

# EU ACP Technical Assistance to Overcome Technical Barriers to Trade

Lessons learnt from the Final Evaluation

**The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Programme** is a EUR 15 million, demand-driven, trade-related technical assistance facility covering the period 2013-2017. It is funded by the European Union (EU) at the request of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and has been instrumental to the targeting of TBT issues in ACP countries, the strengthening of Quality and Regulatory Infrastructure (Q&RI) in compliance with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) TBT Agreement, and the addressing of quality-related market access constraints among productive sectors.



**TBT PROGRAMME**  
OVERCOMING TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE



# The TBT Programme at a Glance

**The Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Programme** is a joint initiative of the European Union (EU) and the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group. The Programme aims to respond to the need to actively involve ACP countries in improving their capacity to address Quality and Regulatory Infrastructure (Q&RI) and TBT-related issues based on self-identification of the needs of regional stakeholders and Q&RI beneficiaries. The Programme has run from 2013 to 2017 and received a contribution of EUR 15 million from the intra-ACP envelope of the 10th European Development Fund (EDF).

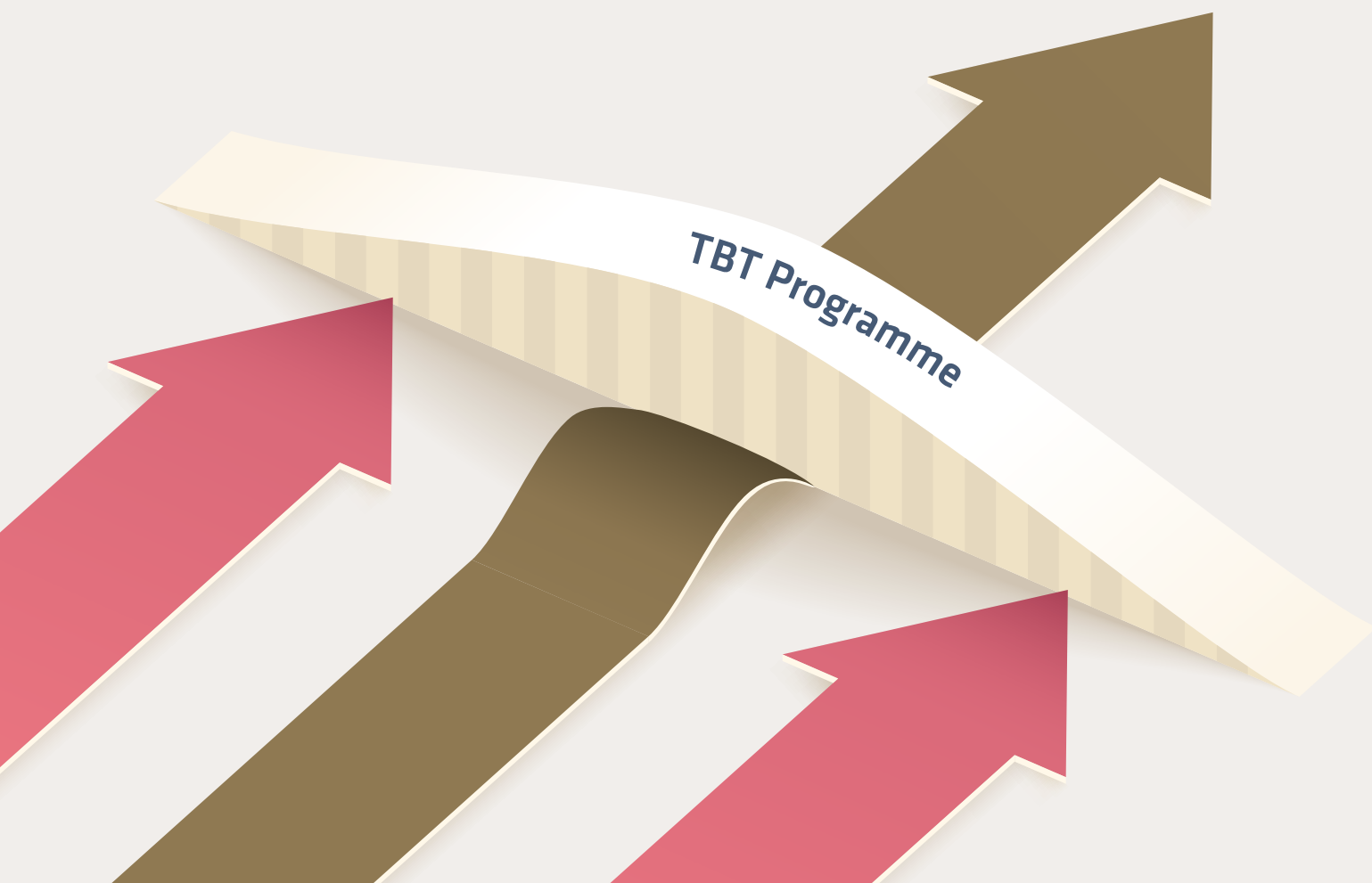
The Programme's objective at the highest level was **to increase competitiveness on local, regional and export markets by enhancing the export capacity of economic operators** and at specific level, to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries and regions to comply with TBT on external markets as well as to enforce legitimate and adequately harmonised TBT on internal markets while taking advantage of the existing World Trade Organisation (WTO) TBT Agreement.

