-crossing formalities and should enhance intraregional trade.

DEEPENING REGIONAL INTEGRATION
By tackling border administration challenges and addressing procedural obstacles to trade, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) can be instrumental in deepening regional integration. Entering into force in February 2017, the agreement created binding obligations for WTO Members to implement reforms to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It provides a unique opportunity for countries and RECs to include trade facilitation as a priority agenda item in their regional integration processes or deepen initiatives already in place.

The TFA is an important step forward in harmonizing the trade facilitation environment. It provides an approved legal framework within which neighbouring countries – and RECs – can coordinate and adjust their reform programmes. While the TFA is legally binding and enforceable for individual WTO Members, the agreement recognizes and supports the contribution of regional bodies to implementation, with specific references to regional arrangements, which national governments and RECs should consider. The agreement also allows the flexibility for countries and regions to coordinate reforms according to specific priorities. Developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) within RECs not only benefit from a differential timetable to meet their TFA commitments, they also enjoy specific technical assistance and capacity building.

The implementation of TFA may also have an indirect regional dimension. There are many examples of measures with potential regional implementation capacity in the agreement, such as Article 1.1 and Article 1.2 on publication and availability of information through the Internet, which can be implemented in a coordinated manner to provide traders with a common regional platform where to retrieve information. Another is Article 7.7 on trade facilitation measures for authorized operators, whereby if member states within an REC agree on a common set of qualifying criteria, it will support business participation to each national scheme within a REC and create a basis for mutual recognition agreements.

TRADE FACILITATION ROADMAP
In its aim to help RECs foster a conducive business environment and deepen regional integration, the International Trade Centre (ITC) has developed a toolkit based on a six-step methodology to assist policymakers in designing, implementing and monitoring regional trade facilitation reforms. It provides a comprehensive review of relevant instruments and approaches available to regional institutions and their member states. Its objective is to support RECs in designing regional trade facilitation reforms tailored to their needs and resources. That will deepen the regional integration process by promoting simpler, cheaper and faster intraregional trade transactions for businesses.

The six-step methodology:
1. Consolidate Member States’ needs and identify common requirements;
2. Build consensus on TFA obligations to be implemented regionally;
3. Define the mix of legal and non-legal instruments to support implementation;
4. Outline Member States’ and regional bodies’ implementation responsibilities;
5. Develop a targeted implementation plan based on the selected instruments and allocation of responsibilities; and
6. Establish a regional institutional platform to facilitate regional reforms, such as a regional trade facilitation committee.

NO SIZE FITS ALL
The above methodology was applied in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) where ITC supported the establishing of a regional trade facilitation committee (RTFC) with a mandate to design, support the implementation and monitor regional reforms. The committee, still due to be legally established, first identified the common trade facilitation needs of each member state and then selected a set of measures for regional implementation. Based on an analysis of the appropriate mix of instruments and sharing of responsibilities, members of RTFCs – policymakers, cross-border agencies and private sector representatives—built tailored regional implementation plans for three priority measures, with an objective to proceed to implementation in 2019.

As there is no one-size-fits-all regional trade facilitation roadmap, each community must take into consideration its specific mandate, institutional arrangement, procedures, political economic and implementation capacity to design its way forward. ITC encourages policymakers in RECs to make use of this roadmap to implement regional trade facilitation policies and to establish a platform or committee that coordinates and monitors their implementation. The roadmap to regional trade facilitation reforms – if supported and implemented with the commitment of national and regional policymakers – should help reinvigorate regional integration processes by promoting simpler, cheaper and faster intraregional trade.

1. The port of Accra, Ghana.
2. Will they make it across the border?
Learn what drives the 26-year-old serial inventor and multi-global pitch winner to make practical science a reality for students across Africa and beyond

Brownish and black, with gold letters on the bindings.

Charles Ofori Antipem was seven or eight years old when he first lay eyes on an A-Z set of the Encyclopaedia Britannica at his local library.

He discovered the library one day while playing outside with friends. He remembered hearing what he called some of the ‘best guys in school’ talking about it. ‘I almost didn’t enter,’ said the 26-year-old serial inventor from Nsoatre, a town in the Brong Ahafo region in midwestern Ghana. ‘But the librarian looked at my face, so I entered.’

This was where Antipem met the likes of master inventors Nikola Tesla, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and the Wright brothers. ‘It was a whole new world,’ he said. ‘Reading about these people made me feel like I can also make things like that. From then on, I spent all my time at the library. Exciting times.’

