

NEWSLETTER 10 | 2026

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HOW ARE FRANK ASIIMWE AND NICOLAS BABIGUMIRA STRENGTHENING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS?

With support from the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme implemented by the International Trade Centre in partnership with the East African Community, Uganda's East Africom Consults is increasing exports, creating jobs for youth and women, and connecting hundreds of farmers to growing coffee markets.



In the rolling coffee hills of Nyakishenyi Rukungiri District in southwestern Uganda, smallholder farmers rely on coffee as a key source of income. For East Africom Consults, a growing Ugandan coffee enterprise

founded by Frank Asiimwe and Nicolas Babigumira, connecting these farmers to reliable markets has become both a business opportunity and a mission. The company exports green coffee beans to international markets including

Kenya, Italy, China, the United Arab Emirates and Taiwan. East Africom Consults sources coffee from about 300 smallholder farmers, helping link rural producers to regional and international buyers.

While about 20% of the company's coffee is exported directly, the majority reaches global markets through partnerships with exporting companies such as the National Union of Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises (NUCAFE).

Overcoming Barriers to Growth

Like many small and medium-sized enterprises in the coffee sector, East Africom Consults faced challenges in scaling its operations and expanding exports.

Limited knowledge of international market requirements, packaging standards and digital marketing tools made it difficult for the company to reach new buyers and strengthen its presence in global markets. The company also sought to improve internal systems, adopt more inclusive employment practices and explore opportunities for value addition beyond trading green coffee.

Support Through the EU–EAC MARKUP II Programme

To address these challenges, East Africom Consults received targeted support through the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II), funded by the European Union under Global Gateway is implemented by the International Trade Centre in collaboration with the EAC Secretariat and national partners in the recipient countries.

Through the programme, the company participated in a range of capacity-building initiatives including the Export Accelerator Programme, packaging and branding training, coaching on non-tariff measures and market analysis, and training on e-commerce, digitalization and digital marketing. The company also benefited from gender-responsive business training and an access-to-finance boot camp. Exposure to international business events and learning platforms, including participation in China Expo and SME training in South Africa, provided insights into export market trends and buyer expectations.

These activities encouraged the company to rethink how it markets its coffee and engages with customers.

"We changed the way we market our coffee by shifting to digital marketing through our website and platforms like Alibaba. This has improved our visibility and enabled online trading through our website," the company noted.

Expanding Markets and Adding Value

The support has already translated into tangible business growth.

East Africom Consults increased its export volume of green coffee beans from five metric tonnes in 2024 to 14 metric tonnes in 2025. Over the same period, sales rose from \$58,280 in 2024 to \$77,700 in 2025, bringing total sales for the two years to \$135,980.

The company has also begun diversifying beyond green coffee exports. Following training on packaging and value addition, East Africom Consults introduced roasted and ground coffee products, selling 800 kilograms in 2025 and generating \$10,650 in additional revenue.

"We have also gained new buyers in Uganda for indirect exports in 2025, including two new clients who now source coffee from us for international markets," the company said.

Improved marketing and market visibility have also helped the company secure new buyers.

The business has also established relationships with restaurants and retail outlets including Café Javas and Java House coffee shops in Uganda.

Creating Jobs and Opportunities

As the company grows, so too does its impact on the local community. East Africom Consults has expanded its workforce and adopted more gender-responsive employment practices. Today, the company employs seven full-time staff members and hires additional casual workers during peak periods.

Notably, 50% of the new jobs created have gone to women, many of whom are youth under the age of 35.

The company has also made efforts to ensure inclusive employment practices that consider the needs of women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Beyond employment, the company's expansion is creating new opportunities across the coffee value chain. About 300 farmers now supply coffee to East Africom Consults, benefiting from increased market access and growing demand.

Looking Ahead

With stronger export readiness, improved digital marketing and growing demand for its coffee, East Africom Consults is now better positioned to expand in regional and international markets.

For the company's founders, continued growth means not only building a successful business but also strengthening opportunities for farmers and young workers in south western Uganda's coffee sector. Through improved market connections and ongoing investment in quality and value addition, the company aims to bring even more Ugandan coffee to global buyers in the years ahead.

EU-EAC MARKUP II RSC Meeting in Burundi



BUJUMBURA HOSTS THE EU-EAC MARKUP II 4TH REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE (RSC) MEETING

Bujumbura hosted the 4th Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting of the European Union (EU)–East African Community (EAC) Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II) from 17–19 March 2026.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Leo Kizito Ocaya Ojara, Uganda’s MARKUP II focal point. Mr Jose-Luis Gonzalez, Programme Officer Regional Economic Integration and Mr Sagoh Djete, MARKUP II Programme Manager at the European Union Delegation to the United Republic of Tanzania and the East African Community were also present.

It provided updates on the progress of the EU-EAC MARKUP II programme and served as a platform for strategic dialogue among key stakeholders.

The RSC offers an important opportunity for representatives from EAC Partner States, the EAC Secretariat, and the European Union to review programme implementation and provide strategic guidance to maximize the impact of MARKUP II.

