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The Gambia



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The West Africa Competitiveness Programme aims to support a number of selected value chains at national and regional level to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets, while taking into account social and environmental concerns. The WACOMP consists of one regional component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania).

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Mr. Bernard Bau

UNIDO WACOMP
Project Manager

Foreword

Greetings from the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) The Gambia! I bring you wishes of the New Year and welcome you to the maiden edition of the WACOMP The Gambia Newsletter.

WACOMP aims to improve the performance and growth of selected value chains and to enhance the climate for business at national and regional level through ensuring standard compliance of West African products. It seeks to offer new green solutions and promote digital transformation, support agribusiness development, employability, productivity and market access for farmers and SMEs.

WACOMP is a technical assistance programmatic initiative funded under the 11th European Development Fund. The programme has 1 Regional Component and 16 Country Components.

In the Gambia, the WACOMP component is being implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and United Purpose (UP) with close coordination and strong synergies among the two implementing partners. It is aiming to increase competitiveness in The Gambia through enhanced quality compliance along the onion value chain, thereby strengthening the country's competitiveness and enhancing its integration into the regional and international trading systems.

The newsletter will be a quarterly publication that seeks to update our stakeholders and the public in general about the developments unfolding in the project.

It is our conviction that the newsletter will go far enough in engaging its audience to not only keep them abreast

but also find a sense of belonging in familiarizing themselves with the project and even make contributions in the future editions of the newsletter.

In 2021, the project had accomplished its major tasks and this includes the preparation of its inception activities including the development of project implementation strategies, needs assessments and submission of its inception report. We successfully organized a training of laboratory technicians on ISO/IEC 17025:2017 standards in our bid to contribute to The Gambia's long road to achieve and maintain an ISO Accreditation. Stories of these remarkable milestones and the successfully organized Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting are some of the major highlights of this edition of the newsletter.

WACOMP further complements the UNIDO's 2021 – 2025 Country Programme in The Gambia and our staff have been instrumental in providing necessary support to its launch.

While I look forward to an eventful 2022, I thank you for dedicating your time in reading this bulleting, hoping you will find it interesting.

Happy reading!

Bernard Bau
UNIDO WACOMP Project Manager,
Department of Digitalization, Technology and Innovation

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernard Bau". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a dark blue or black ink on a light blue background.

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP)

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) is a partnership initiative between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU) with the support of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union Commission (UEMOA).

WACOMP is funded through a 116 million EUR contribution from the Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) for West Africa (2014 – 2020) under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

The main economic challenges in West Africa include competitiveness of enterprises and the need for better value chain integration at regional and national levels in order to scale up sustainable structural transformation.

The WACOMP embraces the vision of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III) and is also aligned to UNIDO’s mandate of fostering Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID).

UNIDO kicks off a new chapter of the WACOMP in The Gambia

On August 1, 2020, WACOMP officially kicked off the country component in The Gambia, of which the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and United Purpose (UP) are the implemented partners in partnership with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Employment (MOTIE) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA).

The EU is contributing a total of 4,000,000 EUR to The Gambian component, of which 2,350,000 EUR is implemented by UNIDO and 1,250,000 EUR by UP.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the competitiveness of The Gambia and enhance its integration into the regional and international trading systems.

The specific objective is to improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of onion and other horticulture value chain.

Staff of WACOMP-GM based in The Gambia





Staff and PSC Members posed for a picture after a successful meeting

WACOMP-GM Project Steering Committee Meets

The project held its first Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting on Monday 22nd November 2021 at Metzzy Residence Hotel in Kololi, The Gambia.

The PSC provides the oversight of the project, reviews and approves its annual work plan and report. The PSC also gathers lessons learned, identifies possible challenges and proposes mitigation actions for the project.

