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## REGIONAL PARTNER IN ECONOMIC GROWTH: ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), founded in 1975, represents 15 West African member states. Its mission is to promote economic integration in "all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial, social, and cultural matters." ECOWAS undertakes an extensive range of work to coordinate policies, standards and systems across West Africa. USAID's partnership with ECOWAS aligns with the aims of the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative to combat global hunger, supporting countries to develop their own agriculture sector, along with their trade, environment and energy sectors, to generate opportunities for economic growth and investment.

### **AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT:**

The ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) is part of a larger structure of aligned agricultural plans for Africa under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development program. Initiated through ECOWAS and supported by USAID/West Africa (USAID/WA) and other development partners, ECOWAP objectives are to encourage competitiveness of farmers in intra-regional and international markets, further strengthen food security in the region, and ensure a living wage for workers in the agricultural sector.

USAID aligns its programs to achieve ECOWAP priorities by incorporating nutrition, risk management, climate change and resilience into the ECOWAP framework. USAID/WA helps build capacity to advocate for policies encouraging agricultural intensification, market regulation and social safety nets.

## **TRADE FACILITATION:**

ECOWAS fosters economic growth and poverty reduction through decreasing regional barriers to trade, such as impediments to goods crossing borders, inefficient transport corridors, and lack of access to power. It also works to standardize trade and border policies in all member countries.

USAID/WA directly supports ECOWAS with technical expertise in monitoring and implementation of trade facilitation initiatives, and advancing regional standards harmonization. USAID/WA also helps ECOWAS to achieve its goals by working closely with stakeholders to report road corruption along targeted major trade corridors, and conduct studies on legal practices in order to assess constraints to trade and collect evidence to use for advocacy. It uses this information to improve road governance and increase the volume of trade along corridors in West Africa.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY:**

USAID/WA is helping to implement the ECOWAS Environmental Policy (ECOWEP) by strengthening the organizational and technical capacities of the Environment Directorate. USAID/WA works with the Directorate to assist member countries to harmonize forest policies and track progress on meeting their biodiversity and climate change commitments, and establish frameworks for engaging the private sector more productively to improve the region's natural resources management. USAID/WA directly supports the implementation of the West Africa Strategy to Combat Wildlife Crime through capacity building efforts for law enforcement and the Judiciary, development of tools to support wildlife crime investigations, and engaging the financial sector to assist in identifying potential wildlife trafficking activities. Through inter-agency cooperation, USAID/WA is able to leverage assistance for ECOWEP from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest Service.

## **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY:**

USAID/WA's support to ECOWAS and its specialized institutions aims to improve West Africa's access to affordable, reliable, secure, and sustainable energy through increased private sector investment. Toward achieving these objectives, USAID/WA supports the West African Power Program (WAPP) and the ECOWAS Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERERA) in their efforts to improve West Africa's energy supply by helping to develop a functioning regional electricity market through the facilitation of the construction of cross border transmission lines, developing market rules and regulations, and building operational capacity within the relevant national and regional institutions. In the realm of renewable energy and energy efficiency, USAID/WA supports the ECOWAS Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) to develop commercially viable clean energy (wind, solar and biomass) projects in partnership with private sector developers and promoters across the region.

<https://www.usaid.gov/west-africa-regional>