



ITC – helping countries trade their way out of poverty

Around the world, the International Trade Centre (ITC) works with donor partners to help developing countries increase their share of world trade. As the technical cooperation agency of the WTO and the UN, ITC has three key strategic objectives:

- to strengthen policy-makers' ability to integrate business into the global economy;
- to strengthen trade support institutions (TSIs);
- to make individual enterprises, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, more competitive.

The Geneva-based agency, driven by a conviction that private-sector exporters can help countries trade their way out of poverty, works not only with governments and TSIs, but also directly with small and medium-sized enterprises, producers' associations and poor rural communities to help them become part of the global trading community.

Below are some examples of ITC in action.

Mali quadruples mango exports

Mali, a landlocked African state, has more than quadrupled its exports of mangoes in just four years and is on track to quintuple the volume by the end of 2009 thanks to an ITC-led project, working with donor parties. As well as increasing the volume of exports, the country has also seen the number of its export partners grow from just one country, France, in 2005, to five European countries, several Arab states and various neighbours in the region in 2008. The project helped producers identify market requirements and obtain accurate market information and also to diversify markets, improve packaging and meet international quality and safety standards. ITC is helping with trade negotiations and acting as honest broker to bring Malian exporters into contact with potential importers at international trade fairs such as Berlin's Fruit Logistica.

Tajik exporters look to boost business after obtaining international certification

For the first time, two fruit and vegetable processing companies in Tajikistan have obtained Food Safety Management System certification under the international ISO 22000 standard. The companies were pilot enterprises that worked with ITC under a Trade Promotion Project and funded by Switzerland. Certification is expected to help the companies break into international markets and should also boost their image and reputation with partners and clients. Hitherto most food products in central Asia have not met international food safety and quality standards and have therefore been unable to compete in world markets.

Further information at <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/49/50151.html>

Lao silk weavers see incomes jump

Building on successful experience in neighbouring Cambodia, for the past two years ITC has been helping poor rural silk weavers in Laos to improve both the quality of their products including through new innovative designs, and their skills in promoting and marketing products concerned, thus enabling them to meet the quality standards demanded by foreign buyers. The project is focused on four pilot communities and has included a study tour for weavers to Cambodia to increase their knowledge of processing and marketing techniques. The project's first 50 weaver families report significant increases in their incomes.



Threat to African organic farm exports neutralized

Thousands of organic farmers in Africa faced ruin when Britain's Soil Association, the organic certification agency, threatened to refuse recognition of African produce being air-freighted to the UK market by applying a "food miles" penalty concept. ITC, working closely with the UK's development agency, DFID, led a successful campaign through the national and international media arguing that the proposal was both scientifically unsound and also discriminatory. The campaign resulted in the Soil Association withdrawing its proposal and at the same time demonstrated the importance of small producers in poor countries having a say in standard setting. Case studies had shown that up to 22,000 people in Ghana and Kenya were threatened with ruin if the food miles proposal had gone ahead.

Further information at:

<http://www.worldtradeweekuk.com/WTWCaseStudy.aspx?WTWCaseStudyID=5>

Romanian exporters gain access to much-needed market intelligence

ITC has worked with the government of Romania to set up a trade information web portal offering an interactive system of trade-related information and advice. The aim is to strengthen links between the local business community and markets in Europe and elsewhere. Although Romania experienced good economic growth after joining the European Community in 2007, the current world economic downturn has underlined how essential it is to have access to comprehensive, timely and reliable trade intelligence. Development of the new portal was part of a larger Swiss-funded ITC project designed to boost the country's export potential.

Further information at: <http://www.intracen.org/docman/PRSR13640.pdf>

Vietnamese handicraft producers helped by UN agencies

ITC has teamed up with four other UN agencies in Viet Nam to boost development of the rural handicraft sector. The programme is targeting 4,450 poor rural households and aims to increase the incomes of people engaged in producing handicrafts and small furniture, and growing or collecting the relevant raw materials. A key aspect of the project is to improve standards and link producers to potential markets.

