



New Trade Hub in Dakar announced at AGOA Forum

A fourth USAID-funded trade hub will open this year in Dakar, **Senegal**, joining WATH and the Southern and Eastern/Central African trade hubs, based respectively in Gaborone and Nairobi.

The new hub is part of the African Global Competitiveness Initiative, announced by President George W. Bush via video at the July AGOA Forum in Dakar. The initiative will provide \$200 million over five years to help African economies succeed in global markets.

Like WATH, the fourth hub will be overseen by USAID's West Africa Regional Program (WARP), based in Accra.

More than 1,000 people from the US and 35 African countries attended the AGOA forum, including WATH clients from **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone**.

WATH's director, Dr. Andy Cook, and export business development director, Vanessa Adams, attended workshops on road transport, agriculture and public-private partnerships. More than 75 people attended a workshop on African regional trade organized by WATH and USAID/WARP.

WATH clients participated in workshops, including Dr. Marie Diallo of PhytoPharma, **Senegal**, who helped present "Women Entrepreneurs: Taking Advantage of AGOA." Garment producers Berty Fong of **Ghana's** Belin Textiles, Mariama Sesay of Sayenu Industries, **Sierra Leone**, Gora Atchj, EGA Confections, **Senegal**, as well as Mirelle Nemale and Emmanuel EnoMbei of the Chamber of Commerce of **Cameroon** attended "Post-MFA: Apparel Competitiveness."

WATH's Emily Miller Says Goodbye

I joined the West Africa Trade Hub in February 2003. Since then, we have doubled our staff, moved to larger offices across the street, established six new AGOA Resource Centers (ARCs) and added shea butter, cashews, handicrafts and fish to our export business development product portfolio.

I am impressed with the ARCs that have become their countries' primary resource on AGOA. As a business development specialist, I particularly enjoyed my time working in the West African shea butter sector and seeing a surge in

Miller in Mauritania

interest by the US beauty care industry and American consumers. The West African shea butter booth attracted a lot of attention at the Natural Beauty Expo West tradeshow in March 2005.

I am leaving Sept. 2 with mixed feelings, especially since WATH is just arriving at a new juncture of growth and change. I know I will enjoy the small town life I have in the southwestern US, but I suspect I'll be back in West Africa again sometime in the future. My replacement in AGOA support services, Mr. Abou Fall, will be a great addition to WATH. Contact him at afall@wathtradehub.com.



Irradiation: Hope for W. Africa Ag Exports? By Leah Quin

Irradiation didn't sound promising to the group of Ghanaian yam exporters when they first heard about it as a way to improve the quality of their produce.

"We had misgivings," said Osei Banahene of the **Ghana Yam Producers and Exporters Association**, remembering the first talk of irradiation in the mid-90s. "Would the yams still be edible? Would irradiation cause aftereffects? Out of ignorance, we put in fears where there were no fears."

A decade later, irradiation is emerging as West Africa's best hope for increasing its agricultural exports. The fears Banahene cited are diminishing as

more countries – including the US – find controlled exposure to radiation can extend shelf life and kill pests, all apparently without affecting the taste or vitamin content of the produce. Even consumer prejudice is falling, as irradiated – and duly identified – papaya from Hawaii has been selling well in the mainland US for a few years.

As the US and Europe prepare to ban the widely used chemical treatment methyl bromide, irradiation may become a necessity, rather than a choice, for developing countries seeking to export their fruits and vegetables.

"Without irradiation, none of these products are ever going to move," said Dr. Shawn Robertson, who works for the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service for USAID's West Africa Regional Program.

Robertson is in the midst of conducting Pest Risk Assessments, which evaluate the chances of infestation for each product, by country or region: asparagus from **Senegal**, eggplant and mango from **Ghana**, papaya for all of West Africa.

But PRAs – required by the US government for most of its imported fresh fruits and vegetables – only evaluate the likelihood of insect or fungal contamination. It's then up to each country to find a way to diminish that risk.

But is irradiation feasible for West Africa?

Technologically, yes, says the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission, created more than 40 years ago to research peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

With a chunk of cobalt-60 donated by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the agency has found several applications for irradiation: delaying the germination of yams and potatoes, killing fruit flies, preserving spices, reducing mold in cocoa beans. But the cobalt-60 is losing power, and the facility is not yet what would be needed to irradiate commercial quantities of

produce, said Dr. Josephine Nketia Tabiri, the director of its food safety division. Enter WATH. This month, two of its consultants – one from Ghana, the other from the US – will start the process of figuring out the demand and feasibility of a commercial irradiation facility in Accra, perhaps similar to private ones already operating in South Africa.

