

EU-EAC MARKUP II IN KENYA

Here's a quick look at the key results, along with a few success stories and flagship initiatives from MARKUP II, a programme funded by the European Union as part of the Global Gateway initiative. It shows how the programme has made an impact in Kenya, from strengthening quality infrastructure and boosting the competitiveness of SMEs to empowering women and young entrepreneurs and expanding access to regional and international markets.



Republic of Kenya

The EU-EAC MARKUP II - is a regional development initiative that provides support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the East African Community (EAC) to enhance their export competitiveness, value addition and access to markets.

Duration	Funder	Unrealized Export Potential
2023- 2027	European Union (EU)	\$ 78 millions.

Main Implementing Partners and Beneficiaries

EAC Secretariat, relevant Partner States ministries and departments in Burundi, MSMEs and public/private institutions, research and Business Support Organizations (BSOs) in selected sectors.

Objectives

- Contribute to economic development in the East African Community through increased sustainable intra-EAC /African and EU-EAC trade.
- Improve livelihoods, employment, export competitiveness for MSMEs
- Promote economic growth in the region through value-addition, processing, diversification, export and investment promotion of priority value chains.

Key Activities:

- Establishing a Value-chain specific Trade Obstacles Alert and Resolution Mechanism
- Providing capacity building on market analysis and trade-related information
- Harmonizing technical requirements for market access.
- Providing capacity building in sector branding, labels and geographical indications and traceability
- Providing capacity building in leather business and export skills of sector SMEs and cooperatives
- Providing financial advisory services for MSMEs including access to investment facilities and information on financing
- Facilitating regional business collaboration deals at MSME and Business Support Organisation levels



EU Participation at the ASFW



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



From Kabati to the World: Inclusive Craftsmanship, Strengthened by EU-EAC MARKUP II



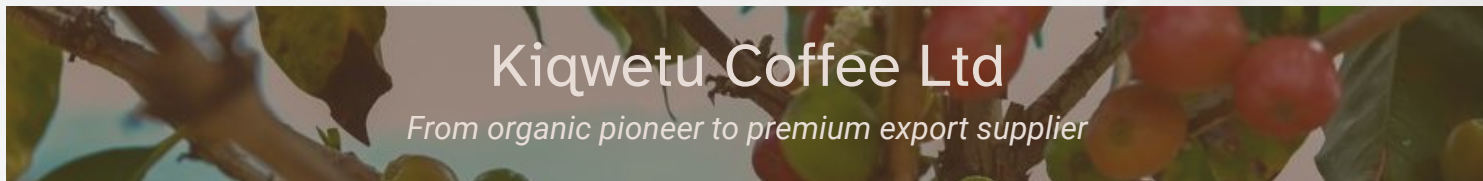
From Kabati to international markets, Nashipai Leather demonstrates how trade can become a driver of inclusion, sustainability, and economic transformation when women, creativity, and opportunity are intentionally placed at the centre of development interventions.

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.

From Origin to Opportunity

How EU-EAC MARKUP II is strengthening Kenya's coffee value chain



Kiqwetu Coffee Ltd began as an environmental restoration project, transforming a neglected quarry into a thriving organic coffee farm. Despite being one of the first organic-certified estates in Kenya, the business had limited visibility and sold mainly bulk green coffee through indirect channels. With support from the EU-EAC MARKUP II Programme, Kiqwetu expanded its market reach, improved export pricing, strengthened certification readiness, and moved toward value addition.

How MARKUP II supported

<p>Regional and international market access including AFCA & World of Coffee</p>	<p>VSS capacity building, IMS development, audit preparation, and certification support</p>	<p>Support in value addition through roasting training, marketing, branding and packaging</p>
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Results at a Glance

<p>Annual revenue USD 42,000 → USD 65,000 (+54%)</p>	<p>Export volume 2.4 MT → 6 MT (+150%)</p>	<p>Export value USD 24,000 → USD 55,000 (+129%)</p>	<p>Premium price/kg USD 8 → 14 (+75%)</p>	<p>Export markets 1→3</p>
<p>Direct buyers 2→5</p>	<p>Certifications 1→2 (Rainforest, Organic)</p>	<p>Employees 8 → 12</p>	<p>Repeat orders 8X increase</p>	<p>Value addition Roasting up to 2,000 kg/month</p>

"MARKUP exposed me in terms of market access. Being one of the first organic-certified estates in Kenya, we were not well known. After participating in the MARKUP programmes, I gained visibility. World of Coffee was the game changer. The contracts I'm signing now and the pricing I'm getting are a direct result of that participation."