The Programme had 3 expected results:

1. Enhanced capacity of regional and continental quality and regulatory infrastructure (Q&RI) institutions;
2. Improved capacity of economic operators to comply with Technical Regulations; and
3. Dissemination of results and experiences to improve capacity to provide support at intra-ACP level.

The Programme has been implemented by the ACP Secretariat with the assistance of a Programme Management Unit (PMU) and guided by a Steering Committee, which comprised members from the ACP Secretariat, the EU and continental/regional Q&RI organisations such as the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), the Intra-Africa Metrology System (AFRIMETS), the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

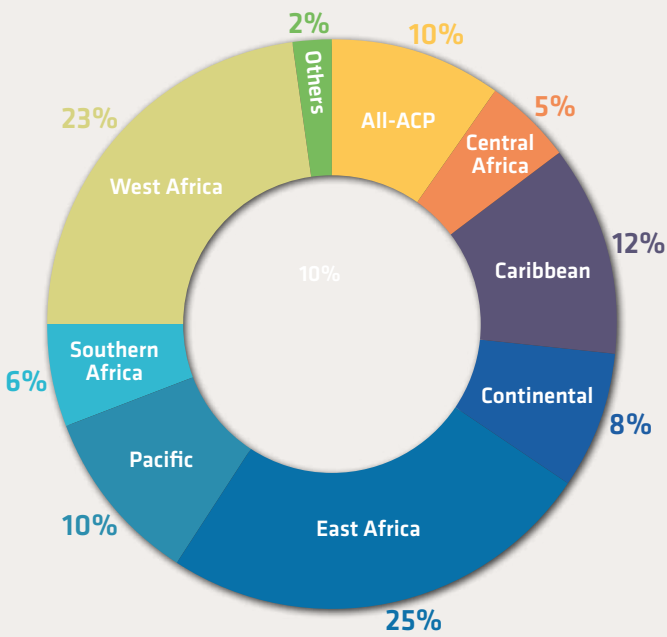
For more information see: [www.acp-eu-tbt.org](http://www.acp-eu-tbt.org)