Before long, he would read every volume in the set.

FALLING FOR SCIENCE

Though the library ignited Antipem’s love of learning and inventing, his love of science came from his dad – Solomon Antipem, a science teacher – and on rainy days, a bottle and a funnel.

‘We didn’t have much in terms of science equipment but he did have a rain gauge,’ Charles said. ‘Every day when it rained, my dad would take me out to measure rainfall.’

This sparked his interest in the art of experimenting and collecting data. His mother, Cecelia Kyeremaa, was also ‘very, very supportive’ of his early interest in science, he said.

‘Every now and then I would do a crazy experiment,’ he recalled. Once, his mom helped him light a coal fire so he could boil a cassava to extract starch to build a prototype of a laser-based smoke detector.

‘I felt like she was part of my team,’ he said.

EXCELLING UNCONVENTIONALLY

Antipem did well in school but in an unusual way. He didn’t take notes in class – rather, he would sit, listen and imagine what the teacher said.

‘Success is hearing an engineer in the future telling their story beginning with “When I was young, I had a Science Set.”’

‘It’s like when I read books, I would get lost in the moment,’ he explained. ‘I’d be in a trance, imagine myself in the story. So when the teacher explained in class, I could imagine it. Atoms or whatever, I imagined, and it became very difficult for me to forget.’

In high school, he earned the nickname ‘crazy scientist’. While other students followed class schedules, he spent most of his
time in the lab, creating and experimenting. Initially, he paid a price for it.

‘They sacked me from science lab,’ he said. ‘In senior high school, they said, “He’s not a serious student. Let’s take him from science to general arts classes.” I ditched classes and went to physics. After a year, the headmaster just gave up.’

If results speak for themselves, things worked out. One example: During a physics exam in the lab, there was an issue with the experiment setup. The lab technician alerted the teacher, who said, ‘Ask Charles to fix it.’

BECOMING AN INVENTOR
By age 15 Antipem had created his first product, a flexible, water-resistant computer keyboard that could fit in a pocket once folded. Using a kit he created, people could convert their traditional keyboards in less than 10 minutes.

He would soon add to his list of inventions:
- A smoke detector with intertwining lasers that scans the entirety of a ceiling to detect smoke more quickly than conventional detectors;
- An evaporative cooling system for locally manufactured cars using indigenous earthenware technology;
- A LED-powered drawing board for engineering students;
- A housing structure for plants that permits light to fall on targeted areas – based on distribution of auxins or plant hormones – so plants grow into desired shapes; and
- The multi-award-winning Science Set (thescienceset.com/), a $15 textbook-sized lab kit with 45 components that students use to perform experiments and learn science in a practical way.

GAINING GLOBAL TRACTION
The story of the Science Set began in 2012 about 140 kilometres from Antipem’s hometown at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

Antipem entered university to study mechanical engineering. During school breaks, he went back home and brought children together to teach them science.

It was during these trips that Antipem had a thought: ‘I had only the rainfall bottle. What would happen if I gave the kids better than I had?’

So in 2015, in his dorm room, he built what would become a prototype of the Science Set. He and his friend Michael Asante-Afrifa then worked on improving it. When he brought the kit back to the children in his hometown, it made a difference.

‘The teachers were excited and the kids were excited to be inventing,’ Antipem said.

Science teacher Maxwell Samuel Yamoah uses the Science Set in his classroom. Students conduct experiments in electricity, electronics, magnetism and electromagnetism.

‘The Science Set is a game-changer,’ Yamoah said. ‘It makes teaching and learning of science more experiential and evidence-based. The change in pedagogy has developed critical-thinking skills, innovation and curiosity in students. This has developed the can-do spirit in them.’

Putting a science lab on the desk of every student became Antipem’s goal: Spark students’ interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in a hands-on way, encouraging them to pursue careers in those fields.

Why? ‘Because Africa needs more engineers to solve our problems,’ he said.

The need will only increase in coming years. More than half the global population growth between now and 2050 is expected to take place in Africa, according to the United Nations. Youth on the continent will need relevant skills – particularly those in STEM – to support that level of growth in a sustainable way.

For their part, Antipem and Asante-Afrifa are focusing on using the Science Set to help students learn in a proactive way. A year and a half ago they became co-founders of Dext Technology, which produces the kit. The company has nine full-time staff and 26 part-time employees.