The meeting brought together representatives from EAC Partner States—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

It was also attended by officials from the EAC Secretariat, EU delegation to Burundi as well as representatives from the East African Business Council (EABC) and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

The EU-EAC MARKUP II governance structure plays a central role in guiding programme implementation. It ensures country-level ownership and effective performance monitoring through National Steering and Technical Committees at the Partner State level, as well as Regional Steering and Technical Committees at the regional level.

As part of the meeting, delegates visited programme beneficiaries in Burundi’s coffee, tea, and horticulture sectors. These visits provided valuable first-hand insights into the programme’s impact, while also highlighting ongoing challenges that require continued support from Partner States and development partners.

Market Linkage



TASTE OF HARVEST BURUNDI

The Burundi National Taste of Harvest Auction concluded successfully in February, with all 14 coffee lots sold to international buyers. The auction closed at the culmination of the 22nd African Fine Coffees Conference & Exhibition in Addis Ababa, where the coffees were showcased to potential bidders through curated cuppings and direct engagement with buyers.

Winning bidders came from China, France, Japan, and Malaysia, highlighting strong global demand for Burundi's high-quality specialty coffees. The highest bid reached US\$55.25/kg, underscoring the premium value placed on Burundi's top micro lots.

The results reflect the growing recognition of Burundi as a source of exceptional coffee

and the increasing interest from international markets in the country's top micro lots. The Taste of Harvest program continues to serve as a platform to showcase origin quality while creating direct market linkages between producers and buyers.

The auction was organized by the African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA) in collaboration with auction service provider M-Cultivo,

with support from the International Trade Centre (ITC) under the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme.

Full auction results, including final prices and winning bidders, are available here:



EAST AFRICAN BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT SUMMIT & EXPO 2026 ADVANCES REGIONAL TRADE

Arusha, Tanzania – Monday, 9 February 2026 – The International Trade Centre (ITC), through the European Union (EU) –funded EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II) has partnered with the East African Business Council (EABC) for the upcoming East African Business and Investment Summit & Expo (EABIS) 2026, scheduled to take place from 24–25 February 2026 at the Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

The East African Business and Investment Summit & Expo is a flagship event that brings together Cabinet Ministers, CEOs, investors, development partners, and business leaders from across Africa and beyond to shape the East African economic agenda and unlock new intra- and extra-EAC trade and investment opportunities.

Hon. Beatrice Askul Moe, Chair of the EAC Council of Ministers and Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of EAC, ASALs and

Regional Development, Republic of Kenya, will endorse the communiqué, outlining the recommendations and resolutions from the Summit discussions to inform future policy decisions. International trade is constantly evolving, and for East African Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), navigating complex international trade regulations remains one of the biggest barriers to growth. While tariffs continue to decline, compliance with Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) such as technical requirements, certifications, packaging, and labelling – is becoming increasingly complex.

To help businesses turn these challenges into a competitive advantage ITC will officially launch its latest digital solution, the Non-Tariff Measures Self-Assessment Tool (NTM SAT), during a breakout session titled “Turning Trade Intelligence into Business Opportunities” at the East African Business and Investment Summit on 25 February 2026.

In addition, ITC will deliver a keynote presentation on the AfCFTA Investment Protocol and the WTO Investment Facilitation Agreement during the panel on Leveraging Regional and Continental Integration. ITC will also share study insights on Value Chain Diagnostic during the High Level CEOs Dialogue on Driving Industrialization in East Africa at the East African Business and Investment Summit & Expo 2026.

THE 2026 SUMMIT EDITION WILL ALSO FEATURE:

- Presidential Panel on Regional Prosperity.
- High-Level CEOs' Dialogue on Trade in Services.
- Panel Sessions on Leveraging Regional and Continental Integration.
- Panel Session on Open Skies- Advancing Air Transport Liberalization for a Borderless Africa.
- Breakout Sessions on: Broadening Digital Tax Stamps Beyond Revenue Collection – Fighting Illicit Trade, Unlocking SME Growth, Strengthening E-Commerce and Mutual Recognition Agreements for Engineers.
- Fireside Chats on: Artificial Intelligence, Climate Finance and Green Trade and Intermodal Transport and Infrastructure Connectivity.

The Summit will delve into continental and global economic trends with the aim of repositioning the East African Community (EAC) as Africa's premier trade and investment hub. For more information, visit Event Website here:



FROM KABATI TO THE WORLD: INCLUSIVE CRAFTSMANSHIP, STRENGTHENED BY EU-EAC MARKUP II



Mr. Filippo Amato, Head of Trade EU in Kenya, participated at AFSW where MARKUP II supported 11 SMEs from Kenya, Rwanda, and the United Republic of Tanzania to participate in the regional trade fair.

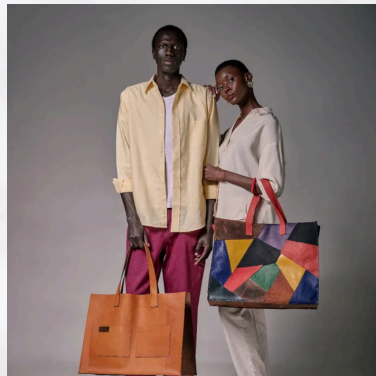
From Kabati to international markets, Nashipai Leather demonstrates how trade can become a driver of inclusion, sustainability, and economic transformation when women, creativity, and opportunity are intentionally placed at the centre of development interventions.

