



International  
Trade  
Centre

## MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP

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# Evaluation of ITC's Performance in Trade and Market Information

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### Management Response, Action Plan, Results, and Means of Verification

<b>Date of submission of final evaluation report:</b> October 2021	
<b>Responsible chief:</b>	Mondher Mimouni, Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section
<b>Responsible director:</b>	Rajesh Aggarwal, Director Division of Market Development, a.i.
<b>Head of evaluation:</b>	Miguel Jiménez Pont, ITC Independent Evaluation Unit
<b>Date of finalization of management response:</b> March 2022	

**Recommendation 1: Revise the strategy and intervention logic of the market analysis tools.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *TMI should prepare a new strategic document that should include a more comprehensive theory of change / intervention logic, detailing what each tool is intended to achieve, who the targeted users are (and which other groups are likely to benefit) as well as the pathways through which intended results are expected to be achieved.*
- *The strategy should also address how to better reach users in ITC's priority countries. Moreover, it should provide information about which collaborations with external actors (such as universities, researchers, private sector, or other organizations) already exist or are being pursued, and how they will contribute to the effectiveness of the tools.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:  Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/>	The section management agrees that a new strategic document will be timely and will also allow to explain the positioning of the new tools, how the series of market analysis tools contribute to answer to users' needs, and how they benefit trade related decisions and analysis.  The Theory of Change developed in the context of the Transparency in Trade programme will be revised 1) to include recently developed tools and features and 2) to adjust it to the new ITC Strategic Plan 2022-2025.  Furthermore, TMI will suggest a strategy to increase the use of the tools in ITC's priority countries. Some ideas that would be further developed in the document are the involvement of the Division of Country Programmes (DCP), to ensure ITC builds on its regional offices to strengthen its positioning with MSMEs. The document will contain a suggested approach to position market analysis tools' awareness in more projects, and to improve their visibility at corporate events.  Finally, partnerships with external actors will not only be promoted, but also pursued as they take part in ITC's mandate to enhance transparency in trade and contribute to SDGs.
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**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible of- fice or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
1.1 Prepare a new version of the market analysis tools strategy to be validated by SMC	Strategic plan for Market analysis tools	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	
1.2 Participate in ITC Partnerships for Purpose working group to contribute ITC strategy for a better promotion of partnerships	ITC plan for Partnership for Purpose	OED	TMI, OED	Ongoing	

**Recommendation 2: Adjust the approach and metrics used to assess the tools' performance.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *Explore options to get comprehensive feedback on the usefulness of the tools for their intended target groups, considering survey fatigue and related low answer rates for online questionnaires. Possible approaches include: the existing MAT survey could be retained, but administered to a larger audience using stratified random sampling; a qualitative survey campaign should be carried out, for example through interviews, group discussions or other means, to obtain more detailed information about users' needs. For reporting purposes, the analysis could focus on recent users, while the overall results could provide a more comprehensive picture of the tools' overall performance. Besides, the tools performance could also be assessed through pop-up satisfaction surveys (as currently already done for Export Potential Map), which could provide a more reliable assessment of actual users instead of focussing on registered accounts only.*
- *The tools' performance metrics should be reframed to focus on visits and actual use rather than registered accounts, while distinguishing the type of profile (MSMEs, BSOs etc).*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

TMI management recognizes the survey fatigue for online questionnaires and agrees that a new methodology should be implemented to collect critical information for reporting. This would likely consist in combining the Market Analysis Tools (MAT) survey with other targeted approaches, such as needs' assessment focus groups. Indeed, the MAT survey's main purpose is to respond to corporate and donors' reporting indicators and to a lesser extent to measure user's satisfaction and needs. Hence, exploring new ways of capturing related information will be useful.

As regards the tools' performance metrics, the current system already allows to answer several types of requests. It does not focus on registered accounts only. Indeed, TMI could provide either the number of visits, or the number of registered accounts. For instance, the number of frequent users (ie using the tools at least twice per year, as per ITC definition) is reported against A1 indicator at corporate level. And the total number of registered accounts is published as part of ITC Regular Budget submission to New York. Those two systems are in place to allow answering different interest/needs for donors or for ITC.