If the study shows possibilities, there's still the question of funding such a venture. But WATH's agricultural specialist says it's imperative to start the process.

"This could affect the whole region's exporting capability," said the Hon. Kofi Humado, also a member of Ghana's parliament, who is coordinating the study. ■



US Sanitation Expert Visits W. African Fisheries

William Spinali, a HACCP expert from the US, reviewed sanitation practices at fish and seafood-processing plants in Cape Verde, the Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal. During the visit, co-organized by WATH and sponsored by Africa Fast Track Trade (a USAID project), Spinali consulted with businesses on complying with US safety and quality standards for export. He reported being impressed with many companies, which have stringent quality control processes, and has already started connecting West African suppliers with US buyers. Here, he poses, far right, with the staff of Frescomar in Cape Verde, including its president, Miguel Pinto, far left.



THE WATH FACTOR



Letter to the Editor

I read with excitement your article in the WATH FACTOR – Issue 19 that deals with the issue of corruption on West African roads. I am glad that WATH intends to do something about this canker worm that has eaten so deeply into the fabric of our society.

Various individuals acting in the name of some government ministries target producers in **Cameroon**. They collect levies from producers who export through the airport. One ministry collects 30% of the invoice value; another collects 10%. A recently created ministry collects another 15%. The producer has to bribe his/her

way, with an amount ranging from \$100 to \$200, to allow the truck carrying crafts to enter the airport.

These illegal taxes constitute a major roadblock to trade and poverty-alleviation efforts of non-governmental organizations.

Artisans are disadvantaged people. It beats the imagination of any reasonable person why such a vulnerable group should be the target of all the illegal taxes that are charged at Douala airport. Since poor producers have got no strong person to defend their interest, most of them have abandoned their crafts, with the difficulties that this abandonment entails. It is a pity that no one sees the effects on our economy

of this act of discouraging exports. Yet the singsong over public media is that the authorities are doing everything to alleviate poverty.

I therefore welcome WATH's initiative to gather information/data, which eventually would lead to bringing pressure to bear on the authorities in the countries concerned. This done, WATH would be raising a strong voice on behalf of the voiceless poor. More grease to WATH's elbows.

The author is an exporter in Cameroon whose name was withheld on request. Issue 19 detailed WATH's plans to create an information system to quantify bribes and delays along W. African trade routes.

Mangoes from **Senegal** and pineapple from **Ghana** will be stirred into fresh-cut fruit mixes exported from South Africa to the UK, the result of a *unique collaboration between trade hubs*. At least 50 metric tons of pineapple and an estimated 5-10 metric tons of mangoes will be shipped to South Africa weekly from May to November for the next three years, for a combined regional value of more than \$1 million annually. WATH and the Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub joined forces this spring to find fruit in West Africa for the South African company.



WATH's shea butter consultant, Dr. Peter Lovett, left, attended a meeting in Bamako, **Mali**, between Malian shea exporters and the two largest international buyers of shea nuts in Africa, Aarhus and Loders Croklaan. The July 12 meeting was organized by a USAID contractor in Mali, Action for Enterprise, to discuss *buyers' demands and willingness to pay more for quality nuts*.



Bernadette Mitchell, *deputy director of USAID's office of sustainable development*, (left, with WATH director Dr. Andy Cook), stopped by WATH's offices July 25. She learned about WATH's mission and began discussions about the fourth trade hub in Dakar.



The Hon. Kofi Humado, right, WATH's agricultural specialist and a member of parliament in **Ghana**,

attended a workshop in Accra July 18 on the *use of analytical research to increase agricultural growth* and boost exporting capacity. The workshop was hosted by the International Food Policy Research Institute and the government of Ghana, with funding assistance from USAID.



The new director of USAID's West Africa Regional Program visited WATH's office on July 13. Dr. Jatinder Cheema has worked for USAID in four overseas posts, including mission director to Eritrea and deputy director in Armenia. At WARP, she will head a program that promotes regional economic integration – WATH is a part of this goal – as well as other improvements to security

and health in West Africa. Here, she poses third from left, with, from left to right, Emily Miller, Dr. Andy Cook, Vanessa Adams and Hanna Amichia, all of WATH. Far right is Amanda Fernandez, WARP's economic integration advisor.

WATH's business development specialist Emily Miller spoke at the ExpoAfrica preparatory business seminar in Accra July 5 on characteristics of the US marketplace. She urged 400 participants to *learn more about the current trends and global competition in niche markets such as handicrafts*.



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December 8 Freetown, Sierra Leone

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Sept 29-Oct 2 Expo Africa 2005
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