Under the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme, Nashipai Leather is receiving targeted support to strengthen sustainable production, improve product competitiveness, and expand market access for its handmade leather goods.

Through tailored training in product development, leather finishing, costing and pricing, as well as exposure to new market opportunities, the enterprise is building the skills and systems needed for long-term business growth and resilience.

Beyond business development, Nashipai represents a powerful model of inclusive and sustainable trade. The enterprise is creating dignified income opportunities for deaf women artisans, enabling them to actively participate in economic activities from which they

have often been excluded. By transforming traditional craftsmanship into market-ready products, Nashipai is advancing women's economic empowerment, social inclusion, and community livelihoods while promoting ethical and locally rooted production.



Faces of MARKUP II

Chanzo Coffee in Uganda goes further!

Alfred Wasikyie on the impact of MARKUP II support

- Generated **\$100K+** in sales
- Created and maintained **15+ jobs (70% women)**
- Entered **new European markets**
- Increased employee income by **10%**
- Strengthened **quality, packaging & traceability**
- Built **direct buyer relationships**
- Developed a **HACCP plan** for export readiness
- Enhanced **market intelligence** and **export decision-making**



ALFRED WASIKYE - CEO, CHANZO COFFEE

Business Support



EAST AFRICA'S FIRST PACKAGING DIRECTORY REVEALED AT PROPAK NAIROBI

ITC's online directory of verified packaging suppliers is helping small businesses across East Africa find affordable quality packaging – and cut through a challenge that has long limited their growth. ITC brought the directory to thousands of people at Propak East Africa, the region's leading event for packaging, plastics, print, and processing.

Finding reliable packaging is a persistent barrier for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in East Africa. Without it, products struggle to reach new markets, and growth stalls.

To address this, ITC launched an online directory

of packaging suppliers verified as SME-friendly under the Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II), funded by the European Union under Global Gateway in partnership with the East African Community. The first of its kind in the

region, the directory covers Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda. Every supplier listed has been assessed for quality, affordability, and experience working with small businesses.

CONNECTING SUPPLIERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES AT PROPAK 2026

Propak East Africa – the region's leading event for packaging, plastics, print, and processing – brought together more than 5,500 visitors and 150 brands this year. Sharing a booth with the Institute of Packaging Kenya, MARKUP II used the platform to connect the directory with the people who need it most.

Exhibitors confirmed their listings and learned about SME-friendly certification. Visiting small businesses discovered trusted packaging partners, saving time and reducing costly mistakes. ITC Deputy Executive Director Dorothy Tembo also visited the booth, underscoring ITC's commitment to supporting small businesses across the region.

FREE FOR SUPPLIERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES ALIKE

The directory is free for small businesses to use, and free for packaging manufacturers and distributors in MARKUP II countries to join. Certified suppliers gain visibility and credibility with SME buyers across the region. Suppliers interested in listing their company can contact packaging@intracen.org.

NON-TARIFF MEASURES (NTM) SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL LAUNCHED

With the support of European Union, the East African Community (EAC) and ITC, East African companies can now access consolidated information tailored to their products and target markets without navigating multiple sources.



Certifications, sanitary rules, packaging standards, and labelling requirements can make it difficult for small businesses in East Africa to compete in export markets.

Together, these are known as non-tariff measures. Knowing how to navigate them can turn regulatory hurdles into opportunities.

The new Non-Tariff Measures Self-Assessment Tool (NTM SAT) is the first free global information hub dedicated to helping businesses understand and comply with non-tariff measures. The tool was created by EU-EAC MARKUP II programme with support from the European Union (EU) under the

Global Gateway. The tool focuses especially on health and safety requirements for food, and on technical requirements for things like packaging and labelling.

The tool was launched during a breakout panel discussion at the East African Business and Investment Summit & Expo 2026, held in Nairobi on 25 February 2026. The session jointly organized with East African Business Council and Kenya Private Sector Alliance also showcased the MSME Financing Gateway which provides enterprises with access to financing needed to meet standards, upgrade production, and expand into regional and international markets.

Sagoh Djete, Project Manager for Regional Cooperation – Infrastructure at the EU Delegation to Tanzania and the EAC, underscored the importance of working together closely to advance regional integration, strengthen intra-African trade, and improve access to global markets.

A NEW APPROACH TO REGULATORY TRANSPARENCY

Built on the data of ITC's Market Access Map, the tool translates complex legal texts into clear, structured, and actionable guidance. Companies can now access consolidated information tailored to their products and target markets without navigating multiple sources.

CORE FEATURES

The platform combines three integrated functions:

- **Search:** Identify import requirements applied to a specific product in a chosen export market.
- **Compare:** Analyse and compare regulatory requirements particularly health and technical measures across markets or against international standards.
- **Self-assess:** Conduct a step-by-step diagnostic to evaluate product compliance with detailed regulatory requirements and identify gaps before shipment.

By integrating regulatory data with a practical self-diagnostic feature, the tool enables firms to move from information to implementation.

HOW DOES IT IMPROVE COMPETITIVENESS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION?

For small businesses, the NTM SAT reduces the time and cost required to interpret trade regulations, minimizes the risk of border rejections, and supports informed decisions about export destinations.

