



International  
Trade  
Centre



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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER  
**State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO**

# ITC and Switzerland

*A long-standing partnership supporting trade-led  
sustainable development through SECO*





## The International Trade Centre

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ITC is the only international development agency fully dedicated to supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to enable them to benefit from trade. Working with partners to strengthen MSME competitiveness, ITC helps to build entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, particularly for women, youth and people in vulnerable situations.

By enabling MSMEs in developing and transition economies to become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, we can have a positive impact on job creation, incomes and supporting inclusive opportunities, especially for women, young people, and poor communities.

ITC's vision is a world where trade builds inclusive, sustainable and prosperous economies. To put this vision in place, ITC supports sustainable and inclusive livelihoods by boosting the competitiveness of MSMEs, placing trade-led growth at the centre of public policy and building supportive business ecosystems in developing countries. ITC thus combines a focus on expanding trade opportunities for MSMEs with the aim of achieving sustainable development.

Established in 1964, ITC is a joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Its operational budget for 2022 was \$152 million, 74% of which was funded by voluntary contributions. ITC is headquartered in Geneva and has a number of project offices around the world. The ITC family is more than 400 strong, representing 94 different nationalities.

# SECO Support to ITC

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The State Secretary of Economic Affairs (SECO), as a representative of the Swiss government, is a key contributor to ITC's ambition to embed MSMEs from developing countries into the global economy.

Switzerland not only hosts ITC's headquarters but has contributed to numerous initiatives to strengthen the competitiveness of developing country exporters and help build vibrant, sustainable export sectors that provide entrepreneurial opportunities.

This support forms part of Switzerland's engagement in international economic cooperation with the aim of alleviating poverty and promoting sustainable development in partner countries. Under the current strategic period from 2021-2024, SECO's thematic priorities are concentrated on supporting economic growth and sustainable prosperity in order to contribute towards overcoming poverty, inequality and global challenges. In doing so, it aims to a) promote reliable economic framework conditions for equal access to markets and opportunities for people and companies; and b) support innovative private sector initiatives to create decent jobs and income opportunities.

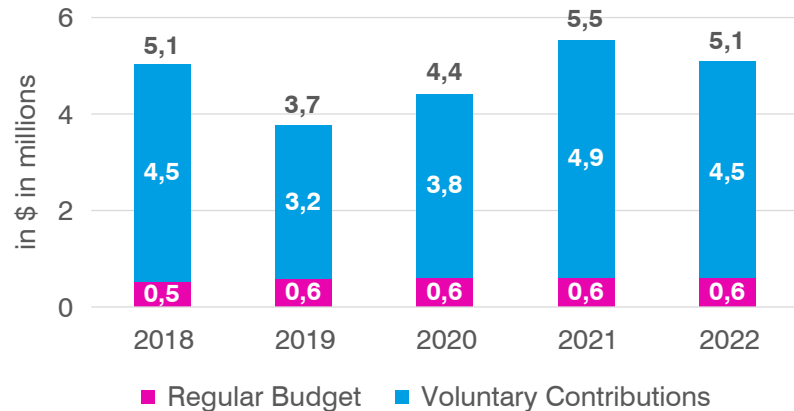


# Switzerland's Financial Contribution to ITC

Switzerland supports ITC financially through both general contributions (core budget) and voluntary contributions (earmarked to specific programmes):

- General contributions are paid by all UN and WTO Member states by virtue of their membership. Between 2018 and 2022, Switzerland contributed a total of \$2.9 million.
- With \$21.0 million voluntary contributions earmarked to priority programmes between 2018 and 2022, Switzerland was ITC's 5th largest contributor of extra- budgetary resources.

*Switzerland's Overall Contributions to ITC*



# Strategic Alignment

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ITC and SECO have several areas of strategic alignment reflected in a joint work programme.

They collaborate on:

- Contributing jointly to establish reliable economic framework conditions, which promote equal access to markets and opportunities through a rules-based trading system. ITC and SECO both support the multilateral trading system by engaging in the WTO, in particular via the informal working group on MSMEs and on issues around Aid for Trade.
- Creating more equitable and sustainable supply chains through the provision of global public goods for transparent market information and the promotion of social and ecological standards.
- Promoting the integration of producers and enterprises into global and regional value chains through interventions focused on market-oriented skills. Joint sectoral programmes on textiles, tourism, and horticulture promote skills that help to meet market-demand in the digital age.
- Stimulating the productivity and growth of enterprises by the creation of an innovation-friendly business environment. Recognizing the importance of the private sector in driving job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable development, ITC works with policymakers, business support organizations, and relevant stakeholders to advance reforms through public-private dialogues.
- Prioritizing gender equality and women's economic empowerment, as well as climate action, the circular economy and the efficient use of resources as prerequisites for sustainable economic growth. ITC and SECO employ mainstreaming strategies to embed these topics in all initiatives.



