



African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

**“Promotion of Quality Standards and Certification for
Handicrafts from Ghana and Sierra Leone”**

**“ACP-EU TBT PROGRAMME”
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TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS and GUIDELINES

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Annex 1 – References

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 and the entry into force of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (the TBT Agreement), WTO member countries are required to ensure that national technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. The Agreement calls for the avoidance of unnecessary barriers to trade and the use of international standards as basic prerequisites for market access. As members of the WTO, Ghana and Sierra Leone are bound by the TBT rules, the violation of which is subject to the WTO Dispute Settlement Body.

While technical barriers to trade are important for handicraft exporters, they are not the most serious export constraint for the handicrafts value chain. The main driver for handicraft export growth is the market's interest in the products being offered. The very first priority is to develop products the market wants to buy. This is the key to attract and increase exports. Then one can and should look at the technical barriers and international regulations and specifications impacting the products to be exported. These operate in tandem. For example, a designer working with wood décor producers needs to know the technical specifications in order that newly designed products are in keeping with regulations. On the other hand, spending enormous time and energy on technical specifications, while exports are declining, is putting the cart before the horse.

The handicraft value chain is unlike most other export value chains in that it is not commodity-based and encompasses many diverse sectors, such as leatherwork, textiles, ceramics, wooden articles, metalwork, baskets, jewelry, etc. What unifies the global term “handicraft” is that products are handmade, where being handmade means that no two pieces are exactly the same and it is precisely this quality of unique and individually crafted products that add value.

One of the most positive aspects of the handicraft value chain in Ghana is that it has been successful in moving handicrafts forward from a cottage industry to a light manufacturing industry. Moving African handicrafts into a manufacturing sector is essential for growth and sustainable, scalable development throughout the continent. However, Ghana has lost market share in part because its products are overly refined and have lost the “handmade” look of traditionally associated with crafts production. Buyers have said: “Many Ghanaian products look like they are made in China”, meaning that they have lost the “hands” in handmade. The only way to achieve balance between being able to do light manufacturing, while retaining the perceived value of hand-made, is through strong design inputs.

We have chosen the wood décor and basketry sectors because they could have the strongest market appeal from among the various other sectors in Ghana and Sierra Leone. Technical specifications for manufactured goods such as furniture may not be completely applicable to this value chain. Therefore, our approach in this technical specification report for the two chosen product categories will encompass two trajectories: the regulatory approach as well as the market-driven approach.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this report is to help advance the handicraft value chain by assisting it to become aware of technical and market-driven constraints that inhibit its growth. The goal is to present the technical specifications that could inhibit exports and offer guides to production companies to negotiate satisfying the specifications.

The second objective of this report is to lay the foundation for the training sessions to be undertaken in Ghana in October.

Ghana and Sierra Leone present very different value chain postures. Ghana has a highly experienced, multi-sectored value-chain with decades of export experience, while Sierra Leone is struggling to establish its footing as an emerging player in this field. Guidelines will reflect the needs for both countries.

3. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR HANDICRAFTS

According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): “a specification is the minimum requirement according to which a producer or service provider makes and delivers the product and service to the customer”. The following factors should be taken into consideration while setting the specification limits:¹

- Buyer expectations;
- Requirements relating to product safety and health hazards provided for in the statutory and regulatory requirements;
- Requirements provided for in national and/or international standards.

Though many technical specifications are not applicable to the handicraft value chain, there are some that are very important and they are noted in the chart in the following section.

3.1 Wooden Home Décor

One of the strongest categories for both countries is wood products. As the market is more interested in African design rather than ethnographic statues and art, we have narrowed this category to wooden home décor. This is an area with strong market potential. Ghana has a great deal of experience in wood décor, though their market share has declined, and Sierra Leone has carvers and available wood, but skills need to be developed to move from carving masks and statues to creating home décor collections. The biggest constraint for the wood producer is the environmental regulations governing the sourcing of wood and this is coupled with the European consumers’ keen interest in environmental issues.

Food safety regulations impact the finishing of wood products, and furniture must comply with stress safety regulations. Though not a legal requirement, the drying of wood is another technical constraint, as improperly dried wood can lead to substantial mould accumulation in transport and cracking or warping in destination climates.

¹ See https://www.unido.org/fileadmin/media/documents/pdf/tcb_product_quality.pdf

Market-driven constraints are not clear-cut and technical, though their impact is profound. Design is the most important factor for attracting markets. It is always difficult for artisans not living in the target market to know what the market wants to purchase. Ghanaians have been producing wood decor products with the same aesthetic sensibility for decades. Often to these artisans changing the design means changing the shape or surface texture, but the overall “aesthetic” remains the same, while the market has moved on and wants entirely fresh designs.

Technical and Market Specifications Table and Guidelines

Wooden Home Decor

Issue	Technical or Market Specification	Notes About Specs	Guidelines
Raw Materials			
Types of wood	Wood must be identified by its common/commercial name as well as its scientific name and must follow all the regulations on the CITES list. ² Some woods are not endangered, but all should be checked.	The environment and sustainability are important to European consumers. ³ Certain handicrafts are noted in the regulations and they must comply. Those not listed are not required to comply.	<p>Ghana: Has signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU⁴. The system of assurances are about to be set in Ghana. Legality Validation of wood and wood products will be handled by the Timber Validation Department and the Timber Industry Development Division⁵ (TIDD) under the Forestry Commission of Ghana.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: Has not signed a VPA agreement with the EU, and therefore is not held to the same account. Though it is highly recommended that exporters refer to CITES list and use only woods that are not endangered to satisfy the EU consumers’ interest in the environment.</p> <p>General: Exporters who advertise their environmental compliance can increase the perceived value of their products and market appeal</p>
Finishing and other materials	Paints and varnishes should be free of lead, cadmium and arsenic and creosotes ⁶ .	The EU regulation, Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals ⁷ (REACH) controls chemical substances going into the	General: All paints and varnishes used should be labelled lead and cadmium free. When labelling products this should be clearly written and visible to show environmental consciousness of the producer and raise their professional