The Committee, which convenes twice per year, is co-chaired by the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Employment (MOTIE) and the EU Delegation in The Gambia. The PSC consists of the European Union Delegation in The Gambia, the MOTIE and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), National Authorizing Officer Support Unit (NAOSU), The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB), Food Safety Quality Authority (FSQA), Sosolaso (umbrella body of Marketing Federations), Gambia Horticultural Enterprises Ltd and the two implementing agencies.

“WACOMP will contribute to market linkages with the tourism sector and strengthen compliance capacity of upstream value chain actors such that products meet mandatory and voluntary quality parameters, including that of food safety,”

said Ms. Lumana Kamashi, the Development Cooperation / International Aid Officer of the EU Delegation in The Gambia.

She expressed hope that there will be strong technical competencies, capabilities, and capacities of quality infrastructure institutions so that the system as a whole and its institutions better respond to agri-food sector needs.

The UNIDO Representative to The Gambia, Mr. Christophe Yvetot, commended the EU Delegation in The Gambia for the solid partnership in supporting job creation and local economies while ensuring environmental preservation.

The implementing agencies of WACOMP-GM, UNIDO and UP, presented their respective annual and inception reports outlining planned activities which were reviewed and approved by the members of the Committee.

The meeting was also attended by WACOMP project staff in The Gambia and UNIDO project team from Headquarters in Vienna, who joined virtually.



The RMA team having a focused-group discussion with women gardeners

Rapid Market Analysis (RMA) for a successful onion sub-sector in The Gambia

As part of the deliverables of its inception phase, WACOMP-GM, in July 2021, conducted a comprehensive assessment of the market situation in the onion and allied horticulture value chain.

The objectives of the Rapid Market Analysis (RMA) are to determine areas for quality improvements and to recommend potential intervention areas to address the quality-related gaps and constraints along the value chain.

Based on the findings of the RMA, although much has changed in the horticulture sub-sector in the past 10 years especially in the growing of onions across the country, there remains a critical need to improve on quality, increase production, provision of quality seeds, good storage facilities and guaranteed access to national, regional, and international markets.

The RMA will serve as the basis for a bespoke technical assistance program for SMEs and extension officers to achieve international certification and assured market linkages.

The mission lasted for 10 days and in the process, 5 regions of the country were visited including 20 farmer cooperatives. The consultations were in the form of focus group discussions using a structured questionnaire administered to each of the farmer cooperatives.

The RMA Report, as a component of the inception report was presented to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) during its bi-annual meeting that was held on the 22nd of November 2021.



JULY

10
days

5
regions

20
farmer cooperatives



WACOMP - GM Assesses the National Quality Infrastructure Gaps and Priorities

The Quality Infrastructure (QI) assessment mission was carried out by a team led by the UNIDO international QI expert, Prof. Dr. Adalberto Vieira, in which several actions took place including, but not limited to, gap analyses of some of the main current stakeholders related to The Gambia's QI system, with particular

emphasis on those working in the conformity assessment domain.

The below four institutions assessed play a key role in several domains of The Gambia's Regulatory Framework for QI and food safety control:

1

The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB),

2

The Food Safety and Quality Authority (inspection and internal laboratory divisions),

3

The National Agricultural Research Institute (National Aflatoxin Laboratory)

4

The Plant Protection Services of the Ministry of Agriculture (Phytosanitary and Plant Quarantine Services)





UNIDO International QI Expert, Prof. Dr. Adalberto Vieira and team meeting the minister of Agriculture

The gap analyses were carried out, as applicable, taking into consideration the ISO/IEC 17020:2012 (Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection) and ISO/IEC 17025:2017 (General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories) requirements.

Each one of the assessments carried out made it possible to better understand where the institution stands at this moment in terms of compliance with the requirements and the related existing gaps or deficiencies, as well as the way forward. The exercise was also an occasion to identify with these QI institutions' opportunities for improvements in several areas, including capacity building and laboratory equipment needs.