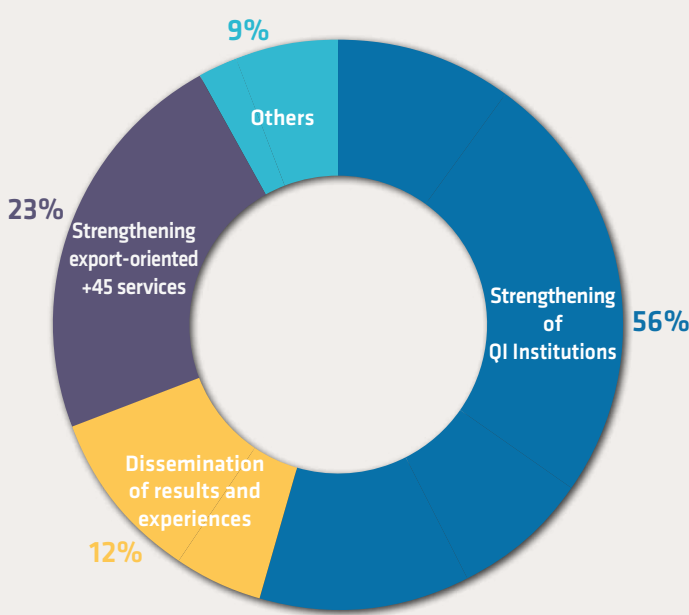


# Outreach in Numbers

Projects' geographical distribution



Projects by area of support





# The Programme Results in Figures

<b>1. Upgrading &amp; Strengthening Q&amp;RI Institutions</b>	Q&RI policies (national and regional) drafted	4
	Technical contributions to Q&RI policy elaborated	50
	Q&RI institutional capacity-strengthening programmes delivered	48
	Items of Q&RI-related legislation drafted	11
	Training platforms developed	4
	Training seminars organised	130
	Participants that have benefited from training programmes	2,474
	New or revised standards developed/improved	32
	Cases of compliance with standards addressed	15
	Laboratories coached to develop action plans toward accreditation	79
	Accreditations achieved (e.g. of laboratories)	4
	Participants supported to increase ACP participation in WTO TBT fora	30
	Meetings supported to increase ACP participation in WTO TBT fora	10
<b>2. Empowering Economic Operators and Export Sectors</b>	Trainers trained for SME support	139
	Participants that have benefited from SME quality management training	224
	SMEs coached to develop action plans toward certification	162
	SMEs that have obtained internationally recognised certification	4
<b>3. Disseminating Results and Experiences</b>	Seminars/Events	52
	Publications	907
	Number of outputs uploaded online	100





# Good Practices of the TBT Programme

## Strong demand-driven approach

The Programme work plan was directly derived from the screening of requests. The TBT Programme worked with the beneficiaries to translate requests for support into coherent projects approved by the Steering Committee. The latter benefited from the valuable participation of key stakeholders from the three ACP regions, including continental/regional Q&RI organisations such as ARSO, CROSQ and the PIFS.

## Synergies and complementarities with specialised TA providers

The Programme has benefited from regular interaction with and the involvement of a number of organisations with long-standing experience in supporting national and regional Q&RI, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the German Metrology Institute (PTB), the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP) and the TradeCom II Programme, among others. EU Delegations were also regularly consulted to avoid duplication, to help align the interventions of the TBT Programme with national and regional policies and to explore synergies with other past, on-going and planned initiatives on the ground.

## Short-term projects to trigger long-term responses

The implementation approach of Programme interventions was never meant to substitute on-going or planned efforts in the recipient countries and regions, but rather to focus on specific gaps to be bridged through specific responses that could trigger larger investments from both donors and the beneficiaries themselves. In a number of countries and regions, this has led to the mainstreaming of ACP-TBT results into the design of projects to be funded by larger Aid-for-Trade programmes.

## Flexible management approach

A wide range of ACP- and EU-based skilled service providers selected through competitive tendering were fully committed to delivering value for money to a variety of projects. In addition, the Programme operated through a rapid response facility capable of easily mobilising expertise through a pool of experts. Through these modalities, a dedicated Brussels-based PMU has ensured the effective and efficient use of resources. The implementation approach was revised in a number of cases (e.g. through extension of the work plans and/or the reallocation of inputs) to better suit the evolving needs of the project in line with beneficiary expectations.

## Focus on sectors of high economic importance to ACP countries

A wave of projects has directly or indirectly targeted sectors of high economic value and potential for ACP countries. Even where the private sector has not been a direct beneficiary, initiatives have contributed to improving the performance of Q&RI at different levels and enabling it to deliver improved services to the private sector in key economic sectors. Examples of targeted sectors are diverse and include (among others) African traditional medicine, agri-food products, fisheries, light manufacturing and handicrafts. Economic diversification is a key development goal of the ACP Group and the TBT Programme has made a significant contribution toward sustaining the efforts of both public and private ACP stakeholders in this direction.

## Merging of projects with clear international and inter-regional dimensions

The TBT Programme has been quick to learn that the numerous requests for assistance received from diverse beneficiaries could be of greater value added if combined into coherent international and inter-regional interventions. In a number of cases, this helped to pool resources for greater efficiency, foster collaboration at different levels of a range of value chains, consolidate knowledge networks and share expertise. In addition it contributed to making ACP-level interventions more visible and relevant, which was particularly helpful in filling gaps and complementing efforts undertaken by ACP Members to solve common challenges.