² <http://checklist.cites.org/#/en>

³ <https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/study/product-factsheet-sustainability-europe-home-decoration-textiles-2014.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fcghana.org/vpa/index.php>

⁵ <http://fcghana.org/page.php?page=46§ion=22&typ=1&subs=253>

⁶ https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/market_information/researches/product-factsheet-europe-wooden-salad-sets-2015.pdf

⁷ <https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach>

		EU. It appears that the level of lead allowed in paints is undergoing revision, which means it will be stricter.	image to buyers. Other products used in home décor, such as metal, should also be confirmed lead free. Recycled metal is usually NOT lead free.
Wood drying	Though we were unable to find any legal standards for moisture content for handmade wood products, buyers have a high level of expectation that wood products will be properly dried.	Both soft and hardwoods should have no higher than a 12% moisture rate, but for air controlled homes (air conditioning and heating) moisture should be 8%. ⁸ If woods is not properly dried it can result in acquiring mould in transport, and cracking, splitting or warping upon arrival in another climate.	There are many low-cost wood moisture - testing devices on the market. Additionally, there are many low-tech drying methodologies. The most common is sun drying, but in tropical climates like Sierra Leone this would not be an option for much of the year. There are other low-tech kiln methodologies that are more effective than air-drying. See YouTube video ⁹ for a low-cost hand-made solar kiln model. The solar drying kiln is the most highly recommended and will bring wood to a 6-8% moisture rate, recommended for the EU consumer with heat and air regulated interiors.
Product Types			
“The General Product Safety Directive basically states that all products marketed in the EU must be safe to use and forms a framework for all specific legislation established for specific products and issues. If no specific legal requirements have been established for your product and its uses, the General Product Safety Directive ¹⁰ still applies” ¹¹			
Tables, chairs, and stools	Some buyers may require a stress test to determine the safety of the product. Generally EU standards for accessory furniture are related to folding products, office furniture and children’s furniture. ¹²	There are also standards on upholstered furniture, but this type of furniture is not produced in either country for export.	The best way to protect products is to be sure they are stable and well made, particularly joinery. If any hardware is used it is important to find the best hardware available as this will increase the perceived value of the products while also providing evidence of the producer’s level professionalism.
Mirrors and Frames	There are EU regulations regarding glass used in furniture, but these regulations do not apply	Standard frames for photographs in the EU are 13x18cm, 24x30, 20x30 cm, 30x40cm, 40x50cm,	Mirror frames can be any size and style.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wood_drying

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTsDhCrE56U>

¹⁰ http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/taxes/show2Files.htm?dir=/requirements&reporterId1=EU&file1=ehir_eu14_02v001/eu/main/req_safeprod_eu_010_0612.htm&reporterLabel1=EU&reporterId2=NL&file2=&reporterLabel2=Netherlands&label=General+product+safety&languageId=en&status=PROD

¹¹ <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/home-decoration-textiles/buyer-requirements/>

¹² https://standards.cen.eu/dyn/www/f?p=204:32:0:::FSP_ORG_ID,FSP_LANG_ID:6188,25&cs=18896D4219FAD6DC57770E4FB5BD781AC

	to glass used in mirrors. ¹³	50x60cm, and 60x80cm ¹⁴	
Kitchen Accessories	Food Contact Materials (FCMs) ¹⁵ must comply with REACH regulations.	The European Consumer is very concerned about food safety. Certification is not required, but all surface wood treatments must be food safe.	Kitchen accessories include bowls, serving utensils, cutting boards, misc. items
Production			
Design	The most critical Market-Driven barrier to trade	Good design sells products. It is the single most important element in production.	As design is so important in attracting and growing market access, please refer to the insert below on the importance of design.

¹³ https://standards.cen.eu/dyn/www/f?p=204:110:0:::FSP_PROJECT:9649&cs=1EF8855D352E6EC2217BEF95BEF48FFFB

¹⁴ <http://photo.net/black-and-white-photo-printing-finishing-forum/0045EK>

¹⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/eurl/food-contact-materials>

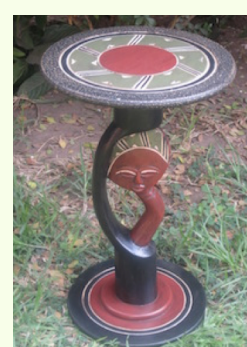
The Importance of Design – Wood Décor

Good design sells products and leads to greater exports. For developing countries, it is important to have professional designers from target markets to create a foundation of products consistent with market trends as per visual elements and price-points. Once this foundation is laid then local designers and producers can expand upon the collections.

In order to gain true market share, “handicrafts” must be transformed in two ways; a) it must move from being a cottage industry into becoming a light manufacturing industry, and b) it must transform its identity from “handicrafts” to “Handmade” — a term that encompasses the full spectrum of design possibilities. This two-pronged identity shift could be achieved through creating a West African Design Brand that adheres to strict principles set by professional designers and administered through training and coaching programs.

The African “Design Brand” could be a certification platform for producers who have been trained by professional designers and agree to adopt the criteria set therein.

Tekura is a leading Ghanaian manufacturer of wood décor with excellent semi-industrial facilities. They continue to produce products that were popular decades ago and have lost some market draw because the current trend is for good design.



Tekura had the benefit of working with renowned French/Malian designer Cheick Diallo. Under his guidance they produced high-end, highly marketable, and impeccably designed décor items. Working with a good designer can help companies break from their aesthetic habits and better respond to market trends. Below are Diallo’s designs for Tekura -- contemporary, on-trend, well designed and unique.