Following the gap analyses and the related engagements made with each one of the institutions, a preliminary list of tests/assays per stage of the value chain

and field/bench laboratory equipment was elaborated, discussed and agreed with the institutions.

Likewise, a training plan covering several domains included in the conformity assessment pillar and related domains was prepared based on the assessment results. The QI mission was also an opportunity, during the course of discussions and assessments with the selected entities, to identify other needs related to the QI that, in spite of not being necessarily related to the onion and to other horticultural value chains, are of particular importance for the reliability of the conformity assessment services provided by the country.

The mission also had an opportunity to make courtesy visits to the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Minister of Health, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Regional Integration and Employment and the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources to brief them about the mission's goals.



WACOMP - The Gambia trained Laboratory Technicians on ISO/IEC 17025:2017

On Monday 13th December 2021 and Tuesday 14th December 2021, WACOMP-GM has held a 2-day virtual awareness raising training on ISO/IEC 17025:2017.

12 conformity assessment technicians drawn from the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA), The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) and National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) were trained on the general requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.

The UNIDO National Technical Coordinator of the project, Mr. Joseph Ndenn, said the training introduced the participants to the international standard to be met by testing laboratories seeking accreditation: ISO/IEC 17025: 2017.

He added that the training marks the beginning of the implementation of the mutually agreed roadmap to accreditation agreed between UNIDO and the management of the 3 beneficiary institutions of the project, TGSB, FSQA and NARI.

13 Dec	14 Dec	2 days	12 conformity assessment technicians
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Staff of The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) participating in the training

“My expectations from the participants are that they will utilise the knowledge gained and share with their colleagues as the training was a privilege and rare opportunity,” he said.

The co-facilitator of the training, UNIDO expert on Quality Infrastructure (QI), Prof. Dr. Adalberto Vieira, said that ensuring reliable laboratory results is key to demonstrating compliance with the required regulations. He added that being able to provide recognizable conformity assessment services to companies and other value chain agents is crucial to access and remain in new reference markets.

“The awareness training will contribute to the acquisition of knowledge on ISO/IEC 17025:2017 of technicians linked to The Gambian QI, with special emphasis on those related to the onion and alike horticultural products’ value-chain conformity assessment,” said Prof. Dr. Vieira.

A participant, Ms. Marie Mendy, the Principal Conformity Assessment Officer of the TGSB, expressed gratitude to the project for facilitating such significant training.

“The knowledge acquired and lessons learnt during the awareness training will greatly assist us, as laboratory personnel, in the implementation of ISO/IEC 17025 requirements,” she concluded.

ISO/IEC 17025:2017 specifies the general requirements for the competence, impartiality and consistent operation of laboratories. It is applicable to all organizations performing laboratory activities, regardless of the number of personnel.

Laboratory customers, regulatory authorities, organizations and schemes using peer-assessment, accreditation bodies, and others, use ISO/IEC 17025:2017 in confirming or recognizing the competence of laboratories.



Effective Communication and Visibility for Project Success

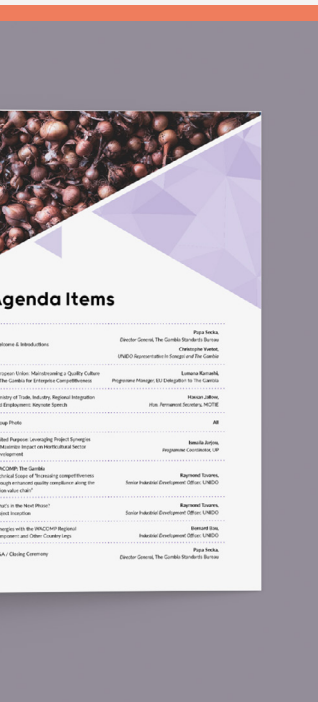
During the Inception Phase, the project has strengthened its communications and branding through the development of a project brochure, poster and rollup banners and the creation of social media channels including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

The project's communication and visibility plan has been revised and finalized during the Inception Phase, as well as aligned to the global communication strategy of WACOMP, developed by the ECOWAS Commission in close cooperation with UNIDO and other implementing partners of the WACOMP. It is also in line with the communication and visibility guidelines for EU External Actions.