## ...and Some Lessons Learnt

After four years of implementation, a number of issues have emerged and remain crucial to the improvement of future ACP-level trade-related interventions. It is thus important to:

- a. Recognise the centrality of the beneficiary in initiating requests and owning project results. Greater focus should be placed on the design phase of project interventions which should include exhaustive gap analysis and needs assessments and should take care to avoid standardised approaches and “one-size-fits-all” solutions in order to maximise ownership and sustainability;
- b. Promote partnerships with specialised TA providers to foster complementarity of interventions. The key to this process is to harness the power of local experts by twinning them with international experts;
- c. Avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary delays by developing templates to inform beneficiaries of the project financial and administrative measures in place;
- d. Exploit the potential of online means and cost-effective solutions to enhance the visibility of ACP stakeholders and disseminate project results to wider audiences; and
- e. Elaborate and define roles to sustain project outcomes through an Exit Strategy which is clearly defined and agreed when the project is designed and fine-tuned during project implementation.

**In the area of Q&RI**, it was found that when dealing with standardisation, extending support to areas such as legal drafting could increase the effectiveness of the intervention. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that the accreditation of laboratories and other bodies takes time and demands long-standing commitment by the beneficiary to maintaining the accreditation. This has to be duly factored in when designing interventions.

**In the area of productive sector support**, and particularly when targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for assistance with obtaining internationally recognised certification, selection criteria should clearly factor in financial readiness and sustainability, managerial commitment and leadership, networking ability and other relevant and clearly selective criteria (depending on the project). Focusing on all segments of the value chain (by associating beneficiaries from different countries who operate at different levels of the chain) has also been recognised as a successful factor in further increasing the effectiveness of interventions that target productive sectors.

**In the area of results dissemination and knowledge sharing**, effectiveness is demonstrated when projects clearly assist beneficiaries to learn from one another and scale up cooperation to set up and improve new and specialised networks, especially those that can in turn trigger increased political weight by speaking with a common ACP voice across regions. It is also worth recalling that the allocation of resources and time for results dissemination should be carefully planned by incorporating modern means of collaboration and communication including digital platforms and solutions, while also capitalising on inexpensive means of dissemination (such as the local press in beneficiary countries).

*“When it comes to quality, the enterprise does not compromise. Indeed, at this point in time the company is preparing to finalise its certification process and it is expected that sound quality management will tremendously enhance the competitiveness of the company on the global market.”*

*Venkateswaran C. Iyer,  
General Manager of McDan Shipping Company  
Limited, Ghana branch*



# A Stronger and More Competitive ACP Quality and Regulatory Infrastructure

## A stronger voice of ACP countries at the WTO TBT Committee and international fora

The TBT Programme was instrumental in organising efforts by the ACP Group, through the ACP Geneva Office, to strengthen the ability of ACP Members to participate in the multilateral trading system. By mobilising capital-based TBT experts and Delegates to Geneva and through training and technical assistance (TA) provided by the TBT Programme, the ACP Group has been able to bring additional technical expertise and step up its informed and effective participation in the work of WTO TBT Committees and at the 7th WTO TBT Triennial Review. The support received helped to establish an informal network of ACP-TBT experts,

which in turn translated into improved capacity to coordinate positions, get involved in networking and increase the visibility of the ACP region when speaking with a common voice.

Undoubtedly, **the support provided to ARSO and CROSQ to obtain WTO observer status marked a key achievement for these regional/continental ACP Q&RI institutions, which are now an established part of the international standardisation architecture** with increased incentive to act on an international level and to make regional ACP views better known in multilateral fora.

## Better coordinated Q&RI support at regional and continental level

While recognising that significant programmes are implemented at continental and regional level through long-term TA programmes, the TBT Programme has the merit to provide flexible support and bridge gaps that can be best addressed as part of an all-ACP vision.

In Africa, the TBT Programme has closely worked with ARSO in line with its mandate within the Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI) on a number of issues and particularly on the **development of African Standards for Traditional Medicine**, a sector with tremendous economic potential for the whole continent. In addition, the TBT Programme has joined efforts with the African Electrotechnical Standardisation Commission (AFSEC) to identify priorities for the harmonisation of standards and conformity assessment practices. To this end, an **online database of African Electrotechnical Standards** was prepared and efforts are on-going within the PAQI to boost the uptake of such standards by AFSEC Members. Furthermore, **targeted support has been provided to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in relation to their Q&RI mandate**. In the case of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), a comprehensive Standards and Quality Assurance plan was updated with clear sectors identified.

In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS)/TBT implications of the SADC-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) were carefully assessed. In West Africa, the TBT Programme supported the convening of a regional workshop in cooperation with UNIDO to strengthen metrology capacities in the region.

In the Caribbean, the TBT Programme has helped to **establish a Special TBT Committee for CROSQ and to operationalise an Information Management Systems and Enquiry Point (TIE)**. The committee will function as a platform for communication, coordination and cooperation between Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries on TBT issues with particular regard to the WTO, but also to the ACP Group and other fora.

The TBT Programme has contributed to the revamping of discussions as regards a sound regional Q&RI in the Pacific Region through substantive work carried out in the Kava sector. Based on TBT Programme support, CODEX formally launched the eWorking Group on Kava for North America and the South-West Pacific (coordinated by Vanuatu) with the target of achieving compliance with standards by 2020.



## Streamlined national Q&RIs: bridging the gap between trade policy and Q&RI objectives

In more than 30 countries, national Q&RIs have been strengthened through targeted support provided by the TBT Programme.

National Quality Policies have been developed/improved in a number of countries such as Botswana, Comoros, Senegal, Zambia and Kiribati among others. **In Kiribati, a National Quality Policy has been adopted by the Government in 2017** and the recommendations therein are being considered for implementation to strengthen the national Q&RI.

Streamlining of the development of national standards and technical regulations in line with international norms is a core area of the assistance provided by the TBT Programme. In Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, training in how to formulate technical regulations and reference standards has allowed the National Standardisation Bodies to appreciate the advantages and practise the application of Good Regulatory Practices and Regulatory Impact Assessment tools. In Senegal a national database of standards has been upgraded and existing standards for water in plastic bags and cement reviewed and improved in order to strengthen national certification procedures. Other Q&RI institutions such as National Accreditation Bodies and Metrology Institutes have been strengthened in Kenya, Mauritius, Samoa and

the Seychelles, among other countries. In Kenya, support to the Kenyan Bureau of Standards (KEBS) and the Kenya Accreditation Service (KENAS) led to the **successful completion by 12 laboratories of an inter-comparison scheme for high-precision calibration laboratories.**

Sensitisation workshops on the functioning of the WTO TBT Agreement have been organised in more than 10 countries. In most cases these occasions were highly appreciated by private sector actors who were essentially given a platform for communication with their respective national Q&RI institutions and enabled to raise concerns related to TBT and compliance with market access requirements. National TBT Enquiry Points have also been strengthened in a number of countries (such as Haiti and the Gambia) to increase transparency. The use of online tools was promoted to manage national notifications, notably in Uganda where the **feasibility of an online TBT Information Management Portal was studied and the Government of Uganda is exploring implementation options.** National TBT Committees have also received useful advice that has enabled them to play a more proactive role in national Q&RIs, thus enabling better compliance with the provisions of the WTO TBT Agreement.





# A Better Equipped ACP Private Sector to Comply with International Market Access Quality Requirements

## Preparing SMEs to apply for internationally recognised certification schemes

The TBT Programme has accompanied and **coached over 160 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to prepare for compliance with internationally recognised product quality and management system certification schemes** such as GLOBALGAP, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), ISO 9001 and others. Both the content of and approach to the delivery of such programmes were developed in consultation with the beneficiaries (mainly Business Support Organisations) and careful selection of SMEs was made with the support of local and international expertise. Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes were often used to leverage a multiplier effect and enhance the sustainability of the knowledge transferred to local intermediary organisations. Some examples are as follows:

- In the Dominican Republic, successful collaboration with COLEACP prepared 6 pineapple producers' farms, including two packing houses, for compliance with GLOBALGAP certification requirements;
- Support to the promotion of quality certification schemes by the Caribbean Agri-Business Association (CABA) benefited 10 SMEs in