For policymakers, it provides structured and reliable NTM data to support regulatory reform, improve transparency, and promote regional convergence.

The launch of the NTM SAT represents a tangible step toward equipping enterprises to navigate international trade regulations with confidence and turn compliance into a competitive advantage.

KEY RESOLUTIONS

- MSMEs, trade associations, and relevant stakeholders are encouraged to adopt the NTM Self-Assessment Tool to enhance compliance, reduce export-related risks, and facilitate strategic market expansion.
- EAC Partner States and regulatory bodies are urged to strengthen transparency and accessibility of trade regulations, ensuring businesses can easily understand country-specific requirements and reduce compliance uncertainties.
- Governments, development partners, and private sector organizations to prioritize training programs for MSMEs on using digital tools for trade intelligence, compliance assessment, and market readiness.
- EAC Partner States commit to accelerating regulatory convergence and alignment of technical, sanitary, and phytosanitary standards to support seamless intra-regional trade.
- MSMEs are encouraged to leverage both the NTM Self-Assessment Tool and the MSME Financing Gateway to simultaneously strengthen compliance capacity and access investment for production and export expansion.
- Special focus should be placed on enabling women-led and youth-led enterprises to access trade intelligence and financial resources, ensuring equitable participation in regional and global markets.

- All stakeholders should establish mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of digital trade tools and regulatory reforms, with regular feedback loops to enhance functionality, relevance, and responsiveness to market needs.
- EAC Partner States, development partners, and the private sector to enhance collaboration, sharing best practices, and lessons learned to improve trade facilitation, regulatory alignment, and export competitiveness across the region.



COFFEE ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP DISCUSSES FUTURE DIRECTIONS

For the third consecutive year, the African Fine Coffees Association (AFCA), in partnership with the Inter-African Coffee Organisation (IACO) convened African Coffee Week in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 2–6 February 2026. The week brought together policymakers, private sector leaders, development partners, researchers, and producer organizations to advance dialogue and action on the future of Africa's coffee sector.

Within this framework, AFCA, IACO, and the International Trade Centre (ITC) jointly hosted the 3rd Annual Coffee

Week Policy and Networking Reception, an event for targeted policy dialogue, peer exchange, and collaboration among senior policymakers, private sector leaders, development partners, and producer representatives from EAC partner states.

The policy reception was built on outcomes from the AFCA 2025 Policy Dinner in Dar es Salaam, which led to the establishment of the Coffee Advocacy Working Group (CAWG). Over the past year, CAWG held four successful online meetings, conducted a member survey, and reached consensus on priority constraints and solutions that require coordinated regional and continental action.

In his opening remarks, AFCA Executive Director and Coffee Advocacy Working Group Chair, Gilbert Gitali, began by noting recent progress. 'Since the 2025 Policy Dinner, the Coffee Advocacy Working Group has turned ideas into real priorities,' he said. 'This event showed that African coffee stakeholders are ready to work together to strengthen and support Africa's coffee sector.'

During the reception, participants discussed on four main priorities:

- Streamlining the coffee trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), including addressing non-tariff barriers and border inefficiencies, and scaling successful cases such as the export of Rwandan speciality coffee to Ghana.
- Strengthening price risk management capacity for cooperatives and SMEs in response to extreme volatility in global coffee markets.
- Exploring digital tools for position and price risk management to support improved decision-making by coffee enterprises.
- Designing a pilot project linking price risk management with access to finance for cooperatives.

Participants contributed through group discussions, moving between topics and sharing ideas. Their input will help shape a technical policy paper that will guide the implementation of plan of activities for the upcoming year.

In his closing remarks, Solomon Rutega, Secretary General of IACO,

stressed the need to turn discussions into action, saying: 'We must move decisively from dialogue to implementation.' He confirmed IACO's commitment to working with AFCA, CAWG members, and development partners such as ITC to improve AfCFTA trade facilitation and make risk management solutions

more accessible to African coffee producers.

EU-EAC MARKUP II continues to demonstrate the importance of public and private groups working together to reduce trade barriers, manage market risks, and build resilience in Africa's coffee value chains.

TANZANIA MAPS THE ROAD TO DIGITAL TRADE



The launch of the CART.IS system in Tanzania will make trade faster by streamlining processes and cutting costs.

Tanzania is advancing toward a more digital and interconnected trade environment, with the launch of the results of its CART.IS (Commercial and Regulatory Trade-related Information Systems) analysis.

The assessment was conducted within the framework of the European Union–East African Community (EAC) Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP II), funded by the European Union under its Global Gateway initiative and implemented by the International Trade Centre in collaboration with the EAC Secretariat.

The event, held in Dodoma on 24–25 March 2026, brought together representatives from the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, a wide range of other government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and key partners involved in the CART.IS analysis. Participants discussed progress in the digitalisation of trade procedures and identified further steps to develop interagency and cross-border cooperation.

The study found that 33 trade-related services across 9 institutions have already been digitized, reflecting important progress. However, many systems remain fragmented and not fully interoperable, and several services still require paper-based outputs, highlighting the importance of strengthening integration, institutional capacity, and

coordination.

The programme contributes to the modernisation of trade procedures, enhanced regional connectivity, and improved economic competitiveness.