Today 19,000 students in seven countries – Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, Germany and the United States of America – perform experiments with Science Sets at school.

WINNING PITCHES
To reach more students at a greater pace and to attract investment, the Dext Technology co-founders have been participating in – and winning – global pitch competitions.

Antipem earned first place and $5,000 for his pitch at the 2018 World Export Development Forum young social entrepreneurs pitch contest in September, beating out competition from across Africa.

The event was organized by the International Trade Centre’s Youth and Trade Programme, Impact Hub’s Accelerate2030 programme and Nyamuka Zambia, a business plan competition for start-ups.

Through the experience, Antipem gained new contacts and business leads. The aim now is to put the award-winning kit into the hands of one million students in Africa in the next few years.

Antipem went one better in October, beating out hundreds of competitors to win the ONE Africa Award 2018 in Dakar, Senegal, gaining the title of the most innovative solution in education in Africa along with $100,000.

REACHING A MILLION
Many things have changed for Charles Ofori Antipem since the day he first set foot in his local library as a primary school student.

So what does success mean to him?

‘Success is hearing an engineer in the future telling their story beginning with “When I was young, I had a Science Set,”’ he said.

2. ‘Science Set’ The multiple award-winning Science Set enables students across the world to learn science in an experiential way.
Building trust, recognizing excellence in trade promotion

SUSANNA PAK Communications Officer, International Trade Centre

Experts explore the changing role of trade and investment promotion organizations at a global conference in Paris, France, and institutions from Ghana, Nigeria and Qatar win big

In a rapidly changing and increasingly digital world, building trust remains the constant.

That's according to trade and investment experts from around the world who gathered at the 2018 World Trade Promotion Organization Conference in Paris, France, on 25-26 October. The biennial conference – co-hosted this year by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and Business France – explored the theme of trade and investment ecosystems: delivering for growth.

With the rise of digital platforms, trade and investment promotion organizations have a new opportunity to become trust builders between businesses, buyers and institutions – a role that cannot be replaced by technology – and to focus on broad-based, inclusive economic growth, as well as to...
strengthen partnerships. In other words, collaborate to compete.

More than 120 institutions from 95 countries participated in the event.

As part of the conference, trade and investment promotion organizations received awards for innovation and excellence in export-development initiatives that focus on helping micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to compete in global markets.

DIVING INTO DIGITAL
The Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA) won for best use of information technology. Its online Market Hub provides exporters and external buyers 24/7 access to trade information.

‘Digital technologies make everything easier for Ghana exporters,’ said GEPA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Afua Asabea Asare. ‘The Market Hub is a one-stop shop for everything good about exports.’

The award of recognition in this category went to Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) for its online platform, Cleantech CUBE, which promotes Swiss suppliers of clean technologies to foreign markets.

SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE TRADE
The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) won for best initiative towards inclusive and sustainable trade for its Zero to Export initiative, which trains exporters on the export process, provides advice on products and markets, and enhances their marketing and management skills.

‘Many of the people we have trained are women exporters, and they are now helping their communities,’ said NEPC CEO Olusegun Awolowo.

The award of recognition went to the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) for its Export Voucher Programme, which offers a ‘cash-like coupon’ for businesses to purchase export support services online.

The Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry received a special award from ITC Executive Director Arancha González for its work to raise incomes and create jobs in rural areas through value-added sea buckthorn – a local berry – and sheep wool.

The Ghana Export Promotion Authority will host the next World Trade Promotion Organization Conference in Accra in 2020.

‘This is an honour for us,’ said QDB/TASDEER Executive Director Hassan Al Mansoori. ‘It’s a combination of hard work and a good partnership with Business France.’

The award of recognition went to the Export Development Authority of Egypt for its Green Trade Initiative, which builds the export capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those selling agricultural products to Europe.

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE
QDB/TASDEER, an arm of the Qatar Development Bank, won for best use of a partnership. Working with Business France, it has diversified into healthcare, engineering, information technology and jewellery, reaching new export markets such as China, Oman, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

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1. All winners
2. WTPO Conference
3. WTPO Conference
4. Eiffel tower
5. WTPO Conference hosts ITC/Business France with WTPO 2020 host GEPA
Expanding tourism in Myanmar’s Kayah State and Tanintharyi region

Earlier this year, the International Trade Centre (ITC) announced that it would be extending and expanding its support to Myanmar’s tourism sector as part of the fourth phase of the Dutch-funded Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF IV) programme. The four-year programme will be implemented in partnership with Myanmar’s Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT).