Issue	Technical or Market Specifications	Notes about Specs	Guidelines
Production			
Machine and hand tooling	There are no technical specifications for wood tooling. But to see the “Hand” in handmade is a strong market-driven value, and increases the perceived value of the product.	To achieve efficiency in wood production semi-industrial tools are necessary. Hand finishing can be the key to achieving the “hand-made” look that the market wants. “Rustic” is a powerful and popular market niche.	<p>Ghana: There are many Ghanaian companies with well-equipped production facilities. Because Ghana has a history of mass-production it’s finishing also reflects a mass-market aesthetic. It should develop hand-tooling techniques that will create a hand-made appearance.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: As Sierra Leone has little export experience their advantage is that they can incorporate market-driven trends at the very start of their development as an export sector</p>
Quality Assurance and Control	<p>Safety and durability standards are covered above under “Tables, chairs and stools”</p> <p>Handmade products, by definition, will have variances yet there are certain quality standards that the market expects, such as size compliance, wood dryness, and surface texture.</p>	<p>As quality control and assurance are important to the professional handicraft buyer, the ISO 9001:2015¹⁶ document could be useful to the more developed production companies. ISO certification for quality management is valuable for larger businesses, it will matter less to handicraft producers and buyers.</p> <p>All buyers, large or small, expect that home décor products will be the same as the sample. A common complaint among buyers is that samples are perfect but the production quality is not the same.</p>	<p>To ensure consistent quality the producer must make two samples, one for the buyer, and one to use as an in-workshop guide. Simple QA systems could include sizing templates, dye or paint mix recipes and the like to be distributed to production facilities, and an inspection procedure during the production process. Though this may add expense, particularly at the beginning, it will more than pay for itself in satisfied customers who will have increased confidence to order more and will result in fewer chargebacks for poor quality goods.</p> <p>A quality management specialist could do much to guide companies to improve this crucial standard.</p>
Social Standards	Fair Trade ¹⁷ embraces key social standards including child labour, compensation, working conditions, and labour regulations.	Fair Trade carries great weight in the EU market and adds value. The Fair Trade Certification mark will increase sales not only to Fair Trade certified buyers but to all buyers because the EU consumer is highly fair trade conscious.	Fair Trade Certification can be a lengthy and costly process. It is best that an association apply for the entire membership and spread costs among members.
Transport			
Labelling	All packages must have	Products are not required	Buyers may want product labelling that can

¹⁶ http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso_9000.htm

¹⁷ <http://wfto.com>

	the weight indicated on the outer pack ¹⁸ . All shipments must be accompanied by a certificate of origin.	to have country of origin label as in the US.	include their local, product, producer, or country information to personalize the product and make it more consumers appealing. Buyers may have “inner” and “outer” packs for which they will want specific labelling. They will convey this in advance.
Packaging	There are strict EU regulations regarding wood or organic packing materials.	Ghana has traditionally used cardboard and non-organic materials for packing.	It is best to avoid wood, straw or other organic material for packing.
Moisture/Mould	It is necessary to protect wood from moulding while in transit. Though not a Specification, it is a market expectation. NOTE: Desiccant products that contain dimethylfumarate (DMFU) are banned in the EU ¹⁹	The dryer the wood, the longer it will take for mould to form. See above, wood drying.	Desiccant products are essential in keeping a container dry of container sweat. Manufacturers will specify quantity needed per container size. It is advisable to put them inside the packing boxes as well.
Fumigation	Although fumigation is not required, it is highly suggested.	Only a certified company can offer a fumigation certification.	Wood products as well as packing materials can contain mites or other insects.

¹⁸ http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer_affairs/consumer_protection/product_safety_and_labelling/standards_for_product_labelling.html

¹⁹ <http://www.bureauveritas.co.uk/FBPJJOqG/Footwear+Newsletter+February+2013.pdf>

3.2 Basketry

Ghana's Bolgatanga Basket Market



A basket-weaving cooperative in Bolgatanga



Ghana exports many containers of baskets each year though it produces very few other products in the category. The Ghanaian baskets are produced in the North of the country in the Bolgatanga region, and thus their baskets are internationally known as “Bolga Baskets”. They use a common grass from the Kumasi region. The weavers are mainly women, often formed into village-based cooperatives. There are selling reps in Bolgatanga that service international buyers or their Ghanaian agents in collecting or ordering what is needed and getting them to Accra – this system has worked for decades.

The lack of good quality control systems regarding sizing and colors is a major constraint and the system of reps in Bolgatanga could be expanded to incorporate a stronger quality management system at the village/producer level. Another technical constraint for the basket sector is the difficulty in finding a reliable source for dyes that are considered chemically safe.

Sierra Leone, on the other hand, has numerous weaving and plaiting techniques and it uses a variety of grasses. The sector is very loosely organized but there are a few budding entrepreneurs who have begun to organize village groups for commercial production. This is the most promising sector in the Sierra Leone handicrafts value chain. Because of the variety of techniques and grasses they have the potential to expand beyond baskets and do other home and fashion accessory items, such as belts, shoes, hammocks, mats and table wear.