The CART.IS methodology helps governments assess and coordinate their digital ecosystems for cross-border trade.

With ITC's technical support, it enables evidence-based planning and generates comparable data, while in Tanzania it also provides a comprehensive baseline covering 33 government services and 92 inter-agency interactions, and outlines key reform priorities to advance digital trade and strengthen regional cooperation.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE II EU–EAC TPO MASTERCLASS



On 15–16 April 2026, the second EU–EAC Trade Promotion Organisation (TPO) Masterclass took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, bringing together 18 participants from across the East African Community (EAC). The event marked an important step in strengthening collaboration and capacity among TPOs, building on momentum generated earlier in the year.

The Masterclass followed a planning meeting held in Brussels in February 2026 with Trade Promotion Europe (TPE), the pan-European association of European TPOs. In partnership with TPE, the initiative continues to support the consolidation of the EAC TPO Working Group by fostering peer learning, skills development, and institutional exchange.

A PLATFORM FOR EXCHANGE AND COLLABORATION

The first morning of the Masterclass was dedicated to networking with European TPO representatives and economic counsellors based in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Representatives from the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Finland, ACCIO, and Business France contributed to these exchanges, strengthening links between European and East African institutions.

The session opened with remarks and presentations from key stakeholders, including the EAC Secretariat, the European Union Delegation, the East African Business Council, and the European Business Group in Tanzania, setting the stage for two days of focused discussions.

SHARING CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES

Each participating EAC TPO delivered a presentation outlining:

- Key strategic challenges they face, both internally and externally;
- Services, schemes, and programmes they consider to be good practices;
- Specific issues for which they sought advice from peers.

These contributions led to dynamic exchanges, encouraging practical problem-solving and mutual learning.



KEY STRENGTHS OF THE MASTERCLASS

Participant feedback highlighted three main strengths:

- Digitalisation, including digital trade, AI, and digital tools;
- Peer exchange, particularly speed networking and experience sharing;
- Practical focus, with topics such as market segmentation and service design.

DRIVING CHANGE IN TPO PERFORMANCE

Participants identified three priority areas for improving operational and managerial performance:

- Digital transformation Advancing digitalisation through CRM systems, AI tools, and improved internal processes, alongside requests for support in implementation.
- Service redesign and client segmentation Better aligning services with SME needs through refined segmentation and more tailored support.
- Enhanced support for SME exports Improving market access, strengthening market intelligence (including ITC tools), increasing focus on trade in services, and enhancing impact measurement.



PESTICIDE RESIDUE ANALYSIS TRAINING CONDUCTED IN RWANDA



A specialized training program on the implementation of analytical methods for pesticide residue analysis was successfully conducted at National Agricultural Export Development Board Laboratory (SEQUI/NAEB) Laboratory in Kigali, Rwanda.

The training was delivered with the support of development partners and technical

experts dedicated to strengthening food safety systems and improving agricultural export compliance.

As the NAEB laboratory analysts were new to the instrument, the training began with a comprehensive introduction to the ULTIVO LC-MS system, including instrument startup procedures, module identification, system operation,

liquid chromatography fundamentals, and ionization principles.

The program included extensive hands-on practical sessions covering routine instrument maintenance, standards preparation, equipment optimization, and analytical method development.

Analysts were also trained on acquisition software and MassHunter Quantitative software for data processing and interpretation.

Training further covered international sampling protocols under CODE CAC/GL 33:1999 and international

pesticide residue method validation and quality control guidelines according to DG SANTE 2021 requirements.

A robust analytical method covering 178 pesticides was successfully developed during the training. Participants performed matrix spiking exercises and achieved satisfactory recovery values, demonstrating strong technical competence. In addition, one proficiency testing sample of grapes was analyzed with results showing good agreement with assigned values from the proficiency testing provider.

To further validate the developed method, four samples collected from a pack house were analyzed,

and various pesticide residues were successfully detected using the trained EN Method and developed acquisition method.

The training was conducted over three separate weeks, allowing participants sufficient time for practical application and knowledge retention. All trainees demonstrated competence in pesticide residue analysis, contributing to the strengthening of laboratory analytical capacity and food safety systems in Rwanda.



SIX COUNTRIES, ONE MISSION: CONNECTING QUALITY CHAMPIONS ACROSS EAST AFRICA



24 Quality Champions from six countries gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for the first Regional Summit of EAC Quality Champions and QC Hubs in February.

Under the EU-funded EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme Phase II (MARKUP II), the programme has continued to strengthen national teams of Quality Champions in six East African Community (EAC) countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Across East Africa, a growing network of professionals is helping small businesses improve the quality and safety of their products. These professionals—known as Quality Champions (QCs)—are trained under the International Trade Centre’s Quality Champions Programme and support enterprises through coaching, training, and advisory services on quality management systems, food safety, and operational improvement.

Under the EU-funded EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme

Phase II (MARKUP II), the programme has continued to strengthen national teams of Quality Champions in six East African Community (EAC) countries: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Many of these experts work closely with enterprises in priority value chains, helping them adopt international standards, improve processes, and become more competitive in regional and international markets. Over time, these teams have also established national quality associations, which now serve as hubs coordinating quality advisory services and capacity-building activities in their respective countries.

