The International Trade Centre (ITC) has extensive experience in assessing competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ITC works with governments, investors and business support institutions to help them assess competitiveness and translate the findings into locally rooted sustainable development strategies.

ITC publications are free online. The SME competitiveness collection includes ITC’s annual flagship report, the SME Competitiveness Outlook; SME competitiveness country surveys; and topic-based competitiveness surveys, both regional and national, such as for investment and for women in trade.

http://www.intracen.org/publications/collections/
SME Competitiveness Outlook

SME Competitiveness Outlook 2018 - Business ecosystems for the digital age

Digitalization and the rise of the platform economy are rapidly changing the way in which firms do business. A strong business ecosystem is necessary to manage this change. This SME Competitiveness Outlook tells how to build it.

The report combines data analysis, academic insights, thought leader views and case studies to guide policymakers, businesses, and trade and investment support institutions in designing the business ecosystem that is necessary for small businesses to embrace and benefit from industry 4.0.

Published: 2018
Available in: English

SME Competitiveness Outlook 2017 - The region: A door to global trade

This report focuses on regional trade, the most common form of trade for SMEs.

It finds that deep regional trade agreements help deliver inclusive growth. These agreements attract value chain activity and narrow the competitiveness gap between large and small firms. The report provides targeted advice for policymakers, businesses, and trade and investment support institutions. It combines data analysis, case studies, academic insights, and thought leaders.

Published: 2017
Available in: English, Spanish

SME Competitiveness Outlook 2016 - Meeting the standard for trade

Standards and regulations have a major impact on SME competitiveness.

By meeting the standard for trade, SMEs increase their chances to connect to international value chains and consumers in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner. The report contains: governance insights for voluntary sustainability standards; new evidence on how standards and regulations affect trade and business performance; guidance for SMEs on how to select and implement standards and regulations; and a policy action plan to strengthen SMEs’ ability to meet standards and regulations.

Published: 2016
Available in: English, French, Spanish

SME Competitiveness Outlook 2015 – Connect, compete and change for inclusive growth

The SME Competitiveness Outlook argues that small and medium-sized firms are the ‘missing link’ to inclusive growth.

Organized around the theme Connect, Compete, Change for Inclusive Growth, it shows that small and mid-sized firms are generally less productive than large firms. The productivity gap is wider in developing countries, and the wage gap is similar. Firms connected to international markets are more productive and create more employment.

Published: 2015
Available in: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic
Regional competitiveness

**Guide to Chinese private investment in Africa: Insights from SME competitiveness surveys**

Private investment from China into Africa is significant but its potential for increasing local productivity largely underestimated. The main challenge for investors is finding information on the availability and quality of local suppliers.

This new ITC uses data from its SME Competitiveness Surveys to inform 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.

Published: 2018
Available in: English

**Promoting SME competitiveness in Francophone Africa: Standards open doors to trade**

Companies in 16 French-speaking African countries are more likely to export when they comply with international standards, according to a joint survey by ITC and the Permanent Conference of African and Francophone Consular Chambers (CPCCAF). Among 9,000 firms surveyed, only 25% have an internationally recognized certificate, generally for quality or safety.

Getting more agriculture firms certified could boost the number of exporters. Only 7% of enterprises in the agriculture sector export, but 70% of those that do hold an international certificate. The survey also found that the smaller the firm, the less likely it was to have an internationally recognized certificate.

Published: 2018
Available in: English, French

**Promoting SME competitiveness in Africa: Data for de-risking investment**

Most investors seek information about local suppliers before making decisions to invest. This report uses ITC data on SME competitiveness at macro, meso and micro-level to de-risk investment decisions.

Survey results show: high-tech potential among youth, with two-thirds of IT firms run by youth in the Gambia; fast logistics development, with two-thirds of Moroccan SMEs rating quality as high; export certification importance, with more than 25% of companies in French-speaking African countries meeting international standards; financial literacy role for institutions, with Nigerian SMEs with bank accounts understanding loan applications better than non-account owners.

Published: 2018
Available in: English
National competitiveness

Promoting SME competitiveness in Saint Lucia

Small businesses in Saint Lucia are contributing to the country’s export growth. The findings of this ITC Competitiveness Survey provide guidance on how to exploit opportunities in four key sectors: food and beverages, tourism, manufacturing and creative industries.

Saint Lucian SMEs generally benefit from strong electricity, water and ICT infrastructure, and quality support from trade and investment institutions.

Published: 2018
Available in: English

Promoting SME competitiveness in the Gambia

Through innovation, the Gambia’s young entrepreneurs can contribute significantly to the country’s growth. This is the key message emerging from Gambian firms that participated in this ITC Competitiveness Survey.

Results reveal that young entrepreneurs fare well in information and communications technology and intellectual property. They lack basic assistance in areas such as international certification and access to finance.

Published: 2018
Available in: English

SME Competitiveness in Ghana

What keeps SMEs in Ghana from being competitive in international markets is often not of their own making, such as unreliable electricity and high interest rates.

This report outlines these and other findings from the SME Competitiveness Survey, which surveyed 200 Ghanaian firms about their business capacities, as well as their business environment. The survey, analysis and targeted recommendations were developed by an ITC-led Alliance for Action, including seven public and private national institutions.

Published: 2017
Available in: English

Promoting SME Competitiveness in Hungary

Hungarian SMEs account for 99.8% of enterprises, 70% of employment, 50% of value added and 28% of its exports to the European Union.

This report provides targeted recommendations to help SMEs trade, with a focus on agriculture, electronics and ICT sectors. For each sector, it outlines what firms need to build capacity, and how the business ecosystem can support them. The Hungarian National Trading House, ITC and the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined forces to produce the report.

Published: 2017
Available in: English
Focus on gender

**SheTrades: Promoting SME competitiveness in Indonesia**

Being a women-owned company negatively affects the credibility of their business, say Indonesian women entrepreneurs in the services sector.

They also need better access to patents, internet access, quality certifications, marketing opportunities and customer outreach to run a business successfully, according to an ITC SME Competitiveness Survey of women-led firms in the country.

Published: 2017
Available in: English

**SheTrades: Promoting SME competitiveness in Sri Lanka**

A largely untapped resource, Sri Lankan women have the potential to play a significant role in the country’s economy.

Using the ITC SME Competitiveness Survey, this report suggests encouraging more women to be part of the services sector in Sri Lanka, and ensuring that women-led enterprises have better access to quality certifications, digital and computer knowledge, marketing opportunities and intellectual property systems.

Published: 2018
Available in: English

**SheTrades: Promoting SME competitiveness in Kenya**

Women make up almost half of Kenya’s labour force, yet they remain on the margins of business ownership. Only 9% of Kenya’s firms are majority women-owned.

Kenyan women entrepreneurs say they need better access to loans, business registries, patents, quality certifications and affordable internet access to address the gap.

Published: 2017
Available in: English