



Economic Partnership Agreement with West Africa - Facts and figures -

West Africa¹ and the European Union (EU) concluded in February 2014 the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The deal is a major achievement from a trade and development point of view. It confirms the privileged partnership between the two regions.

West African exports to the EU accounted for €20.4 billion. EU exports to West Africa were worth €25 billion in 2014. The EU supplies a large part of the equipment that contributes to economic growth and development in the region and is the main export market for West African agricultural and fisheries products.

Using trade to boost economic development in West Africa

The EPA between the EU and West Africa has its foundations in the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou in 2000. The EPA has a strong pro-development approach and is backed by significant development cooperation funds to make sure that West Africa can fully benefit from its advantages in the area of trade. The EPA will help West Africa to integrate better into the global trading system and will support investment and economic growth in the region.

The agreement is the first Economic Partnership that brings together not only the 16 countries of the region but also their two regional organisations: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). This is a clear indication of the West African drive towards closer regional integration, which the EPA seeks to support.

As in other ACP regions which are implementing an EPA, this agreement will be put into practice in a mutually beneficial way. For West Africa, it will increase exports to the EU, stimulate investment and contribute to developing productive capacity, with a positive effect on employment. The EPA will support necessary reforms and promote economic and social development. For the EU, it opens new business opportunities and increases legal certainty for European investors in the region. It gives both partners practical tools for stepping up trade cooperation and solving any potential problems.

¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo

Improved opportunities for trade in goods

The deal weighs in West Africa's favour and takes account of the current differences in the level of development between the two regions. While the EU opens its market completely from day one, West Africa will remove import tariffs only partially over a 20-year transition period. The EU offers **market access** that is significantly better than its Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP). This is particularly important for some of the main non-oil exports of West Africa such as bananas and other fruits and vegetables, fish and fishery products, processed cocoa or other processed foods, as well as textiles or leather products.

For agricultural products or finished consumer goods currently produced in the region or for which the region plans to develop production capacity, West Africa will keep applying customs duties. In its **market access offer, West Africa** excludes 25% of tariff lines which covers all the products considered most sensitive and which currently face a 35% duty under the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET), such as meat (including poultry), yoghurt, eggs, processed meat, cocoa powder and chocolate, tomato paste and concentrate, soap and printed fabrics. Also excluded from liberalisation are half of the products currently attracting 20% duty under the ECOWAS CET such as fish and fish preparations, milk, butter and cheese, vegetables, flour, spirits, cement, paints, perfumes and cosmetics, stationery, textiles and apparel and fully built cars. At the same time, tariffs will be progressively eliminated on 75% of goods such as equipment and other inputs making them cheaper for local businesses.

In addition to the very gradual and controlled liberalisation in West Africa, the EPA includes a variety of **safeguards** which can be deployed if imports of liberalised products are increasing too quickly thus jeopardising local markets. Special protection is foreseen for infant industries, and the EPA allows West Africa to take specific measures in case food security is threatened.

Besides free access to the EU and improved access to inputs, countries in West Africa will be able to produce goods for exports to Europe using materials sourced from other countries without losing the free access to the EU, thanks to improved **rules of origin**. This will increase West Africa's ability to benefit from opportunities in the EU and its capacity to participate in global value chains.

The EPA also provides for enhanced cooperation in **agriculture and fisheries**. The EPA foresees the establishment of a high-level dialogue on agricultural policies creating transparency and improving coherence on agricultural matters within the region and with Europe. To support agriculture in West Africa, the EU agreed not to subsidise exports of EU farm products to the region. Moreover, to help West African farmers meet the EU's **sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards**, financial and technical support is provided. The EU also often sends Food and Veterinary Office inspectors (FVO) to give recommendations on how to solve export problems.

Enhanced aid for trade

The EU is not waiting for the agreement to enter into force to help West African economies prepare to take advantage of the EPA. Financial assistance is already flowing to the region. The European Commission worked with EU Member States and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to reach a joint commitment for support to West Africa's EPA Development Programme in the new programming period 2015-2019. As a result, the EU Council of Ministers decided on 17 March 2014 to provide at

least €6.5 billion to the PAPED, using all the financial instruments available, including those of the EU Member States and the EIB.

EU support will focus on trade, agriculture, infrastructure, energy and capacity building for developing civil society. The allocated amount corresponds to the existing needs, as estimated by the West African authorities.

The EU agreed to continue helping West Africa throughout the whole implementation process so the EU support will continue also beyond 2019.

Support to regional integration

The negotiation of the EPA actively supported integration in West Africa, as the 16 countries and two regional organisations had to define common positions and policies on the issues at stake.

The West African market access offer to the EU is fully aligned with the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) adopted in October 2013, which lays the basis for an ECOWAS customs union. The implementation of the EPA and the ECOWAS CET are going hand in hand and will mutually reinforce each other.

Moreover, the EPA includes important provisions to make customs procedures easier and more efficient and foresees that West African countries will grant each other at least the same treatment as they are granting the EU.

West-Africa – EU trade figures (2016)

West Africa is the EU's largest trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa. The EU is West Africa's biggest trading partner, ahead of India, China and the US: the EU accounts for 24.5% of West Africa's exports and 28.5% of West Africa's imports.

In value, EU – West Africa trade amounts to € 45.5 billion.

In terms of sectors, West Africa's exports to the EU consist mainly of fuels (51.9%) and food products (33.8%). West Africa's imports from the EU consist of fuels (28.6%), food products (12.0%), machinery (26.7%), and chemicals and pharmaceutical products (12.5%).

Further information

[Economic Partnership Agreements](#)

[EU trade relations with West Africa](#)

[Monitoring of the EPA – the competitiveness observatory](#)

[Technical factsheet on liberalisation in the West Africa – EU EPA](#)

[Study on the economic impact of the West Africa - EU EPA](#)

[Statistics on trade in goods between West Africa and the EU](#)