Improving the users' database to better track the type of profile is foreseen, while waiting for progress on the implementation of a corporate single sign-on. While that will capture registered users' profile, it is important to remind that most of the tools are accessible without creating an account, as per ITC commitment to facilitate free access to trade related information.

<b>Action Plan and Responsibilities:</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected result and means of verification</b>	<b>Responsible of- fice or partner</b>	<b>Contributing section(s)</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
2.1. Benchmark of new solutions to collect users' feedback, including for example focus groups per clients' profiles	A list of approaches/methods that TMI could implement to collect users' feedback (including satisfaction with the tools, support and information's needs)	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	Implementation of new approach in a second phase, while ensuring no discontinuity with reporting required by donor (main project financing GPG is ending in Dec. 2022)
2.2. Deploy a campaign encouraging MAT registered users to update their information to increase accuracy of type of profile ( <i>MSMEs, BSOs etc</i> ), aligned with corporate single sign-on	An updated overview of repartition of users against their profile (for the registered accounts only)	TMI	TMI	Within 2 months following full implementation of corporate single sign-on	While we improve registered accounts tracking, most of the tools will remain accessible without creating an account as per ITC mandate to enhance transparency in trade

**Recommendation 3: Increase awareness of the tools to better reach main target groups.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *TMI should improve outreach to its main target groups, for example by carrying out targeted awareness campaigns on the tools globally, combined with capacity building activities upon funds' availability. This could be done through specific user channels, for example at a regional level in collaboration with regional economic communities and with the assistance of national and private sector BSOs.*
- *In addition, BSOs should be encouraged to include links to the tools into their own websites to make them more visible and accessible to their members, using the guidelines developed by TMI. Given their intense collaboration with BSOs around the world, ITC's Institutions and Ecosystems Section would be a helpful partner in this effort, including to provide contacts of BSOs in ITC priority countries.*
- *Regarding MSMEs as a target group, in particular the level of familiarity with the still very young Global Trade Helpdesk should be increased, as it is especially geared towards their needs.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:  Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/>  Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>TMI management agrees that increasing awareness about the market analysis tools is critical, and that targeted campaigns can be deployed when funds are available. In recent years, TMI management placed communication and visibility as key to reach projects' results. Thanks to these efforts, the section was successful in including a dedicated communication budget in some projects (eg. Trade and Investment Facilitation Mechanism).</p> <p>However, developing and implementing awareness campaigns globally would be extremely costly, as a good Communication and Visibility plan would have to be customized at national level to consider different languages, channels and users' needs. Furthermore, the Global Trade Helpdesk growing awareness is already in the pipeline, and the tool will continue to be promoted as per ITC's commitment and funding.</p> <p>Collaboration with BSO to promote and use the market analysis tools should be reinforced indeed, and TMI management will cooperate with Institutions and Ecosystems Section (IE) to explore if some quick-win activities can be automatically suggested to BSO (eg. installing a link to the tools on their website). The same idea will be discussed with the Division of Country Programmes (DCP), to ensure ITC builds on its regional offices to strengthen its positioning with target audience.</p>
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**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
3.1. Develop a plan to improve tools' outreach to be presented to SMC	Plan to SMC, including communication and visibility actions and the related required budget.	TMI	TMI, IE, DCP, C&E	31/12/2022	Benefiting from DCP as an entry point to collect data to be explored as well

**Recommendation 4: Continue to improve the functionality and features of the tools and the user-friendliness of their interfaces. Put more emphasis on analytics and data visualization.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- i. Devote additional resources to further interface improvements for the Market Analysis Tools. Interface simplification should be based on clients' needs, ease of use and designed in a way to minimize the need for user training.*
- ii. Newer versions should enable the generation of automated reports and insights, and include advanced data visualization capabilities based on user requests. Incorporation of advanced search technology based on plain language or voice activation could help make the tools more accessible.*
- iii. In particular to better serve MSMEs in DCs and LDCs, the tools' websites should be further optimized to be fully responsive to different user displays and existing mobile applications should be upgraded, so they are functional and able to provide automated personalized insights (based on products).*
- iv. TMI should further leverage its relationships with universities, researchers, private sector, or other organizations to make use of their expertise, for example in methodology or in designing user interfaces and apps that respond well to user needs.*
- v. A priority should be to update the Export Potential Map methodology in line with the recent academic literature.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