Yet despite working toward the same mission, many of these professionals had never met each other.

The summit also brought together key regional partners, including representatives from the EAC Secretariat, the East African Business Council (EABC), and the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO). For many participants, it was the first opportunity to meet colleagues carrying out similar work in neighbouring countries and to exchange experiences face to face.



Over three days, participants engaged in discussions and collaborative sessions designed to deepen this shared purpose. Quality Champions presented examples of enterprise improvement projects they had supported in their countries, highlighting practical tools for food safety management, lean process improvement, and quality systems implementation. The participation of regional institutions such as the EAC Secretariat, EABC, and ARSO enriched the discussions by bringing perspectives on regional cooperation, standards harmonisation, and opportunities to connect the QC network with the broader regional quality infrastructure.

The summit also created space to look ahead. Participants explored how national Quality Champion hubs could strengthen their services, expand outreach to SMEs, and reduce reliance on project-based funding. They also discussed how stronger regional collaboration could amplify their impact by allowing experts from different countries to share knowledge, support each other's initiatives, and promote quality more effectively across the region.

By the final day, the discussions had evolved into something more concrete. Participants agreed to establish a regional network of Quality Champions and endorsed the creation of a regional association—the East African Quality Association—to sustain collaboration beyond the current programme. The proposed structure aims to strengthen cooperation among national quality associations, increase the visibility of the QC network, and support enterprises across the region through coordinated expertise and services.

More than anything, the summit demonstrated the value of bringing people together. Participants left with new professional relationships, fresh ideas to apply in their own countries, and a renewed sense that they are part of a broader regional effort.

As the network grows, these connections between Quality Champions will play an important role in strengthening quality culture across East Africa—helping enterprises improve standards, access markets, and contribute to the region's economic integration.



VALIDATION OF THE EAC LEATHER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS STRATEGY (2020–2030)



The EAC met in Arusha for the Mid-Term Review of the Leather and Leather Products Strategy (2020–2030) and to agree on priorities to strengthen the sector.

The meeting brought together EAC Partner States, regional institutions, private sector organizations, development partners, and technical experts. They reviewed progress, addressed bottlenecks, and agreed on strategic priorities.

The Midterm Review, undertaken by the EAC Secretariat with ITC technical support, responds to directives of the 40th Extraordinary Sectoral Council on Trade, Industry, Finance,

and Investment (SCTIFI), held on 24 May 2025. That meeting called for an assessment of the Strategy's implementation and the identification of urgent policy measures to revitalize the sector.

The objectives were to review the key findings of the Review, including implementation progress across Partner States, global and regional market performance and value chain dynamics. The discussions also focused on identifying and confirming key policy, regulatory, and institutional bottlenecks affecting the leather sector development and competitiveness. The meeting noted the

relevance of the EAC Leather Strategy (2020–2030) in increasing the sector's contribution to industrialization, export growth, and job creation.

The validated report will be submitted to the EAC Statutory Organs for consideration and policy guidance to support effective implementation during the remaining period of the Strategy.

The EU–EAC MARKUP II Programme continues to demonstrate the importance of public and private sector collaboration in reducing trade barriers, addressing market constraints, and building resilience in the region's leather value chains.

'The Mid-Term Review offers us a timely opportunity to recalibrate our efforts and seize the growing demand for leather products through value addition, stronger policy support, and enhanced production capacity across the EAC region,' said Flavia Busingye, Director of Customs and Agricultural Trade at the EAC Secretariat.



NON-TARIFF MEASURES AND MARKET ANALYSIS TRAINING CONDUCTED IN UGANDA

The Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA), in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC), successfully conducted a three-day Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and Market Analysis Training Workshop aimed at strengthening Uganda's capacity to identify market opportunities and address trade barriers affecting businesses.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS

Held under the European Union (EU)-funded EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme, the training brought together 16 participants from business support institutions and industry stakeholders to build practical skills in market research, export analysis, and the use of ITC trade tools.

The workshop focused on enhancing the ability of participants to support small and medium enterprises in navigating non-tariff barriers, improving compliance,

and accessing regional and international markets.

SUPPORTING REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND MARKET ACCESS

The programme aligns with MARKUP II's broader objective of increasing export competitiveness for Uganda's agribusiness and horticultural sectors, including coffee, cocoa, avocado, and packaging products, while promoting regional integration within the East African Community.

Participants described the training as highly practical and relevant

relevant to their work, noting that the skills acquired would support evidence-based trade policy development and help businesses access new export markets.

"I will utilize HS code classification to ensure our members remain compliant with export requirements," said Ibrah Sekayi.

Another participant, Andrew Walusimbi, emphasized the need to expand the initiative's reach, calling for *"the immediate rollout of the training through regional offices to scale the intervention's impact."*



OUR LEATHER FOOTWEAR TRAINING IN SOUTH SUDAN IS CHANGING LIVES

"The training has improved my skills in cutting, stitching, and sole attachment. I can now produce quality shoes that can compete in the local market," said Khamis Samuel.

Khamis and Asunta were among 27 participants from various leather companies in South Sudan, the majority of whom were young female university graduates seeking practical skills and sustainable livelihood opportunities. For many, this was their first formal technical training in footwear production.

