

TradeCom II Support to Mauritius

PRESS RELEASE

Title of Project: “Strengthening Export competitiveness for inclusive growth in Mauritius, especially in the context of the i-EPA Implementation”.

Location: The operational base for the project, will be Mauritius.

Date: Intended implementation starting date – March/April 2017

Duration: 10 months

Web: www.tradecom-acpeu.org

Background

TradeCom II is a Programme financed by the UE at the request of ACP Group. It is designed to facilitate the integration of ACP Countries in the global economy and value chains by improving, *inter alia*, their capacity:

- to formulate and implement suitable trade policies,
- to participate effectively in multilateral trade negotiations under the WTO and to implement the trade agreements to their benefit, and
- to strengthen their competitiveness.

TradeCom II Programme has translated the needs of ACP beneficiaries into a number of relevant and implementable projects.

Support to Mauritius

“Strengthening Export competitiveness for inclusive growth in Mauritius, especially in the context of the i-EPA Implementation” is a project designed by TradeCom II Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius

It is designed to Promote exports of the Mauritius private sector including SMEs, Women and Young Entrepreneurs enhancing the business environment of the country in the framework of the i-EPA Implementation.

At the end of August 2009 the interim EPA (i-EPA) between the European Union and four countries of the ESA group, namely Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe, was signed in Mauritius. This is the first i-EPA under implementation in Africa. The i-EPA establishes a stable and predictable trade partnership for the development of the countries of the region.

Under the i-EPA, Mauritius is able to have full duty free and quota free access to the EU market and, since the implementation of the i-EPA, there has been a diversification in the Mauritian export basket which now includes non-traditional products such as pharmaceutical products, fertilizers, essential oils, medical equipment, and electronic equipment amongst others.

Nevertheless, Mauritius continues to face several challenges which need to be addressed to strengthen the economy and its export performance. These challenges include the strengthening of regional integration, the gender disparity in the Mauritian labour market and an increased need for guidance and support by the private sector.

In the context of this Project, a team of experts will provide a range of highly specialized technical services to the Mauritian beneficiaries. These services involve:

- Provision of technical support to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and key TISIs to strengthen their support to the SMEs, women and youth exporters;

- Provision of capacity building services on export quality and conformity measures, and effective access to trade information services; and
- Preparation of strategic and technical reports in the areas covered by the project.

Project outputs

The Project contributes to:

- enhance the business environment for Exporting SMEs;
- promote exports of the Mauritius private sector including SMEs, Women and Young Entrepreneurs.

Intervention areas

To promote exports of the Mauritius private sector including SMEs, Women and Young Entrepreneurs and enhancing the business environment of the country in the framework of the i-EPA Implementation, the areas of intervention contemplated under this project are two-fold:

- The first support area includes the strengthening of the capacities of quality and standards of SMEs, and the access to Business Intelligence services by SMEs. Under this support area the activities foreseen are:
 - Design of a guide on “Managing Quality in Mauritius” to sensitize stakeholders on quality, standards and technical regulations, SPS and the related-services available in Mauritius;
 - Upgrading Business intelligence capacities through the strengthening of the monitoring cell covering national and regional needs;
 - Provide assistance in the setting up a European Business Information Centre (EBIC) for supporting business linkages with the EU market;
 - Organization of a two-day training workshop on TBT and SPS for the beneficiaries.
- The second support area is on enhancing the export capacity of business communities including women and youth entrepreneurs making them aware of the trading opportunities and benefits under the i-EPA and the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The activities under this area will provide:
 - a multi-stakeholder training workshop on the opportunities and benefits of the i-EPA, including a guide on compliance with i-EPA Rules of Origin;
 - a regular awareness programme through sensitization material aimed at SMEs, Women and Youth Exporters on the sectors covered by these projects in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade and other relevant stakeholders in Mauritius.