- i. Interface improvements:** TMI management fully agrees with the recommendation to continue improving tools' interface. Building on its successes in developing state-of-art trade intelligence portals such as the recently launched African Trade Observatory, or the Export Potential Map tool that won the German Design Award in 2018 (following an inception phase and a test with users' groups), TMI will continue to improve the market analysis tools within available budget. For instance, Market Access Map was fully revamped in 2019 thanks to EU funds. Since then, the tool was enhanced with a Russian version, and a daily updated list of Covid-19 related measures to answer clients' needs to navigate the critical economic situation. The tool will soon have its mobile version and a new language (Arabic). Likewise, other tools are frequently upgraded with new features. Additionally, among its priority actions, TMI management would like to further develop Investment Map (a proposal will be presented to SMC early 2022) and redesign Trade Map (TMI will engage with historical main partner to seek for financial support) to align them to users' needs.
- ii. Advanced new features:** TMI management agrees that automated reports and insights, advanced data visualization, as well as advanced online search based on plain language will be useful for supporting economic operators in their trade related decisions. TMI will consider those elements for the future tools' redesign. Indeed, these recommendations require a full redesign of the tools subject to funds' availability, to cover research and development (for database and front-end), mock-up design and production. However, due to the nature of the information that is provided through the tools, voice activation seems not relevant due to high development cost and minor impact for economic operators.

iii. **Tools' accessibility:** A diagnostic of each tool's accessibility will take place. In the meantime, TMI management would like to clarify that some tools are already mobile-responsive (eg. Trade Map, Export Potential Map, Global Trade Helpdesk and soon Market Access Map). There is only one Market Analysis Tools (MAT) Application, downloadable from Google and Apple stores. TMI management agrees that the "MAT App" should be upgraded to provide customized insights based on personal interests (eg markets, products), and that each tools' should be optimized to different devices.

iv. **Partnerships with third parties:** TMI management knows that relationships with third parties are crucial and will continue expanding its network of partners [universities, researchers, private sectors, other organisations] in a strategic and sustainable way. For example, TMI would like to highlight some of the existing partnerships for methodology and user interfaces. For instance, its collaboration with Researchers through GTAP, which is a global network of researchers and policy makers in quantitative analysis of international policy issues. TMI represents ITC in this consortium. Few years ago, GTAP adopted a methodology developed by TMI (ie to compute ad-valorem equivalents for tariffs) and this is now the computation used globally. Through this network, TMI is aware of the development in trade analysis and policy and will continue taking part to it to benefit from collaboration on methodologies and apply relevant ones to ITC tools, as well as its work with other research institutes (eg CEPII).

Furthermore, TMI already worked and will continue working with external partners for tools' design. A recent example is the collaboration with a web design expert to develop the African Trade Observatory. The expert interviewed representatives of the target audience to design the tool based on users' needs. Similarly, the mock-up for Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH) was developed with a web-design expert, and all partnering institutions have shared their feedback to collectively ensure the tool address users' needs (WTO, ICC representing private sector, UNCTAD, World Bank, UNIDO, WCO, FAO...). Each time the GTH is enhanced, the features are developed in collaboration with all those other organizations.

v. **Export Potential Methodology:** TMI management agrees that the Export Potential Map methodology should continue to evolve in line with the latest academic literature. The methodology was developed by ITC economists in collaboration with renowned researchers, and reality-checked in many countries with positive feedback. Since then, the approach has been continuously undergoing refinements. Recently, for example, we have made some changes to make medium-term projections while improving the quality of the estimation (eg. switched from simple OLS-estimated demand elasticities based on one-year growth rates to weighted OLS estimates based on multiple year-growth rates). Another change that will be implemented with the next update is a new measure of ease that uses a log-linearized transformation function to reduce the impact of unusually large trade flows. These revisions, while they have a non-significant impact on the results, require an update of the methodology paper, including a thoroughly revised discussion of the newest relevant literature.