Technical and Market Specifications Table and Guidelines

Basketry Sector

Issue	Technical or Market Specification	Notes About Specs	Guidelines
Raw Materials			
Types of grasses and fibres used in baskets and plaited items	Grasses and fibres must be identified by their common/ commercial names as well as their scientific names and must follow all the regulations on the CITES list. ¹ Most grasses are not endangered, but it is good to check to be sure.	The environment and sustainability are important issues for EU consumers. If grasses are sustainably harvested, it is good to note that on labelling to show that the producer is environmentally aware.	<p>Ghana: Has a long and strong tradition of basket exports, having exported many containers a year for decades. They use a common grass, mainly harvested from the Kumasi region. Its scientific name is Pennisetum Purpureum. It has no CITES restrictions. Procurement is not endangered, though there are seasonal constraints.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: Has numerous weaving techniques using different grasses. Though not yet developed or market ready, this sector offers Sierra Leone a strong export potential. Design inputs and efficient production training would be the first step towards developing marketable products.</p>
Dyes	Dyes should be free of lead, cadmium, and arsenic.	The EU regulation, Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) ²⁰ controls chemical substances going into the EU. It appears that the level of lead allowed in paints is undergoing revision, which means it will be stricter.	<p>Ghana: The basket sector in Ghana has had difficulty in finding quality lead-free dyes. As weavers work in the extreme North of the country QC has been a problem in controlling dye consistency.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: Those enterprises using local dyes should have the dyes tested at the SL Standards Authority. Even if they are only selling locally at the moment, it is important to find quality dyes because as one enters the global marketplace, this will become a serious issue.</p>
Mould	Though we were unable to find any standards for moisture content for basketry products, buyers expect that products will not have	Woven grass products should be stored in a clean and dry facility before shipping and the container used should be stocked with Silica and the correct	Ghana: Bolgatanga is situated in the dry Sahel region where mould is not a problem for stored baskets. Even in Accra there are dry storage facilities. For Ghana the mould problem arises in the shipping

²⁰ <https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach>

	mould upon arrival.	type of container to guard against mould is important (the shipping agent will advise on this).	containers. See <i>Wood Drying</i> in the wood section. Sierra Leone: As a tropical region Sierra Leone basketry may collect mould while they are being stored waiting for shipment. A clean, dry and properly ventilated storage facility is necessary.
Product Types			
Baskets	Certainly the largest category within the basketry, woven and plaited grasses sector.		
• Utilitarian and Storage Baskets	These types of baskets will have to be food safe as it is possible food will be stored in them.	The largest category of baskets sold is utilitarian/storage and they must be durable to withstand usage. Storage is a fast growing category in Europe ²¹ .	As much as possible baskets should be made to be stackable or nesting. This will greatly reduce end-price because many more will fit in a container and transport costs will be reduced.
• Gift Baskets	Must be food safe and sturdy as foodstuffs are packed in them as a gift collection		Often a forgotten market, gift baskets are a significant niche market.
• Decorative Baskets	Though no specific use, should be food safe just in case.		The value of these baskets is derived from the quality of the design
• Tabletop	Definitely must be food safe		Flat baskets are used as runners and trivets.
Garden Accessories	There could be stress regulations for products such as hammocks or woven garden furniture	Urban and indoor gardens are a rising trend among EU consumers ²²	Sierra Leone already produces hammocks in small quantities
Mats	If the mats are for tabletop use, must be food safe		Sierra Leone's tradition of plaited palm and woven baskets lends itself to floor mats, as well as placemats and runners.
Fashion Accessories			
"Several factors determine the quality of accessories from the perspective of European consumers, including performance, reliability and durability. For accessories, quality is determined in terms of the quality and standard of the material, color-fastness, surface designs and final finish . . . the consumption of fashion accessories is growing when apparel consumption in general is contracting." ²³			
Footwear (raffia)	EU has definitive labelling requirements ²⁴ CITES restrictions apply	Accurate sizing, and quality construction are essential.	Raffia sandals and slides would sell into casual urban or resort niche markets. Handmade shoes are a

²¹ https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/market_information/researches/product-factsheet-storage-europe-home-decoration-textiles-2014.pdf

²² https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/market_information/researches/product-factsheet-garden-europe-home-decoration-textiles-2014.pdf

²³ https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/market_information/researches/product-factsheet-europe-fashion-accessories-2016.pdf

²⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3AI21209>

	to grasses used in fashion accessories		growing trend.
Belts	Restrictions on lead, cadmium and arsenic in dyes. It is important that dyes are colourfast.	Beware that many metal components may have lead content.	Woven and plaited raffia or other grasses used in belts appeal to the same niche markets above plus the general fashion accessories market.
Bags	The greatest market expectation is good design. Dyes must be colourfast. Construction must be durable, particularly the handles.	Clutches, totes, small purses, market bags, and more are all possible with woven or plaited grasses. Beware that metal zippers, snaps and buttons may contain lead.	Ghana: The Bolga Baskets fall into numerous categories, including totes and market bags. Sierra Leone: The potential is enormous for Sierra Leone to develop numerous types of bags using the various techniques and grasses at its disposal.
Jewellery	All food safe regulations apply		Raffia and woven jewellery is a budding niche market and Sierra Leone, with the proper product development, could be a leader in this niche.
Production			
Design	The most critical Market-Driven barrier to trade	Good design sells products. It is the single most important element in production.	As design is so important in attracting and growing market access, please refer to the insert below on the importance of design.

The Importance of Design – Basketry & Woven Grasses Sector

Good design sells products and leads to greater exports. The basketry and woven grasses sector has enormous potential and can appeal to many market strata, from mass-market to luxury. It fits perfectly into the EU interest in the environment and sustainability as well as the natural/rustic aesthetic that is a global trend.

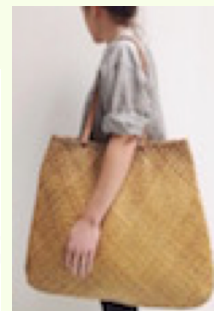
Decades ago South African designer Marissa Fick-Jordan developed contemporary baskets using telephone wire. Today telephone wire baskets define South African Design and are sold in huge quantities around the world. Design is the key to gaining markets.



Ghana's Bolga Baskets are sold around the world and are seen as market baskets and therefore do not capture the higher-end markets. Designer Palash Singh developed a modern basket collection using traditional weaving techniques and colours. These designs will capture the imagination of the market, attract a higher price, and lead to more creative designs.