Furthermore, the recruitment process for a National Communications and Visibility (C&V) Expert has been completed in October 2021 to follow-up on all C&V related activities as the visibility aspect of the project is highly relevant for increasing awareness and informing of the impact achieved during the implementation period.

In November 2021, the project team held a meeting with the EU Delegation in relation to some communications and visibility considerations to take note of in the implementation of the project. The meeting provided an opportunity for the new Communications & Visibility Expert to be introduced to the EU C & V focal person for effective collaboration.





As part of efforts to synergize with United Purpose (UP), there is an established working relationship with the UP communications and visibility focal person. The two project teams have discussed to collaborate on information sharing and joint coverage and dissemination of milestone activities of the project.

A video introducing WACOMP regional and country components of the WACOMP project was produced. The video will add to the project's already-existing visual products to raise more awareness about the project and its impact in the country.

Access Video here

https://youtu.be/TFXrNF_snpw

Moving forward, the social media sites will be constantly updated for continued engagement with the online community. This will enable the public for easily follow and keep track of the project's lifespan, activities and impact. The content on the social media will include project updates, beneficiary and stakeholder testimonials, amongst others.



@WACOMP_GM



@WACOMPTheGambia



@wacomp_gm



WACOMP - The Gambia

WACOMP-GM Team Provides Support to UNIDO Country Programme Launch



UNIDO Country Representative and Trade Minister shake hands after signing the programme

The team of WACOMP-GM has provided support and participated in the launch of the UNIDO Country Programme which took place at the Sir Dawda Kawraja Jawara International Conference Center on the 12th November 2021.

UNIDO and the Government of The Gambia have signed a Country Programme providing a practical guide for UNIDO's interventions in The Gambia over the next 5-year period.

The Programme is built on established national industrial development priorities and a consolidated international policy framework, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the new UN Sustainable Development Country Framework (UNSDCF) cycle based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA).

In coordination with UNIDO's Headquarters and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE), the WACOMP team played an active role in the preparation and organization of the ceremony.

During his keynote address, Mr. Christophe Yvetot, UNIDO Country Representative in The Gambia, celebrated the WACOMP project, saying it will go far enough in improving the quality infrastructure of the onion and horticulture value chain in The Gambia.

Similar remarks about WACOMP's potentials were made by Mr. Manuel Mattiat, UNIDO Programme Officer, during his presentation of the Country Programme.

The Country Programme is designed "to improve The Gambia's production and trade capacity by fostering partnerships and supporting inclusive and sustainable industrial development", said Mr. Mattiat.

WACOMP project roll-up banners were displayed and brochures made available to participants at the launch ceremony. This has increased visibility and understanding of the project among government officials and civil society present.



Fruitful Meeting with the UNIDO Country Representative in The Gambia

On the sidelines of the UNIDO Country Programme launch, the staff of the WACOMP-GM, met the UNIDO Country Representative for The Gambia based in Dakar, Mr. Christophe Yvetot, at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara Conference Center in Bijilo on the 12th November 2021.

The inception meeting availed both parties the opportunities to interact and discuss pertinent project-related matters.

Mr. Yvetot expressed delight in meeting the WACOMP project staff and commended them for the achievements registered so far.

He said he will be often in touch with the project team and affirmed his commitment to addressing the needs

of the project. As part of his visit to The Gambia, the Representative held a meeting with the EU Delegation in The Gambia, as the WACOMP project is funded by the EU. He expressed satisfaction that the Delegation is impressed with the project's inception phase and called for more work especially in improving the value chain and addressing the needs of the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs).