<b>Action Plan and Responsibilities:</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected result and means of verification</b>	<b>Responsible of- fice or partner</b>	<b>Contributing section(s)</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
4.1. Secure funding for the market analysis tools beyond 2022, to plan a redesign of Trade Map and maintenance of the other tools, including data updates and basic upgrades to answer users' needs	A project plan with secured funding (level 1)	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	
4.2. Propose market analysis tools' improvements and seek for funding when required, including with SMC, more specifically for Investment Map	A project presented to SMC for improving the tools and deciding on priorities to be implemented based on a sustainable funding	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	
4.3. An updated "ITC export potential methodology" paper including revisions in line with the latest literature	Release of an updated methodology paper on ITC export potential	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	
4.4. A benchmarking to take an informed decision about the MAT application	Based on a benchmarking, decide either to stop or upgrade the MAT application	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	Upgrade would take place at a later stage
<i>Note: the aspect on partnerships with third parties (iv) is addressed in action 5.1 below</i>					



**Recommendation 5: Continue recent developments of promising integrated data solutions designed to respond to specific needs (such as the African Trade Observatory). In addition, explore areas where ITC is well positioned to serve existing demands for data.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *While continuing to focus on its core activities of collecting and disseminating comprehensive and updated high quality trade data, TMI should expand partnerships with universities, researchers, private sector, or other organizations to develop new products based on the changing needs of its clients, especially in areas where ITC has an established comparative advantage.*
- *TMI should adopt a strategic approach (in line with recommendation 1) moving into new substantive areas. Given recent work with the African Union, an area of strategy advantage could be the development of standards and methodologies (such as surveys) for estimating informal trade on a case-by-case basis, in cooperation with partner agencies and national statistics offices. Given the nature of the customized assistance that will be required, the activity will need to be financed for individual countries, and might therefore not qualified for Global Public Good related funds.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:		TMI management, will continue partnering with third parties to develop new products and/or enhance current ones. For instance, the section will support the development and promotion of a mobile application of ePing tool on SPS/TBT notifications in collaboration with UNDESA and WTO. In addition, TMI will engage in a deeper partnership with private sector agencies such as Google and IATA on the enhancement of ITC market analysis tools.
Accepted:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Partially accepted:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rejected:	<input type="checkbox"/>	TMI management agrees that the activity related to informal trade does not qualify for Global Public Good related funds, as that will require developing and implementing methodologies at local/national levels. However, TMI could contribute to any initiative in that direction if endorsed by SMC.

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
5.1. Prepare an inventory of the current partnerships with third parties, and a strategy to expand them in future (to be inserted in the market analysis tools strategy)	Strategic plan for Market analysis tools	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen the organization’s visibility where ITC data is used by other providers.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *Ensure that ITC data are given due credit when used by other organizations, in particular as regards TRAINS.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:		<p>TMI and Senior management are aware of some sensitivity regarding credits that should be highlighted by other organizations. Discussions should continue to fix this detail, while maintaining good collaboration and ITC’s reputation among our partners.</p> <p>TMI management also stresses that most of the time ITC’s credits are well advertised. Therefore, TMI Chief will continue raising this point to partners when appropriate.</p>
Accepted:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Partially accepted:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rejected:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
6.1. Chief TMI will raise this point once more to partners, seeking to increase ITC visibility	Point made to counterparts, expecting they will take appropriate action this time (which is then uncertain and not within TMI/ITC hands as the priority remains in maintaining the good collaboration while trying to obtain the deserved visibility for ITC)	TMI	TMI	31/12/2022	

**Recommendation 7: Utilize opportunities to identify and address interest of the tools' users for other ITC products and services.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- *The market analysis tools' websites should leverage opportunities to provide links to relevant/related ITC products and services.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:  Accepted: <input type="checkbox"/> Partially accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/>	TMI management agrees that guiding users to related ITC services might add value.  However, the recommendation will require a mapping between ITC products/expertise and international nomenclatures (e.g. harmonised system classification). This challenge of mapping ITC products/services is already discussed in the context of ITC new website. In fact, the needs' assessment conducted by C&E confirmed that clients want to see trade related information on the ITC website.  Several challenges were pointed out during the design phase and related consultations between TMI, C&E and the private company developing the new website. Given ITC classification, not all goods/services can be linked to international harmonized classifications, meaning it is not possible to obtain trade related data. However, the interest of market analysis tools' users would be to see ITC complementary information related to their query (for instance, being redirected to the Coffee Guide if looking for coffee trade statistics). Therefore, not all queries made through the market analysis tools would allow users to be directed to additional ITC knowledge. All ITC projects would still have to map their expertise to international classifications.
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**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible of-fice or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
7.1. All DMD, DEI and DCP sections will have to map their expertise against international classifications	A mapping of ITC expertise against trade related classifications to allow a link with market analysis tools	DMD, DEI, DCP	DMD, DEI, DCP	31/12/2022	Implementation deadline to be confirmed by SMC, allowing 3 months for TMI to implement
7.2. TMI will implement this recommendation upon mapping of expertise by other sections (7.1).	Access to ITC products and services through relevant market analysis tools	TMI		31/12/2022	