Sierra Leone's multitude of grasses and weaving techniques could lead to large markets for a variety of product categories, including baskets, bags, shoes, belts, jewellery and more. Below are a few of the on-trend types of products that can be done in Sierra Leone with strong design inputs using existing skills and materials.



Issue	Technical or Market Specifications	Notes about Specs	Guidelines
Production			
Quality Control	Quality Management systems are a particular problem in the basket value chain as most of the production is done in the villages, often far from the capital where the buyer agents and exporters reside, making implementing a quality management system even more difficult and costly.	<p>As quality control and assurance is important to the professional handicraft buyer, the ISO 9001:2015²⁵ document could be useful to the more developed SMEs. ISO certification for quality management is valuable for larger businesses, it will matter less to handicraft buyers.</p> <p>All buyers, large or small, expect that home décor products will be the same as the sample. A common complaint among buyers is that samples are perfect but the production quality is not the same.</p>	<p>Ghana: As noted above, the basket value chain is comprised of reps in the Bolgatanga region. These reps could be trained in quality management systems and methodologies, along with partnering exporters.</p> <p>As Sierra Leone has emerging entrepreneurs who are beginning to work in the villages, early training in quality management would set up the system right from the beginning.</p> <p>Good quality management is a key issue for buyers. Producers pay a steep price for poor quality management in the expensive charge-backs for poorly made products and can render a major order a loss rather than profit making.</p>
Social Standards	Fair Trade ²⁶ embraces the key social standards including child labour, compensation, working conditions, and labour regulations.	Fair Trade carries great weight in the EU market and adds value. The Fair Trade Certification mark will increase sales not only to Fair Trade certified buyers but to all buyers because the EU consumer is highly fair trade conscious.	Fair Trade Certification can be a lengthy and costly process. It is best for an association apply for the entire membership and spread costs among members.
Transport			
Labelling	All packages must have the weight indicated on the outer pack ²⁷ . A certificate of origin must accompany all shipments.	Products are not required to have country of origin label as in the US.	<p>Buyers may want product labelling that can include their local, product, producer, or country information to personalize the product and make it more consumer appealing.</p> <p>Buyers may have “inner” and “outer” packs for which they will want specific labelling. They will convey this in advance.</p>
Packaging	There are strict EU regulations regarding wood or organic packing materials.	Ghana has traditionally used cardboard and non-organic materials for packing.	It is best to avoid wood, straw or other organic material for packing.
Moisture	It is important that		Desiccant products are essential in keeping

²⁵ http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso_9000.htm

²⁶ <http://wfto.com>

²⁷ http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer_affairs/consumer_protection/product_safety_and_labelling/standards_for_product_labelling.html

	basketry does not mould in transport. Though not a Specification, it is a market expectation. NOTE: Desiccant products that contain dimethylfumurate (DMFU) are banned in the EU ²⁸		a container dry of container sweat. Manufacturers will specify quantity needed per container size. It is advisable to put them inside the baskets and packing boxes as well.
Fumigation	Although fumigation is not required, it is highly suggested.	Only a certified company can offer a fumigation certification.	Basketry products as well as packing materials can contain mites or other insects.

4. LEGAL ISSUES

In order to access the EU market, the technical specifications of Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean handicrafts should be in line with the international and European technical standards and requirements on quality and safety.

Accordingly, Ghana and Sierra Leone should implement and enforce their related international and regional trade commitments particularly those found under WTO Agreements (especially the TBT and SPS Agreements) and the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU. Although the basic requirements to achieve this goal are already available in both countries, other steps are still needed, particularly the following:

- Improving the legal infrastructure related to standards and conformity assessment;
- Enhancing the technological and institutional capacities needed for an utmost functioning of the system;
- Ensuring compliance with international and EU labelling and packaging requirements;
- Enhancing the role and function of the standards, accreditation, certification, and inspection bodies;
- Upgrading existing laboratories to be able to test products and samples for compliance with international standards;
- Improving and facilitating the customs procedures especially those related to inspection and clearance.

Ghana and Sierra Leone can request technical assistance from their trade partners (such as the EU), the WTO and UN agencies (such as UNIDO) to help them comply with international standards. For instance, assistance from UNIDO in this regard range from enabling national standards bodies to offer services in line with international standards to developing local capacities in metrology, calibration and product testing and enabling national and regional accreditation schemes to assess the performance of local and regional laboratories, inspection units and certification bodies.²⁹ It is to be noted that the project under

²⁸ <http://www.bureauveritas.co.uk/FBPJJOqG/Footwear+Newsletter+February+2013.pdf>

²⁹ See <http://www.unido.org/what-we-do/advancing-economic-competitiveness/competitive-trade-capacities-and-corporate-responsibility/trade/quality-and-compliance-infrastructure.html>

which this study is being conducted falls under the technical assistance on TBT provided by the EU to ACP countries.

Ensuring the protection of the Ghanaian and Sierra Leonean handicrafts from misappropriation and imitation is also a step that can be taken before entering the EU market. There is no one-fits-all means of protection for handicrafts products. The protection of each product will depend on the features and type of the product itself.³⁰ It can be ensured via Intellectual Property (IP) laws, unfair competition law, trade practices and labelling laws, use of contracts, customary and indigenous laws and protocols, cultural heritage preservation laws and programs, common law remedies such as unjust enrichment, rights of publicity, blasphemy, and criminal law.