DESIGNED TO BE HIGHLY HANDS-ON, THE TRAINING FOCUSED ON THE SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL FOOTWEAR STYLES:

- Derby
- Oxford
- Court Shoe
- Pantopola
- Moccasin
- Sandals
- Boot

And, describing her experience Asunta William added, *"Before this training, I had no idea about producing shoes, but in just three days, I mastered the concept and was able to produce a shoe on the fourth day. Now I understand proper measurement and finishing techniques."*

EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION VISITS MAYO LEATHER COMPANY

Mayo Leather Company hosted the training and is supported by EU-EAC MARKUP II. It is the only established leather SME in South Sudan with a workshop equipped with basic footwear machinery.

The European Union (EU), which funds the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme, visited the footwear training in action. The EUD to South Sudan representatives interacted directly with participants and witnessed the production process firsthand, observing how trainees transformed raw materials into finished shoes through hands-on learning.

This initiative supports young people and women in South Sudan by providing practical skills, creating livelihood opportunities, and strengthening the local leather industry.

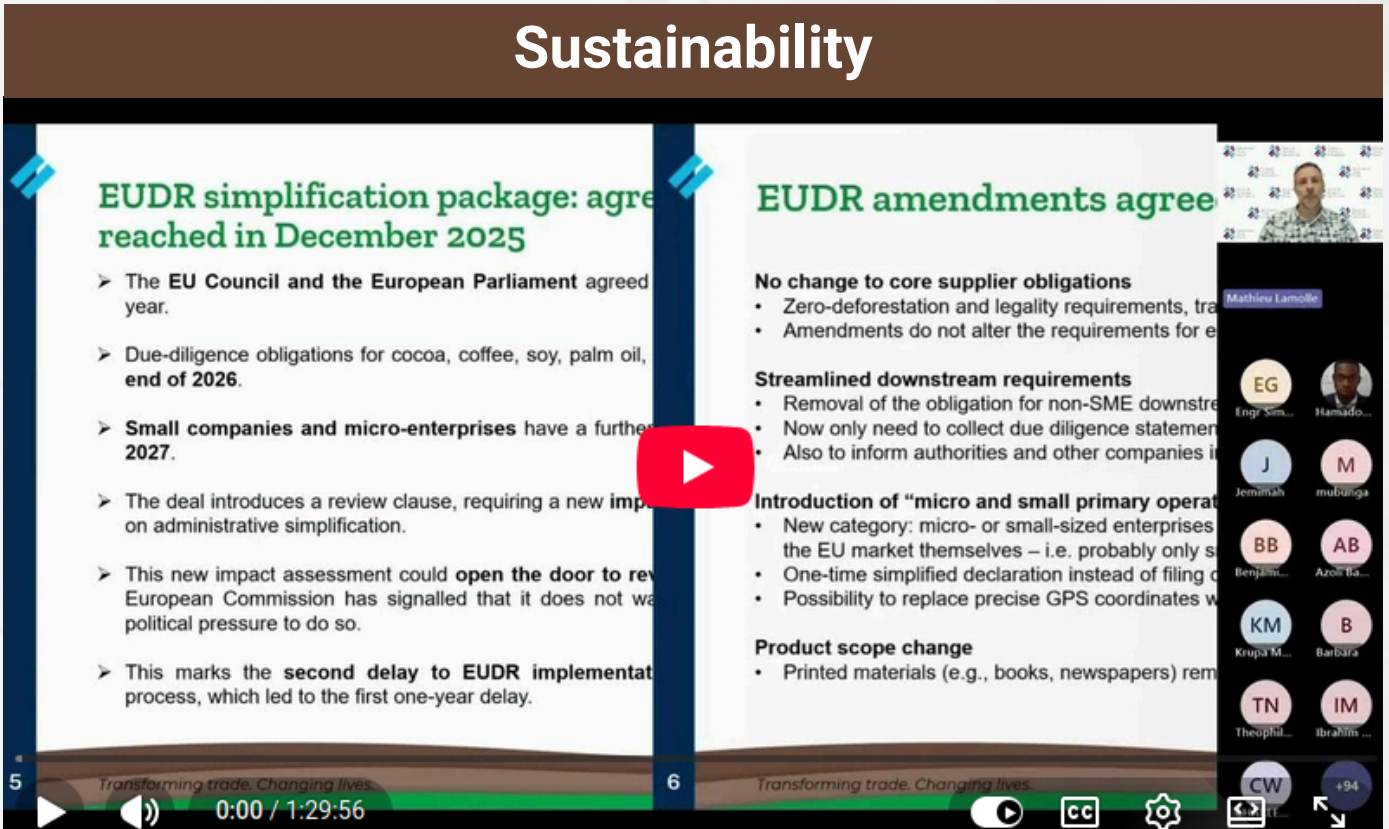
WHY IS THIS TRAINING IMPORTANT FOR SOUTH SUDANESE YOUTH?

By the end of the programme, participants had successfully manufactured seven finished shoes, applying skills in cutting, stitching, sole attachment, measurement, and finishing techniques. Government representatives described the initiative as the first technical training of its kind in South Sudan's leather sector.

