

# Support to Trade Agreements with Africa

Appui aux accords commerciaux avec l'Afrique (AACA)



NEWSLETTER

February 2024



Implemented by



In cooperation with





## Actualité

The Guided Trade Initiative



## Areas of intervention

- 1 – Support to the AfCFTA negotiation
- 2 - Support for the establishment of the prerequisites of the COMESA and AfCFTA Agreements
- 3 - Raising awareness among the private sector about the agreements and their implementation tools



## Project organisation and management

1-Technical Committee

 Hello !



*Dear colleagues, dear partners, dear readers,*

*As we begin this new edition of our newsletter, we are delighted to share with you the significant progress made by the Support for Trade Agreements with Africa project. The last few months have been marked by close collaboration with our partners, punctuated by training courses and practical workshops aimed at exploring the challenges and opportunities associated with trade agreements on the African continent.*

*Our efforts are now bearing fruit with the successful implementation of the AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative in Tunisia, an achievement that testifies to the commitment and determination of everyone involved. We look forward to continuing this fruitful collaboration in the New Year, with the shared aim of promoting and supporting intra-African trade.*

***Lisa Menucha***

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# News





## Tunisia begins trade under the AfCFTA



On 25 May, coinciding with Africa Day, the first shipment under the AfCFTA successfully made its way to Cameroon, heralding a new era of South-South cooperation and a major step forward in economic integration between African countries.

This first successful experience of exporting under the "Guided Trade" initiative, with the AfCFTA preferential rate, initially attracted the interest of 10 Tunisian companies to take advantage of the benefits of this agreement by exporting with AfCFTA certificates of origin.

Up to October 2023, 19 export operations to Ghana, Cameroon and Tanzania have been carried out by Tunisian companies covering various sectors such as construction, agri-food and the chemical industry, with a reduction in customs rates thanks to the application of the AfCFTA Agreement.

To date, 37 AfCFTA certificates of origin have been issued by Tunisia's chambers of commerce and industry.



# Areas of intervention





## 1 AfCFTA negotiation



### Activities in progress

- Support to negotiate and implement Phase II of the AfCFTA
- Support for "Trade in Services" (TiS) regulations
- Support for "Trade in Goods" (TiG) regulations



## Areas of intervention

1 – AfCFTA negotiation



## Support to negotiate and implement Phase II of the AfCFTA

### Consultation workshop on the 5 protocols of phase II of the AfCFTA



On 25 October 2023, a consultation workshop was held to discuss the five (5) protocols of phase II of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement.

This event brought together the focal points responsible for negotiating these protocols, as well as representatives of the private sector. During the workshop, the focal points presented the latest versions of the draft protocols currently being negotiated, as well as the protocols already adopted for phase II of the AfCFTA.

Discussions focused on the key role played by the private sector in these negotiations, as well as Tunisia's position in relation to the resolutions of these protocols.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- To brief private and public sector representatives on the latest rounds of negotiations under Phase II of the AfCFTA.
- Facilitate a debate between private and public sector representatives on issues related to transparency, quantitative restrictions and discrimination as addressed by the protocols of phase II of the AfCFTA..





## 2 The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Activities in progress

- Support to coordinate and institutionalize the AfCFTA in Tunisia
- Identification of promising value chains in relation to the AfCFTA
- Support to Chambers of Commerce – Training on AfCFTA, Rules of Origin, Digitalisation of RO Rules of Origin
- Customs Support - AfCFTA, Rules of Origin, Tariff Classification, Trade
- Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation project in Tunisia with the Customs Authorities on anticipated decision





## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Institutionalisation of the AfCFTA National Committee in Tunisia: First meeting of the AfCFTA national committee



On 14 December 2023, under the aegis of Ms Lamia Abrouk, Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Trade and Export Development, the first meeting of the National Committee responsible for negotiating and monitoring the implementation of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was held.

The Committee comprises representatives from the public and private sectors. A presentation was made on the most important provisions of the Agreement, highlighting the mechanisms and privileges it grants to economic operators, the extent of the progress made in bringing the Agreement into force and guaranteeing the activation of all its provisions, as well as listing the cooperation projects available to support Tunisia in negotiating and implementing the Agreement.

It was also agreed at this meeting to set up five working teams according to the topics under negotiation and according to the priority sectors of the AfCFTA General Secretariat, such as the textile, clothing, automotive components and services sectors, including a working team concerned with monitoring the implementation of the project to rehabilitate the Ras Jdir border post as part of its upgrading and the objective of making it a gateway to Africa



## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Support for customs: Tunisia's customs directorate commits to implementing the AfCFTA and COMESA agreements



Two awareness-raising conferences on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement for the benefit of its executives and customs officers were organised in Tunis on 06.05.2023 and RAS JDIR on 05.07.2023, under the theme: "Accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA in Tunisia: What is the role of customs?".

These events were part of the finalisation, on 6 April 2023, of all the legal procedures and technical conditions necessary for the Tunisian side to begin commercial operations under the AfCFTA Agreement. These awareness-raising conferences, attended by nearly 200 officers, were also an opportunity to :

- Highlight the role of public institutions in developing exports to Africa. Raise awareness among customs officials of the specifics of the AfCFTA and their role in its implementation.
- Promote the DGD's capacity-building activities
- Promote the results achieved with the support of the AACA project.
- Encourage the creation of synergies and exchanges between public and private sector players.

For more information : [Conférence de sensibilisation de la Direction générale des douanes sur l'Accord instituant la Zone de libre échange continentale africaine \(ZLECAF\) à Tunis le 06.05.2023 et Ras Jdir 05.07.2023.](#) | [Accords Commerciaux avec l'Afrique \(africatradeagreements.tn\)](#)





## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Support for customs: Launch of a specific training program on AfCFTA and COMESA rules of origin: 50 officers from the Directorate General of Customs trained



As part of the Support for Trade Agreements with Africa project in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Export Development (MCDE) and the Directorate General of Customs (DGD), four (4) national intermediate and advanced training workshops on the AfCFTA and COMESA rules of origin in Sfax and Tunis from 12 to 21 October 2023 and Djerba and Tunis from 11 to 16 December 2023 were organised, with the participation of some fifty (50) customs officers from different units and regional directorates.

During the workshops, participants worked on the key concepts of correct origin determination, related operational and procedural issues and the implementation of effective origin management. In addition, the trainers, Customs Colonel Major Mohamed Rabie Belhadj, Director of the Origin Directorate within the General Directorate of Customs, and International Expert Stefan Moser, commissioned by GIZ-Tunisia, presented the guidelines on certification of origin, verification of preferential origin, risk assessment and risk management. Participants also discussed specific points such as certification, verification and administrative cooperation.

At the end of these courses, a group of 10 to 12 trained origin experts will be selected to follow a training of trainers' course starting in January 2024.





## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Support for customs: Capacity-building in tariff classification: The World Alliance for Trade Facilitation and the World Customs Organization are supporting Tunisian customs in capacity-building in tariff classification: **25 certified customs officers**



In cooperation with the World Customs Organisation (WCO), two sessions of intermediate and advanced training in the harmonised system for Tunisian Customs officials were held in Tunis from 23 to 27 October 2023 and from 11 to 15 December 2023.

The training courses enabled customs officials to deepen their understanding of the harmonised system in preparation for the implementation of the advance ruling mechanism.

The implementation of the "advance ruling" aims to improve transparency and predictability for economic operators and to reduce differences concerning tariff classification.



## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Support for Chambers of Commerce and Industry - Training on the AfCFTA and COMESA Agreements, Rules of Origin, Digitalisation of the issue of Certificates of Origin (e-CO)



At the request of the Tunisian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the competent authorities in Tunisia for issuing AfCFTA and COMESA certificates of origin, the Ministry of Trade and Export Development (MCDE), with the support of GIZ-Tunisia, organised a series of national training workshops for the Chambers and member economic operators.

Their aim was twofold: on the one hand, to strengthen the authorities' skills in issuing certificates of origin, and on the other, to encourage dialogue between the various stakeholders, particularly enterprises, to understand and tackle the practical challenges of certification of origin. These workshops aim to:

- Increase the use of tariff preferences under these agreements.
- Strengthen expertise in issuing and control issues, post-verification of proofs of origin, and knowledge of cooperation with other customs administrations.
- Facilitate and improve compliance with RoO requirements and identify new export opportunities and the development of regional value chains.
- Contribute to the implementation of the AfCFTA and COMESA Agreements in Tunisia.





## Areas of intervention

2 - The prerequisites and conditions of use of the AfCFTA / COMESA are put in place



### Public-private dialogue as part of the negotiation and implementation process

#### Thematic PPD workshop on the institutional framework of the FTAA and its good governance practices

On 06 June 2023, a thematic public-private dialogue workshop was held on good practice in institutional governance. During this session, the composition of the Tunisian National Committee of the African Continental Free Trade Area was examined in collaboration with the various stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

A comparative continental analysis of national committees in other AfCFTA member states was presented and discussed, providing an initial basis for reflection on the composition of the Tunisian National Committee.

Several recommendations emerged from this session, including the need for :

- Regular consultations: The Committee should organise regular consultations with relevant stakeholders, including private sector representatives, civil society organisations, trade experts and Member State governments
- Monitoring implementation: The Committee should establish a monitoring mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the actions undertaken.
- Capacity building: It is crucial to strengthen the skills and knowledge of public and private sector actors to ensure mutual understanding and more effective collaboration.



## Areas of intervention



### 3 The private sector is sensitized on the agreements and their implementation tools



#### Activities in progress

- Development of strategies, materials and website feed, to raise awareness on the AfCFTA and COMESA agreements
- Communication and outreach activities

#### Planned activities

- Awareness and popularization of the implementation tools of the of the agreements to companies (PAPSS, RO, ATO,...)



## Areas of intervention

3 - The private sector is sensitized on the agreements and their implementation tools



### 6th edition of the Financing Investment & Trade in Africa (FITA 2023) international conference: **Support for Africa Trade Agreements Panel on AfCFTA**



Under the High Patronage of His Excellency Mr. Kaïs Saïd, President of the Republic of Tunisia, represented by H.E. Mrs. Sihem Boughdiri, Minister of Finance, the 6th edition of the Financing Investment and Trade in Africa (FITA 2023) International Conference, held from 20 to 21 September 2023, hosted a unique panel on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) under the theme: "AfCFTA, the implementation phase of the agreement for Tunisia".

Moderated by Ms Amal Mghirbi, AACCA Team Leader, this panel provided an opportunity to take stock of Tunisia's negotiation and implementation of the Agreement, and in particular to retrace the steps involved in obtaining the first AfCFTA certificate of origin issued by the Tunis Chamber of Commerce and Industry to PROKIM for a shipment to Cameroon.

Mr Lazhar Bennour, Director General of Economic and Commercial Cooperation at the Ministry of Trade and Export Development, and Ms Najet Jouadi, Director General of Customs, were the main speakers on the panel, along with Mr Radhouane Mekrazi, Director of the Central Enterprises Assistance Department at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CCI Tunis, and Mr Bedis Keskes, representative of PROKIM..



## Areas of intervention

3 - The private sector is sensitized on the agreements and their implementation tools



### Completion of the ATO and ITC tool training series



Over the course of 2022 and 2023, the AACA project successfully orchestrated 10 training workshops in Tunis and the regions of Sfax and Monastir.

These training sessions were specifically designed to familiarise economic operators with the use of the ATO tool as well as other ITC tools, which are invaluable resources for exploring new markets, particularly in Africa, and within the framework of the AfCFTA.

A total of 231 participants from both the public and private sectors attended, demonstrating the level of commitment and interest in these capacity-building initiatives.

These workshops not only offered practical and operational skills, but also provided forums for the exchange of ideas and the creation of synergies that are essential for stimulating regional and continental economic growth.





# Project organisation and management





## Meeting of the AACA project technical committees

On 18 December, the two technical committees monitoring the activities of the AACA project met.

During this meeting, the AACA team and the various stakeholders had the opportunity to discuss the progress of the activities being carried out as part of this cooperation.

It was also an opportunity to bring together the various actors involved in the implementation of Trade Agreements with Africa, whether from the public or private sector, to discuss the next steps and possible challenges.

The fruitful exchanges helped to consolidate the links between the partners involved, reinforcing the cohesion necessary for the successful implementation of the COMESA and AfCFTA Agreements.

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