Ugandan coffee growers reach the UK supermarket shelf

ITC is helping some 3,000 farmers, mostly women, in southwest Uganda to secure organic certification so they can boost their income from supplying British supermarkets with their products. At the same time, the ITC Trade and Environment programme is also focusing on reducing soil erosion and improving water quality in the coffee growing areas. A further benefit is that organic production methods help increase carbon sequestration, thus contributing to the fight against climate change.

Kyrgyzstan fruit and vegetable sector booming

The fruit and vegetable exports sector in Kyrgyzstan has been improved thanks to an ITC Trade Promotion Project that has significantly altered the approach of producers. The value of fruit and vegetables exported rose 59% from 2006 to 2007, while the overall revenues of the Association of the Fruit and Vegetable Processors was up a remarkable 67%. Producers were encouraged to examine their businesses and identify and discard loss-making products, instead focusing on profitable products and markets.

Boosting employment and incomes for Cambodian women

ITC is working with the government's Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNDP in one of Cambodia's poorest provinces to strengthen the production capacity of women craft producers' groups and help them build lasting links to the market. The Partnership for Gender Equity programme aims to help women producers groups in particular to reach the quality standards needed to increase domestic and export sales of their goods. It also aims to help build the country's own capacity to provide business support services for women entrepreneurs.

“Engendering” Uganda’s National Export Strategy

Ugandans have linked a new national gender policy to its export strategy in an innovative bid to build development through trade. Ugandan exports have grown in recent years and it has diversified its export base. But to reach its National Export Strategy 2012 targets of increasing annual revenue to \$5 billion per year (from around \$1.8 billion), achieving a 16% contribution to gross domestic product and raising the per capita export ratio to \$200 (from \$82), more needs to be done. Working with ITC, the Uganda Export Promotion Board brought a multidisciplinary team to ensure that women are included in the value chain for coffee, commercial crafts, tourism and dairy exports. These sectors have growth potential and value addition in international markets; high potential for Ugandan women entrepreneurship, if trade finance, information and skill constraints are tackled; and address areas where production resources are readily available but not equitably shared.

LDCs: Integrating Gender in Trade Policy

Only two of 30 LDCs explicitly addressed women in their Diagnostic Trade integration Studies (DTIS) that form the heart of coordinated trade-related technical assistance delivered through the Enhanced Integrated Framework, according to ITC research. ITC therefore worked with WTO, and the Laotian and Zambian governments to gather 40 experts from 27 countries (including 19 LDCs). They provided suggestions to revise the DTIS template, as well as a body of good practices that can bring women into trade and development planning, which is currently in development as a publication. Further information at: www.intracen.org/womenandtrade

Helping Business Make the Most of the EC-CARIFORUM Partnership Agreement

ITC’s package of programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean help businesses take advantage of export opportunities, covering areas such as help with packaging and meeting quality standards in order to enter international markets, with branding, identifying niche opportunities, trade promotion, customs and trade finance. To respond to the need expressed by businesses in the region who want to understand and benefit from trade negotiations, ITC developed a guide for business people to the EC-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which is the first of the European Commission’s comprehensive and reciprocal trade agreements to be concluded with the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) nations. The guide focuses on the services and investment commitments covered by the EPA and will help businesses in the Caribbean identify new investment and export opportunities for the services sectors. It simplifies technical trade jargon into commonly understood language and outlines new opportunities and, where relevant, the limitations that will apply to those opportunities. Further information at: www.intracen.org/aidfortrade

Transparency for business in non-tariff measures

ITC worked with over 2000 businesses in seven countries (including one LDC) and seven very efficient trade support institutions, along with a wide range of international bodies (FAO, IMF, OECD, UNIDO, World Bank, WTO) to survey what companies found were the most frequent non-tariff measures they faced. Most frequent obstacles related to TBT (46%) and SPS (28%). This work shows how the business community, when connected to agencies such as ITC, can contribute to a better business environment and reduce the pressure for protectionist behaviour.

Press contact: Natalie Domeisen, International Trade Centre, domeisen@intracen.org