Projects under the programme in Myanmar will be looking to strengthen existing ITC interventions in Kayah State and extend activities to also cover the Tanintharyi region. Projects will be aiming to develop innovative and sustainable tourism products and services, including destination marketing and branding, improving tourism statistics, strengthening tourism-related associations and encouraging business linkages at national and regional levels.

The project will seek to further improve tourism products and services in Kayah, with the goal of making the state a learning centre for developing inclusive tourism.

ITC to step up support to tourism operators of two Myanmar’s rural regions

Announcing the launch of the new programme in Dawei, Tanintharyi’s regional capital, ITC Executive Director Arancha
González said: ‘Together with our partners, ITC will seek to emulate the successes from Kayah in Tanintharyi. At the same time, the project will seek to further improve tourism products and services in Kayah, with the goal of making the state a learning centre for developing inclusive tourism. This will provide opportunities for other states that have shown interest in developing inclusive tourism – such as Chin or Shan – to learn from Kayah State’s experiences.’

Daw Khin Than Win, Acting Director-General, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MoHT), said: ‘I would like to thank ITC for its comprehensive support to the Myanmar tourism sector at national and regional level. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is particularly keen to receive further support for an improved system of tourism statistics that is crucial for a good understanding and the planning of tourism development. In this respect, I welcome the collaboration between ITC and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and I am looking forward to working with them. We are also looking forward to continued collaboration with ITC to improve tourism marketing and branding.’

Mr. Aung Soe, Director-General, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization (MyanTrade), Ministry of Commerce (MoC) said ITC was in the best position to continue helping Myanmar tourism sector to improve. ‘I
particularly appreciate how ITC is empowering Myanmar regions – Kayah first and now Tanintharyi – transferring knowledge locally to assure the project’s sustainability,” he said. ‘ITC is achieving this through very important initiatives such as the Training of Trainers (ToT) programme and setting up and facilitating public-private dialogues that is activating partnerships at the local level.’

JOB CREATION
A particular focus of the sustainable-tourism projects in Myanmar will be ensuring job creation and income generation among women and youth in an effort to reduce poverty. In addition to working with official regional and national authorities, ITC will be working alongside a range of tourism-related small and medium-sized enterprises and interest organizations.

The Kayah State villages that benefited from ITC’s previous interventions have seen a hike in the number of tourists. Between 2016 and 2017, international tourist visits to Kayah State increased by more than 40% and domestic tourist visits almost doubled from 17,000 to 33,000. Over the course of the project tourism spending in Kayah State increased by 400%. Working to bring the various ethnic groups together by promoting the preservation of diverse cultures and traditional practices, the project is seen as playing a role in bridging differences and contributing to peace.

In addition to local partners, ITC will also continue its partnership with the UNWTO to ensure data collection that will help identify the future needs of Myanmar’s tourism industry and provide user-friendly data to tourism operators and national and state levels. In collaboration with the MoC and MoHT, ITC will be developing and delivering a series of training sessions on food safety and hygiene, as well as supporting the development of promotional materials to promote Kayah State and Tanintharyi.

Crucial to the project will be interactions between stakeholders in Tanintharyi and in Kayah State. Ahead of the launch, ITC has organized learning exchanges between beneficiaries from Kayah State and Tanintharyi. This is the first part of what will be regular meetings that will help strengthen the development of inclusive tourism in both regions, and consolidate partnerships at the national level. It is forecasted that such interaction will be extended to also include tourism operators in Chin State in 2019.

1. Locals show a map displaying community attractions in Htay Koh village.
3. A local shaman in Htaa Nee La Leh village.
5. Tourists to Kayah State can try wonderful local cuisine.
7. Kayah State is also home to stunning landscapes.
8. A Kayan - or longneck – women in her home.
9. ITC Executive Director Arancha González and beneficiaries in Kayah State.
PROMOTING SME COMPETITIVENESS IN SAINT LUCIA
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Caribbean island nation of Saint Lucia are contributing to the country’s export growth. The findings of a new International Trade Centre (ITC) Competitiveness Survey, jointly conducted with the country’s Trade Export Promotion Agency, provides guidance on how to exploit opportunities in the food and beverages, tourism, manufacturing and creative industries.

