

# Sustainability Aspects in the Implementation of the EU Economic Partnership Agreements

## Connecting Markets, Developing Partnerships

### EPAs for Sustainable Development

The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are a set of comprehensive trade agreements between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. They aim to extend beyond the scope of traditional trade agreements by creating partnerships that implement trade to foster sustainable development and regional integration.

The EPAs have their origin in the Lomé Convention, which granted ACP states preferential market access to the EU. Upon expiration of this agreement, the EU and the ACP states began negotiations towards equitable trade agreements that grant continued preferential market access, while ensuring compatibility with World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

International trade can have a considerable leveraging effect on sustainable development and poverty reduction: Increased trade-related cooperation with developing countries is necessary to achieve an open and equitable multilateral trading system (SDG 17.10) and to significantly increase the exports of developing countries (SDG 17.11) while simultaneously promoting safe and secure working environments (SDG 8.8).

### The challenge

A series of challenges have shown themselves in the implementation of applied and interim EPAs. This is mainly due to the varying and often limited capabilities of signatory states to implement and exploit the potential benefits of the EPAs. Additionally, the diverse national structures and priorities within the regions present a challenge. Support must be provided to ACP states in order to improve their export capacity, to increase their access to and presence in the EU markets and to promote the integration of local production into regional and global value chains.

Project name	Supporting sustainability aspects in the implementation of the EU Economic Partnership Agreements
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Supra-regional: Member Countries of the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM) EPA and of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) EPA
Lead executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Duration	24.05.2017 - 30.04.2020

### Objective

The project's objective is to support regional organisations, their member states, the private sector and civil society in implementing the EPAs between the EU and ACP States in a way that fosters sustainable development.

### Our approach

The project pursues a flexible cross-sectoral approach at the interface of trade, agricultural and industrial policy in order to reflect the complex correlation of the EPAs and sustainable development. It leverages existing political energy: Promising approaches with dynamic stakeholder backing are implemented through pilot projects in selected partner countries and scaled through systematic regional and supra-regional exchange.

The capacity development strategy focuses on cooperation and networking in the sector, promoting dialogue and cooperation among representatives of government, private sector and civil society. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that EPA implementation is designed to meet the needs of individual groups of stakeholders.



L. to r.: Cotton flowers; Cashew nut processing



Leonor von Limburg  
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L. to r.: Shrimp processing plant;  
Tomato vendor at a market

## Regional focus

In 2008, 15 Caribbean states signed the first EPA with the EU. The SADC EPA between the EU and six SADC states followed in 2016. The project's regional focus is therefore on Southern Africa (SADC EPA) and the Caribbean (CARIFORUM EPA). Interim EPA states (e.g. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire), or regions that are yet to sign an EPA, could be included at a later stage, contingent on the signing and ratification of the agreements as well as on political and institutional conditions.

## Key Stakeholders

- The project cooperates closely with the EU Commission.
- Key implementing partners include the EPA signatory states, their ministries and other relevant agencies, as well as the regional coordinating bodies (eg. SADC Secretariat in Southern Africa and the CARIFORUM Directorate of the CARICOM Secretariat in the Caribbean).
- Other regional and national organizations, networks and associations of the private sector and civil society are also key stakeholders, notably the Caribbean Export Development Agency and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

## Areas of activity

The project operates in three interlinked pillars:

1. Strengthening the capacity of public sector, private sector and civil society actors to foster sustainable development through their improved utilisation of the EPAs. Specific activities include:
  - Supporting initiatives that facilitate access to market intelligence (e.g. online portals, linkages to European import promotion agencies);
  - Capacity building: Workshops and training on EPA flexibilities and trade remedies, regulations and requirements, and export readiness;
2. Facilitating the establishment of a participatory EPA monitoring system. The project will provide methodological as well as institutional support through the following activities:
  - Commissioning of studies to analyse existing monitoring and evaluation systems, capacities and needs of member states and their stakeholders;
  - Building consensus and promoting ownership: Organising workshops and conferences to bring together key stakeholders, present and discuss existing efforts, and attempt to build consensus on key questions such as scope, financing, structure and timetables for a system;
  - Support, operationalisation and scaling of piloting measures.
3. Developing cross-regional exchange platforms for regional organisations and their member states, the private sector and civil society to share useful experiences, lessons learnt and best practices and to maximise the positive development effects of the EPAs. This includes:
  - Design and organisation of interregional, digital exchange formats that allow stakeholders to share knowledge on EPA-related issues, based on their needs and capacities;
  - Support to existing interregional on-site meetings;
  - Preparation and provision of contributions to, and processing of outcomes of the exchange formats.

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