For instance, the external appearance or design of wooden home décor and basketry handicrafts can be protected by copyright or industrial design. The know-how or the knowledge used to create these items can be protected by trade secrets. The protection of the name, mark and reputation of the products can be ensured by trademarks. But when the qualities, characteristics or reputation of the products are essentially due to a specific geographical origin, then geographical indication (GI) is the appropriate means for protection. This is the case of the well-known “Bolga Baskets” that constitute a potential for GI. Collective marks and certification marks are also efficient tools of protection. Collective marks require that groups be formed on the basis of common quality characteristics or the common origin of the products such as the weaving cooperatives in Bolgatanga that produce the “Bolga Baskets”. Certification marks require that the owner of the mark certifies that the product complies with a pre-established set of rules and standards governing its use. In addition to the above tools of protection, the rules on unfair competition are to be initiated to restrain any act of competition contrary to honest practices in industrial or commercial matters. This can be used to put an end to the counterfeit “Bolga Baskets” copied and sold by the Vietnamese under the same name.

For the utmost means of protection, the national and/or regional handicrafts producers with interests based on common quality characteristics or geographical origin can develop collective private standards under the umbrella of a specialized handicrafts organization such as ATAG. This will give more credibility towards the quality and safety of the products and hence can be used as a tool for marketing the product. It will be important, before undertaking protective measures, to do a cost/benefit analyses as the cost of pursuing infringers may significantly outstrip the commercial benefit. This is why we have also recommended a branding strategy³¹, though not legal protection, can significantly increase consumer awareness of geographical origin, authenticity and design ownership while at the same time attracting markets.

³⁰ For more details about the protection of handicrafts, please refer to the report on Market Needs Analyses dated August 11, 2016.

³¹ Ibid

5. Conclusion

As noted above, the wooden home décor and basketry sectors offer great opportunities for attracting the EU market. Producers need to understand the technical specifications relevant to their products and how to address challenges regarding these specifications. Producers wishing to export or increase their export presence need to be aware of market expectations as well.

For these two sectors awareness of and compliance to the environmental regulations is essential, and for the wood sector it is more complicated as most grasses used in basketry are not endangered.

Quality assurance and control standards have challenged the producer and exporter throughout the handicraft value chain across West Africa. The lack of quality management systems has cost exporters enormous headache as well as a loss in profit and productivity. In Ghana alone, there have been many instances of exporters having to absorb hefty charge-back fees for products not up to buyer specifications. This also results in the loss of buyer confidence, smaller and fewer orders, if orders continue at all.

One of the greatest challenges facing the handicrafts value chain is the need for quality and consistent design inputs with follow-up training and mentoring. The market clamours for fresh designs within its aesthetic sensibility, without which African producers cannot compete nor grow their market share.

Officials, service providers, development professionals as well as producers and exporters often fail to grasp the magnitude of lost potential. Buyers know, because they know the amount of orders they are shifting to countries where there is good design and good QC.

Ghana and Sierra Leone should ensure that their national technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. The handicraft product can also be protected from misappropriation and imitation by an adequate means of protection in their country of origin as well as in the destination country.

6. Guideline Charts

Wood Décor Guidelines Chart

Raw Materials	
Type of wood	<p>Wood must be identified by its common/ commercial name as well as its scientific name and must follow all the regulations on the CITES list.³² Some woods are not endangered, but all should be checked.</p> <p>The environment and sustainability are important to European consumers. Certain handicrafts are noted in the regulations and they must comply. Those not listed are not required to comply.</p> <p>Ghana: Has signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU³³. The system of assurances are about to be set in Ghana. Legality Validation of wood and wood products will be handled by the Timber Validation Department and the Timber Industry Development Division³⁴ (TIDD) under the Forestry Commission of Ghana.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: Has not signed a VPA agreement with the EU, and therefore is not held to the same account. Though it is highly recommended that exporters refer to CITES list and use only woods that are not endangered to satisfy the EU consumers' interest in the environment.</p> <p>Exporters who advertise their environmental compliance can increase the perceived value of their products and market appeal.</p>
Finishing and other materials	<p>Paints and varnishes should be free of lead, cadmium and arsenic.</p> <p>All paints and varnishes should be labelled lead and cadmium free. When labelling products this should be clearly written and visible to show environmental consciousness of the producer and raise their professional image to buyers.</p> <p>The EU regulation, Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals³⁵ (REACH) controls chemical substances going into the EU.</p> <p>Other products used in home décor, such as metal, should also be confirmed lead free. Recycled metal is usually NOT lead free.</p>
Wood drying	<p>Both soft and hardwoods should have no higher than a 12% moisture rate, but for air controlled homes (air conditioning and heating) moisture should be 8%.³⁶ If woods is not properly dried it can result in acquiring mould in transport, and cracking, splitting or warping upon arrival in another climate.</p> <p>There are many low-cost wood moisture -testing devices on the market. Additionally, there are many low-tech drying methodologies. The most common is sun drying, but in tropical climates like Sierra Leone this would not be an option for much of the year. There are other low-tech kiln methodologies that are more effective than air-drying. See YouTube video³⁷ for a low-cost hand-</p>