**Recommendation 8: Develop a commitment to open data and regulate access to data in a transparent manner.**

*Directed to Director Division of Market Development:*

- *ITC should adopt an Open Data initiative. The operational principle should be that all data collected by ITC, including the data underlying the MAT, should be publicly available and released in a way that enables bulk download (like in Market Access Map), subject to contractual or confidentiality restrictions. The World Bank’s Open Government Data Toolkit and the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General contain useful elements that ITC should consider during consultations designed to develop its own approach to open data.*
- *The initiative should result in a document, such as a charter or policy, that is developed in a timely and an easily understandable manner, and made readily available to the public within a year. The document should also explain what data cannot be shared and why. Given that within ITC, the Division of Market Development has particular expertise in data collection and treatment, it should lead on this process.*
- *Just as access to data from outside should be transparently regulated, so should the sharing of data within the organization. Independently from the Open Data initiative, internal data sharing should also be governed through a transparent agreement that is accessible to all personnel. It should be ensured to the extent possible that data can be freely shared within the organization where this adds value or enables synergies in line with the organization’s and programmes’ mandate. These efforts should be aligned with the corporate data management strategy which also aims to facilitate information flow and value addition.*
- *Good collaboration between sections within the Division of Market Development should be ensured, also or especially in case of overlapping mandates or areas of complementary expertise, since they all contribute to the organization’s vital research function and therefore need to be well coordinated. Ideally, this would include exploring ways to better harmonize, link and integrate their products and services.*
- *All of these efforts should have the explicit support of senior management.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:	<p><i>Note from Rajesh Aggarwal, Director Division of Market Development, a.i.:</i></p> <p><i>I support the intention behind this recommendation. The implementation of this recommendation, however, entails financial commitment on part of the organisation, which SMC would need to discuss and decide.</i></p>
Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible of- fice or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
<i>To be discussed/defined</i>			-		

**Recommendation 9: Uphold the principle that trade and market information is provided as a global public good. Leverage funding from donors and private sector to enhance this offering.**

*Directed to Chief Trade and Market Intelligence Section:*

- In line with the organization’s mandate and strategic plan, TMI should maintain to the maximum possible extent the global public good model of data provision and free access to the tools, in particular for users from developing countries.*
- TMI should ensure that funds generated by offering customized services do not result in resources and attention being diverted to the provision of services on an exclusive basis, but rather that these resources are used to either drive product development or to support the provision of the tools overall as a public good. Working with donors and external partners to enhance data quality and completeness, as well as the tools’ interfaces and capabilities, can further improve the offering in ways that would benefit everyone.*
- It should be carefully monitored that there is an appropriate balance between the offering that is freely available to all and what is customized and exclusive for specific clients. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the tools are provided in accordance with the organizational mandate rests with ITC’s leadership. Therefore, the evaluation proposes that TMI should share annually with ITC’s Executive Director an overview of the tools’ offering while indicating the scope of privileged partnerships and highlighting the value they bring to the global public good model of data provision.*

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:		TMI management agrees with the recommendation and will continue to apply ITC strategy, which we recommend being free access to the market analysis tools, in particular for users in developing countries. Furthermore, should a country or a regional donor confirms its contribution to the global public goods, a free access could be granted to users from this country/region (eg. EU users if EU supports GPG).
Accepted:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Partially accepted:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rejected:	<input type="checkbox"/>	TMI will provide ED and SMC with any required reporting they might find useful to take decisions related to free access to the global public goods.

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible of- fice or partner	Contributing section(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
9.1. Provide report upon ED’s request (content and frequency to be confirmed by ED)	Regular reports to support ITC’s senior management decisions about access and development of Global Public Goods	TMI	TMI	To be established with ED	