The UNIDO National Technical Coordinator of WACOMP-GM, Mr. Joseph Ndenn, welcomed the Representative to The Gambia, saying the project has successfully executed activities outlined in its inception phase. These, he added, include setting up a functional project management office, conducting needs assessments and working on concrete work plans, including the project implementation strategies.



UNIDO Country Representative held his inception meeting with WACOMP-GM team



National Horticultural Value Chain Expert, Mr. Malamin Drammeh, introducing WACOMP to participants

WACOMP-GM Value Chain Expert Participates in 'Making Markets Work for the Poor' ToT

16

The UNIDO WACOMP National Horticultural Value Chain Expert, Mr. Malamin Drammeh, participated in a 'Making Markets Work for the Poor' (M4P) Training of Trainers (ToT) organized by UP under the EU-funded WACOMP-GM, from the 21st of October 2021 to the 3rd of November 2021 in Mansakonko, Lower River Region.

The training provided participants M4P tools to be used to conduct participatory market system mapping and analysis for onions, tomatoes, chili pepper and sweet potatoes. The M4P approach means regaining control of the value chain at the producer level. It also empowers producer groups to engage with markets more effectively and strengthen their business linkage with other entrepreneurs as well as consumers.

On the fringes of the training, Mr. Drammeh took advantage of the opportunity to make a presentation on UNIDO's component under the WACOMP-GM,

deliberating on the planned activities and what they seek to achieve.

The session raised the awareness of the participants and enabled them to make comments and ask questions in relation to UNIDO's project intervention under the WACOMP-GM.

"The M4P Training of Trainers has increased my knowledge and understanding of the agricultural value chain holistically and in particular the onion value chain. My knowledge and skill have been improved to enable me to identify activities linked to the interventions to address the constraints affecting an increase in production and income of the women onion growers," said the national horticultural value chain expert.

The training was attended by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, related NGOs and marketing federations.



UNIDO and UP WACOMP-GM Teams Provide Updates

As part of efforts to build synergies between the two project teams, the UNIDO and UP hold monthly meetings to update each other about their project engagements and share data and best practices for enhanced collaboration.

In the November meeting, UNIDO WACOMP National Technical Coordinator, Mr. Joseph Ndenn, updated his counterpart about the Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) report which he said is nearly ready and presently being reviewed for approval. The RMA, he added, will help to guide the implementation process of the project. He said the report will be shared with UP to also have the opportunity to review and make inputs before its finalization.

He followed up on the Site Verification Report which UP is working on, saying it will inform the selection of their beneficiary sites for the construction of storage facilities.

The UP WACOMP Project Manager, Mrs. Ngansa Tousay, updated the meeting about their project activities. Key among them is the completion of their quarterly report and planning meeting. She updated that the Site Verification Report is completed and will be shared with the UNIDO WACOMP team.

Both parties expressed the need to continuously communicate and share draft works to be informed and also to allow them to provide feedback on each other's works - instead of waiting for their finalization before sharing.



Staff of UNIDO and UP WACOMP posed for a group picture after a meeting

Meet the UNIDO WACOMP-GM Team

Joseph Ndenn

National Technical Coordinator



Famara Demba

National Project Assistant



Malamin Drammeh

National Horticulture Value Chain Expert

Saikou Suwareh Jabai

National Communications & Visibility Expert



Modou Lamin Bojang

Senior Driver

Musa Mbenga

International Horticulture Value Chain Expert



Lalia Jawara

National Expert for Testing Laboratories

Bernard Bau

Project Manager



Christian Lasser

Project Associate

Mathias Schaetz

Project Assistant



Aline Nassar

Communications and Visibility Assistant

Adalberto Carvalho Santos Vieira

International Expert in Quality Infrastructure



Rajbir Sangwan

Senior International Expert in Quality Infrastructure



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Department of Digitalization, Technology and Innovation (DTI)
Vienna International Centre,
P.O. Box 300, 1400 Vienna, Austria
tii@unido.org / www.unido.org

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The Gambia