³² <http://checklist.cites.org/#/en>

³³ <http://www.fcghana.org/vpa/index.php>

³⁴ <http://fcghana.org/page.php?page=46§ion=22&typ=1&subs=253>

³⁵ <https://echa.europa.eu/regulations/reach>

³⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wood_drying

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTsDhCrE56U>

	made solar kiln model. The solar drying kiln is the most highly recommended and will bring wood to a 6-8% moisture rate, recommended for the EU consumer with heat and air regulated interiors.
Product Types	
“The General Product Safety Directive basically states that all products marketed in the EU must be safe to use and forms a framework for all specific legislation established for specific products and issues. If no specific legal requirements have been established for your product and its uses, the General Product Safety Directive still applies”	
Tables, chairs, and stools	<p>Some buyers may require a stress test to determine the safety of the product. Generally EU standards for accessory furniture are related to folding products, office furniture and children’s furniture.</p> <p>The best way to protect products is to be sure they are stable and well made, particularly joinery. If any hardware is used it is important to find the best hardware available as this will increase the perceived value of the products while also providing evidence of the producer’s level professionalism.</p>
Mirrors and Frames	<p>There are EU regulations regarding glass used in furniture, but these regulations do not apply to glass used in mirrors.</p> <p>Standard frames for photographs in the EU are 13x18cm, 24x30, 20x30 cm, 30x40cm, 40x50cm, 50x60cm, and 60x80cm.</p> <p>Mirror frames can be any size and style.</p>
Kitchen Accessories (such as bowls, serving utensils, cutting boards, etc.)	<p>Food Contact Materials (FCMs) must comply with REACH regulations.</p> <p>The European Consumer is very concerned about food safety. Certification is not required, but all surface wood treatments must be food safe.</p>
Production	
Design	<p>Design is the most critical market-driven barrier to trade. Good design sells products and increases exports.</p> <p>For developing countries, it is important to have professional designers from target markets to create a foundation of products consistent with market trends as per visual elements and price-points. Once this foundation is laid then local designers and producers can expand upon the collections.</p> <p>An African “Design Brand” could be a certification platform for producers who have been trained by professional designers and agree to adopt the criteria set therein.</p>
Machine and hand tooling	<p>There are no technical specifications for wood tooling. But to see the “Hand” in handmade is a strong market-driven value, and increases the perceived value of the product.</p> <p>To achieve efficiency in wood production semi-industrial tools are necessary. Hand finishing can be the key to achieving the “hand-made” look that the market wants. “Rustic” is a powerful and popular market niche.</p>
Quality Assurance and Control	<p>As quality control and assurance are important to the professional handicraft buyer, the ISO 9001:2015³⁸ document could be useful to the more developed production companies. ISO certification for quality management is valuable for larger businesses, it will matter less to handicraft producers and buyers.</p>

³⁸ http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso_9000.htm

	<p>All buyers, large or small, expect that home décor products will be the same as the sample. A common complaint among buyers is that samples are perfect but the production quality is not the same.</p> <p>To ensure consistent quality the producer must make two samples, one for the buyer, and one to use as an in-workshop guide. Simple QA systems could include sizing templates, dye or paint mix recipes and the like to be distributed to production facilities, and an inspection procedure during the production process. Though this may add expense, particularly at the beginning, it will more than pay for itself in satisfied customers who will have increased confidence to order more and will result in fewer chargebacks for poor quality goods.</p> <p>A quality management specialist could do much to guide companies to improve this crucial standard.</p> <p>A quality management specialist could do much to guide companies to improve this crucial standard.</p>
Social Standards	<p>Fair Trade embraces key social standards including child labour, compensation, working conditions, and labour regulations.</p> <p>Fair Trade carries great weight in the EU market and adds value. The Fair Trade Certification mark will increase sales not only to Fair Trade certified buyers but to all buyers because the EU consumer is highly fair trade conscious.</p> <p>Fair Trade Certification can be a lengthy and costly process. It is best that an association apply for the entire membership and spread costs among members.</p>
Transport	
Labelling	<p>All packages must have the weight indicated on the outer pack³⁹. A certificate of origin must accompany all shipments. Products are not required to have country of origin label as in the US.</p> <p>Buyers may want product labelling that can include their local, product, producer, or country information to personalize the product and make it more consumer appealing.</p> <p>Buyers may have “inner” and “outer” packs for which they will want specific labelling. They will convey this in advance.</p>
Packaging	<p>There are strict EU regulations regarding wood or organic packing materials. Ghana has traditionally used cardboard and non-organic materials for packing. It is best to avoid wood, straw or other organic material for packing.</p>
Moisture/Mould	<p>It is necessary to protect wood from moulding while in transit. Though not a Specification, it is a market expectation.</p> <p>The dryer the wood, the longer it will take for mould to form. See above, wood drying.</p> <p>Desiccant products are essential in keeping a container dry of container sweat. Manufacturers will specify quantity needed per container size. It is advisable to put them inside the packing boxes as well. Desiccant products that contain</p>

³⁹http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/consumer_affairs/consumer_protection/product_safety_and_labelling/standards_for_product_labelling.html

	dimethylfumarate (DMFU) are banned in the EU.
Fumigation	Only a certified company can offer a fumigation certification. Wood products as well as packing materials can contain mites or other insects.

Basketry Guidelines Chart

Raw Materials	
Types of grasses and fibres used in baskets and plaited items	<p>Grasses and fibres must be identified by their common/ commercial names as well as their scientific names and must follow all the regulations on the CITES list.¹ Most grasses are not endangered, but it is good to check to be sure.</p> <p>The environment and sustainability are important issues for EU consumers. If grasses are sustainably harvested, it is good to note that on labelling to show that the producer is environmentally aware.</p> <p>Ghana: The scientific name for the Bolga Baskets is Pennisetum Purpureum, and it has no CITES restrictions. Procurement is not endangered, though there are seasonal constraints.</p>
Dyes	<p>Dyes should be free of lead, cadmium, and arsenic.</p> <p>The EU regulation, Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) controls chemical substances going into the EU.</p> <p>Ghana: The basket sector in Ghana has had difficulty in finding quality lead-free dyes. As weavers work in the extreme North of the country QC has been a problem in controlling dye consistency.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: Those enterprises using local dyes should have the dyes tested at the SL Standards Authority. Even if they are only selling locally at the moment, it is important to find quality dyes because as one enters the global marketplace, this will become a serious issue.</p>
Mould	<p>Though we were unable to find any standards for moisture content for basketry products, buyers expect that products will not have mould upon arrival.</p> <p>Woven grass products should be stored in a clean and dry facility before shipping and the container used should be stocked with Silica and the correct type of container to guard against mould is important (the shipping agent will advise on this).</p> <p>Ghana: Bolgatanga is situated in the dry Sahel region where mould is not a problem for stored baskets. Even in Accra there are dry storage facilities. For Ghana the mould problem arises in the shipping containers. See <i>Wood Drying</i> in the wood section.</p> <p>Sierra Leone: As a tropical region Sierra Leone basketry may collect mould while they are being stored waiting for shipment. A clean, dry and properly ventilated storage facility is necessary.</p>
Product Types	
Baskets	Certainly the largest category within the basketry, woven and plaited grasses sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilitarian and Storage Baskets 	<p>Must be food safe as it is possible food will be stored in them.</p> <p>The largest category of baskets sold is utilitarian/storage and they must be durable to withstand usage.</p> <p>As much as possible baskets should be made to be stackable or nesting. This will greatly reduce end-price because many more will fit in a container and transport costs will be reduced.</p>