# ITC-Switzerland Joint Programmes

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Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)

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Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH)

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Strengthening Business Support Organizations (BSOs)

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Mainstreaming Gender and Environment

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Digital Economy

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Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX)

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Trade promotion East: Balkan States and Central Asia

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SwissTrade Programme: Vietnam

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UN Trade Cluster Programme: Myanmar

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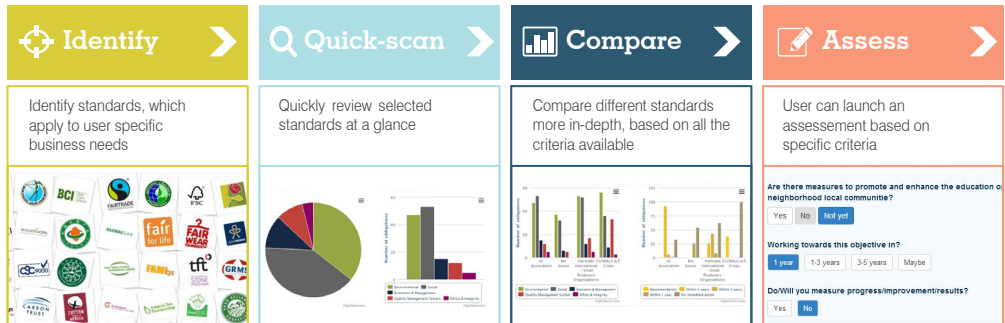




# Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)

The Standards Map database is a one-of-a-kind global, freely accessible repository of comprehensive and neutral information on voluntary sustainability standards and codes of conduct.

Over the years, SECO has supported the development and expansion of the database and related website of Standards Map. Today, there are over 330 voluntary sustainability standards, private standards or codes of conduct referenced in the database and comparable on Standards Map. In collaboration with Swiss partners, T4SD team is also working on increasing the coverage of Swiss labels in Standards Map and facilitating data exports from the database to a website on Swiss ecolabels called [labelinfo.ch](http://labelinfo.ch).







## Global Trade Helpdesk (GTH)

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The provision of up-to-date trade and market information to enhance business decision-making has been at the heart of ITC's mandate since its foundation. Together with SECO, ITC and its network of partners have developed the free, online Global Trade Helpdesk platform that simplifies market analysis for small businesses by integrating information from across 11 partner agencies. The platform has over 180,000 users from firms, ministries, and business support organizations from across 200 economies and was recently recognized by the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers as an inclusive and veritable platform for SMEs with the launch of the Jaipur Initiative.







## Strengthening Business Support Organizations (BSOs)

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ITC's programme to strengthen BSOs aims to recognize and enhance the crucial role of BSOs as connectors and service providers, supporting the internationalization of MSMEs.

Since 2017, ITC has collaborated with the Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) to assess business support organizations as potential partners and beneficiaries of the programme. The collaboration has enabled SIPPO to select the right partners, allocate appropriate roles, mitigate partner risk and design activities to build partner capacity. More recently we have been working with SIPPO and Swisspeace to reshape the BSO assessment to incorporate elements of responsible business conduct and conflict sensitivity.

# Mainstreaming Gender and Environment

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ITC's **Gender Moonshot** builds on the SheTrades initiative to address persistent gender inequalities in trade. Public and private partners collaborate with ITC through SheTrades, equipping organizations and institutions with skills and tools to empower women in trade, enhance their access to opportunities, and influence trade policies. For example, the SheTrades Hubs, which are decentralized platforms through which the Initiative delivers in-country interventions, has expanded to 15 in-country and two regional hubs across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the MENA region. An essential part of this effort is integrating gender considerations into all projects and developing new services and tools. ITC promotes collaboration, best practice sharing, and the adoption of existing trade and gender-related tools among project managers.

Through the **Green Moonshot initiative**, ITC is providing small businesses with essential resources like knowledge, expertise, and tools to adopt environmentally friendly practices, connect them with global networks and international markets, and enable them to showcase their climate commitment to attract environmentally conscious consumers. The Green Moonshot framework provides cohesion on ITC's engagement on the green agenda spanning many diverse elements across ITC projects. For example, in 2022, ITC empowered small firms in tourism, agribusiness, textiles, and crafts to adopt green practices like installing solar panels, recycling water, and using climate-smart agricultural methods.





## Digital Economy

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Through the Switch ON initiative, ITC is enhancing its e-commerce and tech entrepreneurship efforts by prioritizing connectivity, skills training, information sharing, policy reform, and partnerships. This is empowering small businesses in developing countries to benefit from digital trade. For example, in 2022 micro-entrepreneurs in Africa received investments exceeding \$700,000 after the rollout of Switch ON. It is fostering coordinated efforts across policy, institutions, and businesses, ensuring that digital connectivity and services are accessible to enhance the competitiveness of small businesses, particularly those led by women, youth, and individuals in remote or vulnerable communities.

# Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEx)

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The Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEx) and its related work in the Middle East and North Africa (MENATEX) supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and business support organizations working in the textile and clothing industry in developing countries to increase export competitiveness. Co-financed by SECO and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the programme targets six priority countries: Egypt, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Tajikistan, and Tunisia. The GTEx/MENATEX programme, which aims to boost employment and income in the textile and clothing value chain, aligned with the 2030 agenda by addressing poverty, climate change, responsible production, decent employment, and gender equality. It has been renewed for a second phase from 2024 to 2027, focusing on helping the sector adapt to digitalization and environmental sustainability. It will continue in four MENA countries, expand to include Sri Lanka, and feature global and regional components funded by SECO and Sida, respectively.







## Trade promotion East: Balkan States and Central Asia

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The project is dedicated to enhancing the competitiveness and promoting the sustainable export growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Albania, Serbia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It also aims to bolster the capabilities of business support organizations (BSOs) to deliver high-quality services to SMEs. Additionally, the program will promote regional collaboration and knowledge exchange among SMEs and BSOs from partner countries. The agribusiness sector has been identified as a strategic priority for assistance in all four countries due to its substantial potential to foster social inclusion among vulnerable groups and its critical role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.



## SwissTrade Programme: Vietnam

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The SwissTrade Programme in Vietnam aims to boost the trade performance and competitiveness of Vietnamese micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It achieves this by enhancing trade conditions, fostering public-private partnerships and supporting dynamic trade promotion. The project focuses on three main outcomes: First, exports benefit from being part of the National Strategy, backed by evidence, government coordination, and private sector input. Second, private sector involvement and collaboration with the government through Public-Private Partnerships contribute to a positive export environment—this makes exports more sustainable. Third, business support organizations assist small businesses in their export efforts and participation in global value chains.

## UN Trade Cluster Programme: Myanmar

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The four-year project in Myanmar's Southern Shan State, which concluded in August 2023, contributed to the reduction of poverty among local farmers by enhancing horticultural supply capacity and promoting sustainable tourism. Key aspects encompassed entrepreneurship, health and safety market standards, new product development, and policy-related value-chain assessment in the horticultural and tourism sectors. Between 2019 and 2023, ITC worked within the SECO-UN Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity Project in Myanmar with a focus on improving the country's horticultural capacity and developing sustainable tourism practices. Notably, one of the results of the project was fostering compliance with international sustainability standards, technical regulations, and market requirements, boosting horticultural supply in Shan State.





# ITC-Switzerland Joint Programmes

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*"For SECO, ITC represents a long-term and trustful partner, as we share the same values on trade promotion and on strategic orientations to increase benefits from trade for all countries: importance of global public goods, promotion of social and ecological standards, partnership with the private sector are among them. In addition, both gender and climate change are cross-cutting themes in SECO and ITC strategies."*

**Helene Budliger Artieda,**  
Director of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs  
(SECO)

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*"With our long-standing partner Switzerland, we deliver on the key needs of small businesses in trade, from timely market information to sustainable practices and digital skills, including for women-led firms. We'll continue to support small businesses to better compete in markets."*

**Pamela Coke-Hamilton,**  
Executive Director of ITC



## The Future Switzerland-ITC Relationship

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To further leverage their strong strategic alignment in key areas, SECO and ITC are set to deepen their institutional relationship.

Looking ahead, ITC and SECO aim to foster an even closer partnership in areas of mutual significance. These include gender equality, digital transformation, climate action, resource efficiency, support for global public goods, bolstering the multilateral trading system, and fostering private sector partnerships. The plan also involves forging stronger connections with other Swiss initiatives such as the Swiss Import Promotion Program, the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa, and the Sustainable Textiles Switzerland 2030 initiative.

The growing partnership is also designed to equip ITC with the ability to cater to the evolving needs of small businesses and adapt to changing conditions. This adaptability will enable ITC to adjust its delivery approaches and continue to support partners in the process towards *good trade* while leaving no one behind.





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**Contact person**

Zeynep Ozgen  
Senior External Relations Officer  
**P:** +41 22 730 0609  
**E:** ozgen@intracen.org

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

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**Street address**

ITC, 54-56 Rue de Montbrillant, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

**Postal address**

ITC, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
**www.intracen.org**



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Economic Cooperation and Development  
Trade Promotion WEHU

**E:** info.wehu.cooperation@seco.admin.ch  
Holzikofenweg 36, 3003 Bern

**www.seco.admin.ch**

**www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch**