



Liberia's National Export Strategy

The International Trade Centre (ITC) has been assisting Liberia in developing its first-ever National Export Strategy (NES). The NES design process began in 2011. January 2014 marked a milestone in the form of technical validation by public and private-sector stakeholders, through a series of validation workshops. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and ITC Executive Director Arancha González are set to launch the NES during the MSME Conference to be held in Monrovia on 29–30 April 2014.

- ***For Liberia, by Liberians:*** The NES is the result of a country-owned and stakeholder-driven process, under the leadership of Liberia's Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) and with the technical guidance and overall project management of ITC. Comprehensive collaboration with public-sector stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and sector associations, constitutes the bedrock of the process. Civil-society organizations were also part of the consultative process.
- ***Timely:*** Extensive national-level efforts to stabilize infrastructure, institutions and the social fabric in the aftermath of Liberia's civil war have borne fruit. The country is now in a position to engage strategically with trade markets to further its development. In this regard, the NES is well-positioned and well-timed.
- ***Democratization of export culture:*** Historically, Liberia's growth has been fuelled by the commodity and extractive sectors, with the economy driven primarily by concessionaire-based activities. MSMEs, traditionally neglected, will play a crucial role in democratizing the benefits of an export culture in Liberia. The NES was designed to help infuse the fledgling MSME sector with wide-ranging technical, financial and human-capital support.
- ***Focus on rural development:*** The NES aims to help diversify economic activities to ensure greater in-country value, to increase the scope of smallholder activities and to improve livelihoods beyond Monrovia, traditionally the hub of the Liberian economy.
- ***Clear entry points for development partners:*** The NES delivers end-to-end value-chain analysis, providing a robust needs assessment that allows donors to select projects by time-frame or priority, to serve Liberia's development plans. Thus, the NES serves as a blueprint to coordinate and manage trade-related technical assistance.
- ***Gender and environment sensitive:*** Covering Liberia's priority export products, the NES aims to help Liberia improve gender equality, support environmental sustainability, improve regional integration and reduce poverty.

PRIORITY SECTORS

- Priority sectors to be developed under NES are cocoa; fish and crustaceans; oil palm, rubber and cassava.
- An earlier Sector Export Strategy on cassava, completed in 2010, has been brought under the overall NES.
- Work has begun on additional Sector Export Strategies for tourism and furniture, which are expected to boost the value-added components of the economy and contribute to job creation.

CROSS SECTORS

- Critical trade functions, the cross sectors covered by the NES, are arguably more important than individual sectors. Improvements in access to finance, quality management and trade facilitation and logistics will help develop export value chains beyond those in priority sectors to those in the broader economy.

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES TO STAKEHOLDERS

MSMEs	Policy makers	Liberian Institutions	Donors and Development Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realistic, implementable solutions that address root causes of weak export competitiveness. - Improved value-addition capabilities in the export sector. - Broad-ranging policy, institutional and technical support for exporters. - Cross-sector focus of the NES provides assistance beyond current priority sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder-driven model of the NES underlines country ownership. - Provides an instrument for reviewing and adapting national policies. - The NES is aligned with and builds upon existing national policies and development plans, thus ensuring coherence of future planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive assessment of the Trade Support Network (TSN), which is especially important in a post-conflict environment. - Close cooperation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policymaking bodies, • Business-services providers, and • Trade and technical-services providers. - The NES identified TSN redundancies and gaps, as well as solutions to deliver streamlined services to MSMEs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A robust needs assessment for development partners to ensure alignment with their Liberia-based programming. - Activities in each Plan of Action to be converted into projects to be implemented and supported by development partners. - Alignment with existing development activity is ensured and reflected in the Plans of Action of the sectors and cross sectors.

NEXT STEPS

- The NES will be formally launched at the April 2014 MSME Conference along with Liberia's national trade policy, which was designed in collaboration with ITC. The NES launch marks the end of the design stage and the beginning of the implementation stage.
- The Liberian Export Council, a public-private platform to promote exports and manage implementation of the NES, will be established with the assistance of ITC.
- Resource mobilization efforts are ongoing, with the MoCI and ITC working jointly to liaise with development partners and donors to define opportunities for collaboration.
- The five sectors prioritized by the NES will be complemented by Sector Strategies for tourism and furniture, which will contribute to job creation and value-added exports when implemented.

ITC EFFORTS IN LIBERIA

ITC has been working in Liberia since 2006, with projects such as the Liberia Export Development Project (2007–2010), Liberia's National Cassava Sector Strategy (2008–2011), Trade@Hand for Liberia's Market Women (2009–2011) and ACCESS! for Liberian businesswomen working in international markets (2009–2012).

In addition to the NES, ITC is currently providing advisory services to support the Liberian Government in devising a comprehensive strategy for World Trade Organization (WTO) accession as well as drafting a national trade policy that takes into consideration the country's bid for membership to the WTO and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Liberia focuses on WTO accession ahead of MSME Conference: <http://www.intracen.org/news/Liberia-focuses-on-WTO-accession-ahead-of-MSME-Conference/>
- Liberian Assistant Minister for Commerce and Trade on sector development and trade facilitation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi8PQ7ljf1U>
- ITC assists Liberia in developing its services sector: <http://www.intracen.org/news/ITC-assists-Liberia-in-developing-its-services-sector/>
- Liberia: trade-support building and WTO accession: <http://www.intracen.org/articles/Liberia-trade-support-building-and-WTO-accession/>
- MSME Conference 2014: http://www.moci.gov.lr/2content.php?s_sub=152&related=25&third=152&pg=sp