

Chapter 2

Trends, Prospects, and Barriers in Promoting Regional Trade in Pulses/Legumes in the ECOWAS Region Under AfCFTA Regime

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ABSTRACT

Trade in agricultural products plays a particularly crucial role in addressing food security and reduction of poverty. By making the ability of the continent to feed itself a priority goal in the Malabo Declaration, African leaders shared renewed faith in agriculture, and showed how stepped-up investments in production and distribution can make a strong contribution towards the attainments of goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA). Food security goes beyond quantity of food available to inclusion of nutritious diets in households' menu. These commodities are vital to the attainment of food and nutritional security, soil conservation, and, if commercially produced in efficient systems, can boost ECOWAS participation in African trade. This chapter therefore examines the prospects for promoting trade in pulses and legumes within the ECOWAS region in the context of the AfCFTA protocol, paying particular attention to trends, prospects and barriers and where there are flexibilities that allow for beneficial and productive policy intervention.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was founded by the African Union in 2018 although effective trading did not commence until 1 January 2021. The expectation is that the Free Trade Area (FTA) will serve the 55 member nations of the AU and affect the lives of the 1.2 billion persons

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Table 1. General objectives of AfCFTA S/No. objective alignment with SDG

1 Create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful. Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063	Goals 1, 2, 3, 9, 17
2 Create a liberalized market for goods and services through successive rounds of negotiations	Goal 17
3 Contribute to the movement of capital and natural persons and facilitate investments building on the initiatives and developments in the State Parties and RECs	Goals 16 & 17
4 Lay the foundation for the establishment of a Continental Customs Union at a later stage	Goal 16
5 Promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation of the State Parties	Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 10
6 Enhance the competitiveness of the economies of State Parties within the continent and the global market	Goal 16
7 Promote industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security	Goals 1, 2, 3, 9
8 Resolve the challenges of multiple and Goal 17 overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes.	

that reside in these countries. The agreement aims to boost trade among African countries in a manner that not only strengthens them individually but serves as a rallying platform for the entire continent to participate in the global market from a position of strength (African Union, 2018; African Union, 2018; The Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2019). It is expected that trade will produce beneficial spin-offs for the participating countries and enhance their trading positions and voice on the global stage. AfCFTA has been conceived as an important component as well as an instrument for attaining the goals of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 which encapsulates Africa’s vision of how it wishes to develop going forward. Table 1 summarizes the general objectives of AfCFTA as articulated at its inception and reveals the underlying linkages and connections to several other core global and regional initiatives.

Within a broader developmental context, the goals of AfCFTA align closely with those of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in respect to food and nutrition security as well as generating enhanced well-being for the people through regional integration. Further, the general objectives of the AfCFTA also address core issues underlying group dynamics to enhance the contributions of existing and new institutions to the Agenda 2063 goals. The Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) of the African Union similarly aims to promote more inclusive and sustainable development that focuses on expanded agricultural investment (African Union, 2021)

In order to develop a useful framework for understanding the trends, prospects and barriers to a strong trade regime for pulses and legumes in the ECOWAS region, it is necessary to present some key statistics. Available data generated by FAO suggest that West African production and trade in pulses has increased over the last decade (FAOSTAT, 2021).

It is estimated that annual increases in the production and trade of pulses could be in the order of 10 percent, with Benin and Nigeria being the biggest players. Awareness of the nutritional and ecological benefits of the pulses appeared to have been the key driver of these increases in the production of pulses, representing another trade and income opportunity, even as Intra-African agricultural trade had

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