www.intracen.org/publication/Promoting-SME-Competitiveness-in-Saint-Lucia

SUPPORTING SMES THROUGH TRADE FACILITATION REFORMS: TOOLKIT FOR POLICYMAKERS
Policymakers now have a SME-friendly toolkit to guide national reforms when implementing the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement. Addressing reforms from the perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will spread benefits across the whole business community. By examining the 19 provisions in the agreement that most help SMEs, hurt SMEs or help big business, the report offers insights that help national policymakers to boost the backbone of their own economies.

www.intracen.org/publication/supporting-SMEs-through-trade-facilitation-reforms

RED GOLD RUSH: MANAGING QUALITY FOR AFGHAN SAFFRON EXPORTS
Saffron, the world’s most expensive spice, offers great potential for Afghan exporters. Developing a consistent brand for quality is the key to unlocking a ‘red gold’ rush, a priority sector of Afghanistan’s national export strategy. This guide outlines how to build a quality saffron sector based on mandatory requirements, voluntary standards and market preferences for three major markets: Europe, India and China.

www.intracen.org/publication/red-gold-rush

JORDAN: COMPANY PERSPECTIVES - AN ITC SERIES ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES
More than two-thirds of Jordanian companies face difficulties with non-tariff measures when exporting or importing. Inconsistent application of regulations creates major obstacles for Jordanian exporters. The problems caused by conformity assessment requirements and procedures are a key source of concern. This report recommends strengthening officials’ capacity, increasing assistance to the private sector and deepening the dialogue with Saudi Arabia to facilitate transit and direct trade.

www.intracen.org/publication/Jordan

GUIDE TO CHINESE PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN AFRICA: INSIGHTS FROM SME COMPETITIVENESS SURVEYS
While private investment from China into Africa is significant, its potential for increasing local productivity remains largely underestimated. The main challenge for investors is finding information on the availability and quality of local suppliers. This new ITC report uses data from its Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) Competitiveness Surveys to provide information on the capability of firms and quality of business ecosystems in a range of sectors in five African countries: the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco and Zambia.

www.intracen.org/publication/Chinese-private-investment-in-Africa

CROSS-BORDER CONTRACTING: HOW TO DRAFT AND NEGOTIATE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS
With firms increasingly trading digitally across borders, business communities, legal practitioners and governments are developing innovative ways to facilitate business deals, sound contractual arrangements and efficient dispute settlement mechanisms. In close collaboration with its committee of professionals, ITC is contributing to these new legal approaches with this handbook by harmonizing and enhancing the practice of international business related to cross-border commercial contracting.

www.intracen.org/publication/cross-border-contracting

ETHIOPIA: COMPANY PERSPECTIVES - AN ITC SERIES ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES
The majority of Ethiopian exporters and importers face challenges associated with conformity assessments and clearance formalities such as delays, lack of specific facilities and administrative burdens. Based on 231 interviews, this new ITC report recommends enhancing Ethiopia’s quality-related infrastructure and capacity; improving production techniques; simplifying procedures; and disseminating relevant information. It also suggests integrating the business perspective in domestic procedures and ensuring competitive services to the export sector.


www.intracen.org/publications
Upcoming events

**10 -11 January**  
Third Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) Ministerial Conference, Cape Town, South Africa

**22-25 January**  
World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Davos, Switzerland

**10-13 February**  
World Government Summit, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**11-13 February**  
World Sustainable Development Summit, New Delhi

**28 February**  
The Economist’s Asia Trade Summit, Hong Kong SAR

**8 March**  
International Women’s Day

**11-13 March**  
6th Commonwealth Africa Summit, London

**18-22 March**  
Africa Climate Week Accra, Ghana

**20-22 March**  
Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**20-26 March**  
52nd Session of the Economic Commission for Africa, Morocco

**25-26 March**  
Africa CEO Forum, Kigali, Rwanda

**1-5 April**  
UNCTAD’s eCommerce Week 2019: From Digitization to Development, Geneva

**5-6 April**  
World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa, Amman, Jordan

**8-12 April**  

**2-5 May**  
Annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank, Fiji

**5 June**  
World Environment Day

**3-6 June**  
Women Deliver Conference, Vancouver, Canada

**12-14 June**  
World Chambers Congress, Rio de Janeiro

**20 June**  
World Refugee Day

**26 June**  
Launch of International Trade Centre’s SME Competitiveness Outlook 2019

**27 June**  
Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) Day

**1 July**  
Meeting of ITC’s 53rd Joint Advisory Group, Geneva

**3-5 July**  
World Trade Organization Aid for Trade Global Review, Geneva

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