During the opening and closing sessions, speakers emphasized that the MARKUP II

Programme has unlocked participants’ potential through practical learning and encouraged them to apply their skills productively to strengthen the country’s leather industry.

Participants expressed strong satisfaction with the training, describing it as practical, relevant, and directly aligned with local market needs. Many highlighted the balance between theory and production sessions as a key strength. They also called for continued support in accessing start-up capital, modern machinery, and market linkages to scale production and create opportunities for other youth in their communities.



EUDR REGIONAL EVENT

This webinar provides an overview of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and its implications for trade and supply chains in the East African Community (EAC), with a focus on key commodities such as coffee and cocoa.



Watch on Youtube

Participants gained insights into compliance requirements—including due diligence, traceability, and risk assessment—as well as ongoing regional initiatives to support businesses and policymakers in meeting the regulation. The session also presented the support provided by the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme to help governments, businesses, and producers prepare for EUDR compliance and maintain access to EU markets.

Women and Youth

REGIONAL SOFT SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES ACROSS THE EAC

The experience was shared by one of 179 women entrepreneurs who participated in the programme under the EU-funded MARKUP II initiative. We achieved a major milestone with the successful implementation of the Soft Skills Enhancement for Women Entrepreneurs training across the East African Community (EAC).



REGIONAL INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN IN TRADE

The training was implemented through a partnership between the East African Women in Business Platform (EAWiBP), the International Trade Centre (ITC) through the SheTrades Initiative, and the EAC, with support from the European Union. The programme was designed to strengthen women-led enterprises by enhancing soft skills critical for trade participation,

including business communication, leadership, confidence building, and pitching skills.

TWO-TIER TRAINING APPROACH ACROSS THE EAC

The initiative was delivered through a structured two-tier model. A five-day Master Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, from 8–12 September 2025, bringing together selected trainers from each of the six EAC Partner States.

A total of 12 Master Trainers were certified, who later delivered national roll-out

trainings in their respective countries to ensure wider regional coverage and sustainability.

NATIONAL ROLL-OUT ACROSS SIX PARTNER STATES

The national trainings were conducted across all EAC Partner States, including Uganda (29–30 September), Tanzania (16–17 October), South Sudan (20–21 October),

Burundi (25–26 November), and Rwanda (8–9 December 2025).

This approach ensured consistent delivery while enabling localised support for women entrepreneurs in different contexts.

MEASURABLE IMPACT

The programme recorded strong results, with 85% of participants reporting increased confidence in business communication and 80% demonstrating the ability to deliver structured business pitches, surpassing initial targets.

Participants also showed marked improvements in

leadership presence, clarity of expression, and overall business presentation skills.

BEYOND TRAINING: BRINGING INTO PRACTICE

Beyond the classroom sessions, participants identified practical ways to apply their new skills. These included training other women entrepreneurs, improving business communication for market access, and strengthening engagement with potential buyers and partners.

The initiative also reinforced the importance of scaling

capacity-building efforts through regional structures to ensure broader reach and long-term sustainability.

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Overall, the training demonstrates the transformative impact of targeted soft skills development in empowering women entrepreneurs. By addressing both behavioural and structural barriers, the initiative contributes to building more confident, competitive, and trade-ready women-led businesses across the East African Community.



"I used to fear speaking about my business. By the end of the training, I confidently presented my pitch and received constructive feedback."



Upcoming Events

- 1-4 June - Accreditation audit of chemical labs of BBN and ISABU - Burundi
- 1-4 June - Accreditation surveillance audit of ISABU and BBN Labs -ISO 17025 - Burundi
- 2-4 June - Training on Statements of Conformity and Decision Rules - Kenya
- 8-10 June - Awareness creation on TBT and SPS - South Sudan
- 8-15 June - Packaging Training and Coaching (Avocado and French beans) - Rwanda
- 8 June-14 July - Packaging Training and Coaching (Avocado and Spices) - Tanzania
- 10-11 June - Sensitization of coffee stakeholders on the trade procedures on the Uganda Trade Portal and simplification opportunities - Uganda
- 15-18 June - Benchmarking and peer-learning mission / IPA Subcommittee and Anima Network - Cyprus
- 15-19 June - Rwanda Training on Good Practices for French Beans Exporters - Rwanda
- 15-19 June - South Sudan-RBM oriented Project Cycle Management, and Monitoring & Evaluation Training - South Sudan
- 16 June - Sensitization of avocado stakeholders on the trade procedures on the Uganda Trade Portal and simplification opportunities - Uganda
- 22-26 June - 1st Regional Standardization Plan Steering Committee Meeting - Tanzania
- 22-26 June - Regional Group Training on the Maintenance and Troubleshooting of GC-MS Equipment - Kenya
- 22-26 June - Tanzanian Spices Exporters for support on EU Spices Buyer Tour - Tanzania
- 24-25 June - Gum Arabic Harvesting Training 2 - South Sudan
- 24-25 June - Trade Simplification Workshop - Rwanda
- 25-27 June - World of Coffee Brussels
- 30 June-2 July - MARKUP II EAC TPO Masterclass on Digitalisation & AI - Uganda





MARKUP II

EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme Phase II

A regional development initiative that promotes economic growth in the East African Community (EAC) through private sector development and export promotion.

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