5 Caribbean countries (Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Vincent, Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica). In synergy with another ACP institution (the CTA), the TBT Programme successfully combined export quality management with the coaching and training of SMEs with the objective of fostering linkages between local agri-food producers and the international tourism industry (including hotels). Among the 10 supported SMEs, 2 Jamaica-based companies have acquired certification-based ISO standards while the other firms have integrated certification applications into their business plans;

- In Rwanda, support to farmers in the horticultural sector sparked interest in GLOBALGAP certification in a country that has yet to certify any companies to this private voluntary standard. At least 3 horticultural firms are now willing to embark on the process; and
- Public and private sector operators in selected Pacific countries have benefited from awareness-raising workshops to foster the implementation of regional **eco-labelling schemes in the fisheries trade sector**. In addition, 17 SMEs were accompanied in Fiji and Tonga to assist companies, mainly in the horticulture business, to meet compliance requirements for GLOBALGAP and HACCP.





## Promotion of valuable economic sectors for ACP sustainable development


While exports to the EU from the ACP group of countries have globally deteriorated over the last five years (mainly due to the decline in fuels and minerals), new positive trends have emerged in other sectors, especially those related to agri-food products and fisheries. **The TBT Programme has significantly invested in the promotion of quality and private sector compliance (particularly in primary food products)** with direct support provided to companies willing to commit to the long and resource-intensive

certification process, thereby improving access to high-value markets such as the EU. Such support has contributed to sustaining the **21% increase in food imports from ACP countries into the EU and in turn, to building trust in products exported by ACP producers**. In addition to highly relevant economic sectors, the TBT Programme has directed support toward niche sectors with high social return (such as the handicraft sectors of Ghana and Sierra Leone and tanners in East Africa).

## New Quality and Regulatory Infrastructure (Q&RI)-related services available to the private sector

The TBT Programme places strong emphasis on building the capacities of the institutions providing most-wanted services to SMEs (such as conformity assessment services) which are internationally recognised. As such a range of **public and private testing and metrology laboratories have been strengthened, their gaps assessed and corrective action plans drafted, most often with the objective of achieving accreditation**. In the countries that expressed strong commitment to prompt implementation of their action plans such commitment has borne fruit; e.g. in Zambia, Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS) Testing Laboratories

have been recently accredited by the SADC Accreditation Service (SADCAS) for the chemical analysis of potable water and animal feed and the physical testing of latex condoms. In Côte d'Ivoire, the staff at the National Testing and Metrology Laboratory (LANEMA) are ready to apply for accreditation of their mass, temperature and volume laboratories thanks to training received from the TBT Programme, which has enabled them to review some of their internal procedures. A private laboratory (VAGNY Lab) has managed to secure accreditation by the Tunisian National Accreditation Council (TUNAC) following the receipt of support.



*"Thanks to the accreditation of the microbiology laboratory supported by the TBT Programme, the company has attracted more stable contracts with big clients, some of which are export-oriented, and an increase in turnover of over 25% is generated by the increased demand for laboratory services. This has contributed to making the company more creditworthy and capable of sustaining new investments through borrowed capital, which has helped the company to acquire an advanced Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer."*

Mr Atta Kouadio,  
CEO of VAGNY Lab, Côte d'Ivoire



# Connecting the A, C and P to Enhance Capabilities for Knowledge Sharing and Policy Dialogue

The TBT Programme has consistently supported the ACP Group to act as a distinctive inter-governmental and inter-regional entity, with clear value added by the bridging of knowledge gaps, the sharing of experiences and the dissemination of good practices.

Relying on the use of modern Information Technology and learning environments, CROSQ and AFRIMETS now cooperate to offer an E-learning training course in Legal Metrology, while the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC) is now proposing an E-learning programme in accreditation to its Members on the African continent. These self-study programmes allow learners to acquire knowledge and complete each course at their own pace and from anywhere in the world. The modules provide ample information, reading material and video interviews and upon the successful completion of each course, learners receive certification which is an essential pre-requisite for other more specialised courses. The two online

training programmes can be accessed through the following links:

<http://lms.oiml.org/login/index.php>

<http://afracelearning.onlinecf.net/login/index.php>

Greater visibility of the ACP Group has also been achieved thanks to the **synergy achieved by the participation of several all-ACP facilities (such as the TBT Programme, TradeCom II and the CTA)** in the organisation of High-Level Panels at two flagship policy dialogue events (the European Development Days 2016 and 2017 held in Brussels and the quadrennial United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Ministerial Conference in Nairobi). Issues such as the “blue economy”, agricultural trade/food standards, trade and investment, inclusive trade for Africa and the 2030 Sustainable Development Outcomes were among the topics debated during the events, which are at the heart of the development agenda of the ACP Group.