• Gift Baskets	Must be food safe and sturdy as foodstuffs are packed in them as a gift collection. Often a forgotten market, gift baskets are a significant niche market.
• Decorative Baskets	Though no specific use, should be food safe just in case. The value of these baskets is derived from the quality of the design
• Tabletop	Definitely must be food safe. Flat baskets are used as runners and trivets.
Garden Accessories	There could be stress regulations for products such as hammocks or woven garden furniture. Urban and indoor gardens are a rising trend among EU consumers.
Mats	If the mats are for tabletop use, must be food safe. Sierra Leone's tradition of plaited palm and woven baskets lends itself to floor mats, as well as placemats and runners.
Fashion Accessories "Several factors determine the quality of accessories from the perspective of European consumers, including performance, reliability and durability. For accessories, quality is determined in terms of the quality and standard of the material, color-fastness, surface designs and final finish . . . the consumption of fashion accessories is growing when apparel consumption in general is contracting." ⁴⁰	
Footwear (raffia)	EU has definitive labelling requirements ⁴¹ CITES restrictions apply to grasses used in fashion accessories. Accurate sizing, and quality construction are essential. Raffia sandals and slides would sell into casual urban or resort niche markets. Handmade shoes are a growing trend.
Belts	Restrictions on lead, cadmium and arsenic in dyes. It is important that dyes are colourfast. Beware that many metal components may have lead content. Woven and plaited raffia or other grasses used in belts appeal to the same niche markets above plus the general fashion accessories market.
Bags	The greatest market expectation is good design. Dyes must be colourfast. Construction must be durable, particularly the handles. Clutches, totes, small purses, market bags, and more are all possible with woven or plaited grasses. Beware that metal zippers, snaps and buttons may contain lead. Ghana: The Bolga Baskets fall into numerous categories, including totes and market bags. Sierra Leone: The potential is enormous for Sierra Leone to develop numerous types of bags using the various techniques and grasses at its disposal.
Jewellery	All food safe regulations apply. Raffia and woven jewellery is a budding niche market and Sierra Leone, with the proper product development, could be a leader in this niche.
Production	
Design	Good design sells products and leads to greater exports. The basketry and woven grasses sector has enormous potential and can appeal to many market strata, from mass-market to luxury. It fits perfectly into the EU interest in the environment and sustainability as well as the natural/rustic aesthetic that is a global trend.
Quality Control	Quality Management systems are a particular problem in the basket value chain as most

⁴⁰ https://www.cbi.eu/sites/default/files/market_information/researches/product-factsheet-europe-fashion-accessories-2016.pdf

⁴¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3AI21209>

	<p>of the production is done in the villages, often far from the capital where the buyer agents and exporters reside, making implementing a quality management system even more difficult and costly.</p> <p>As quality control and assurance is important to the professional handicraft buyer, the ISO 9001:2015⁴² document could be useful to the more developed SMEs. ISO certification for quality management is valuable for larger businesses, it will matter less to handicraft buyers.</p> <p>Ghana: The basket value chain is comprised of reps in the Bolgatanga region. These reps could be trained in quality management systems and methodologies, along with partnering exporters.</p> <p>As Sierra Leone has emerging entrepreneurs who are beginning to work in the villages, early training in quality management would set up the system right from the beginning.</p> <p>Good quality management is a key issue for buyers. Producers pay a steep price for poor quality management in the expensive charge-backs for poorly made products and can render a major order a loss rather than profit making.</p>
Social Standards	<p>Fair Trade embraces the key social standards including child labour, compensation, working conditions, and labour regulations.</p> <p>Fair Trade carries great weight in the EU market and adds value. The Fair Trade Certification mark will increase sales not only to Fair Trade certified buyers but also to all buyers because the EU consumer is highly fair trade conscious.</p> <p>Fair Trade Certification can be a lengthy and costly process. It is best for an association to apply for the entire membership and spread costs among members.</p>
Transport	
Labelling	<p>All packages must have the weight indicated on the outer pack. A certificate of origin must accompany all shipments. Products are not required to have country of origin label as in the US.</p> <p>Buyers may want product labelling that can include their local, product, producer, or country information to personalize the product and make it more consumer appealing.</p> <p>Buyers may have “inner” and “outer” packs for which they will want specific labelling. They will convey this in advance.</p>
Packaging	<p>There are strict EU regulations regarding wood or organic packing materials. Ghana has traditionally used cardboard and non-organic materials for packing. It is best to avoid wood, straw or other organic material for packing.</p>
Moisture	<p>It is important that basketry does not mould in transport. Though not a Specification, it is a market expectation.</p> <p>Desiccant products are essential in keeping a container dry of container sweat. Manufacturers will specify quantity needed per container size. It is advisable to put them inside the baskets and packing boxes as well.</p> <p>NOTE: Desiccant products that contain dimethylfumarate (DMFU) are banned in the EU.</p>
Fumigation	<p>Although fumigation is not required, it is highly suggested.</p> <p>Only a certified company can offer a fumigation certification.</p> <p>Basketry products as well as packing materials can contain mites or other insects.</p>

⁴² http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso_9000.htm

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