*The African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) and CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Nairobi “TBT Good Practices Dissemination Workshop” in January 2017 to establish greater cooperation in the field of standardisation and quality on the basis of international principles and regulations. The parties are thus committed to ensuring that their standardisation programmes and activities facilitate regional and international trade.*

## Sharing TBT good practices

In January 2017, a stock-taking exercise held in Nairobi brought together a variety of African, Caribbean and Pacific stakeholders to discuss and **share experiences of successful good practices in the addressing of TBT that could be learnt from the TBT Programme and replicated in other ACP initiatives.** This Knowledge Management exercise has found four relevant clusters around which a series of case studies have been developed, namely in the areas of Q&RI, Standardisation, Certification and Accreditation, and Training. As a result of this

insightful experience, ARSO and CROSQ have signed an MoU for the establishment of greater cooperation in the inter-regional dissemination of good practices. At the same time, a repository of valuable technical documentation and Programme outputs has been made publicly available through the TBT Programme website and Capacity4Dev online platform, which can be found at:

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/tbtprogramme/minisite/about-us>



# Conclusions and Recommendations from the Final Evaluation

## The Final Evaluation of the TBT Programme has in general concluded that:

- **Relevance:** The TBT Programme was sufficiently relevant to respond to some of the most stringent challenges faced by developing ACP economies and economic operators in their quest to successfully sell products on markets in the region, the EU and beyond. It targeted problems through the demand-driven approach which allowed the beneficiaries to develop projects;
- **Efficiency:** Most of the projects have been implemented on time and were efficient, despite some delays being encountered in the tendering-related phases. In general, they delivered value for money and the sense of ownership of the process by the beneficiaries has contributed to making the results more sustainable;
- **Effectiveness:** Most of the projects implemented under the Programme were successful in effectively implementing their project activities and in delivering results. Capacity building and advisory services were in general very positively received by the beneficiaries, particularly at the level of Q&RI enhancement and support to productive sectors;
- **Impact:** The nature of impact of the overall Programme in terms of strengthened capacity varies according to the type of beneficiary (Q&RI institution or private economic operator). However, the two impacts reinforce each other as strengthened Q&RI institutions attract more companies while companies which are well informed as regards TBT create the need for strengthening of the institutions. In the long term, this should increase the export potential of ACP economies and in turn contribute to sustainable development;
- **Sustainability:** The quality of services delivered to the ACP countries and regions implies that some knowledge is retained and that some of the tools, regulations and reforms proposed will be used beyond the duration of the Programme. In a number of cases, there is evidence that these have already attracted further commitments.

## A broad set of recommendations has been developed, which can be summarised in a few key points:

- **Tackling TBT issues from the demand side** is recommended to encourage the **private sector** to make increased use of the 'strengthened' quality and regulatory institutions. If these institutions can attract more companies to their services, companies will simultaneously be encouraged to take advantage of the wide array of services on offer;
- **Improved use of the skills available at key EU and EU Member State institutions** should still be pursued as a principle by other similar projects and should be acted upon more rigorously. The transfer of knowledge and experience should be facilitated by the ACP Secretariat or delegated to a management unit. In this regard a list of key EU institutions should first be identified and a few subsequently chosen based on agreed criteria;
- **Improved regional collaboration and cooperation** to enable the exploitation of synergies and potential for regional trade in order to develop the competitiveness of economic operators should be an objective. Experience should be shared not only between EU and ACP countries and regions, but also among ACP countries and regions; and
- **Implementation modalities should be anticipated from the design phase.** To overcome the lengthy and numerous tendering procedures required for relatively small project interventions, different modalities should be explored including the possible decentralisation of expertise to a level closer to the ACP direct beneficiaries and/or the use of management arrangements with a reduced procedural burden at the level of each intervention.

For more information on programme results see:

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/tbtprogramme/wiki/tbt-programme-selected-outputs>