– Jack Melly, Founder, Kiqwetu Coffee



Wanrich Investment

From auction floors to direct trade success



Founded in 2019, Wanrich Investments scaled to commercial production in 2022. Despite the quality of its coffee, most went through the auction at ~USD 5/kg, far below direct specialty prices. With Support from EU-EAC MARKUP II, Wanrich Investments shifted to high-value direct trade, expanded markets and export volumes, secured finance to professionalise operations and scale and created quality jobs and improving resource efficiency.

How MARKUP II supported



Regional and international market access including World of Coffee











Access to finance training and B2B coaching and networking support



RECP coaching introduced water recycling and eco-pulper systems

Results at a Glance

 Annual revenue USD 20,000 → USD 50,000 (+150%)	 Export volume 5 MT → 9 MT (+280%)	 Finance secured USD 30,000	 Premium price/kg USD 5 → 10 (+100%)
 Export markets 1→2	 Certifications 0 → Rainforest alliance in progress	 Employees 1→5	 Savings from RECP implementation USD 50/month

"Through the training on access to finance I got from MARKUP I was able to secure financial aid from Unconventional Capital (UnCap) from Mauritius. The funding enabled enabled me to move all my farm operations from home to the farm office."

– Jane Kamau, Founder, Wanrich Investments Company



Blazing Barry's Coffee

Youth led entrepreneurship driving specialty coffee growth












Blazing Barry's Coffee is a youth-led, fully integrated coffee enterprise founded by Victor. The company oversees production, processing, roasting, branding, and export of both green and roasted specialty coffee. It represents a distinctive model – a youth movement as much as a business, creating opportunities for young farmers and the next generation of coffee professionals. Before MARKUP, annual revenue stood at USD 7,000 and 1 MT export volume.

How MARKUP II supported

 <p>RECP coaching with a dedicated technical coach</p>	 <p>Targeted support through the Youth Agribusiness Accelerator</p>	 <p>Tailored marketing and branding support</p>
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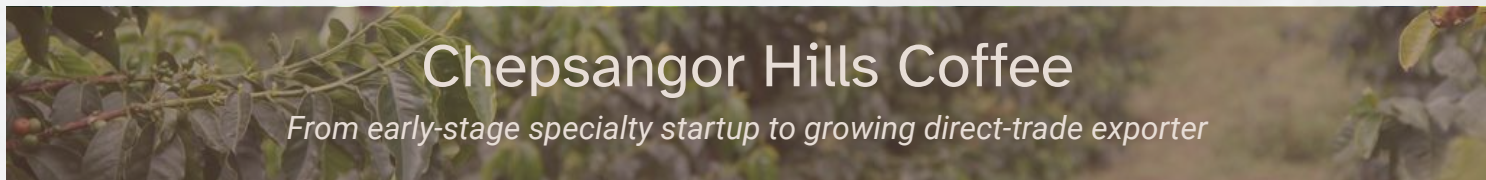
Results at a Glance

 <p>Annual revenue USD 7,000 → USD 23,000 (+228%)</p>	 <p>Export volume 1 MT → 4.2 MT (+320%)</p>	 <p>Finance secured USD 30,000</p>	 <p>Premium price/kg USD 50/kg for processed products</p>	 <p>Product innovation: On farm coffee lab established enabling quality analysis, experimentation, and yellow honey processed specialty coffee production</p>
 <p>Export markets 2→3</p>	 <p>Certifications 0 → Rainforest alliance in progress</p>	 <p>Employees 2→5</p>	 <p>Monthly power cost saved USD 50/month</p>	

"These platforms were very impactful for us, especially in terms of brand visibility and networking. We connected with roasters, machine suppliers, and other industry players."

– Victor Murei, Founder, Blazing Barry's Coffee





Chepsangor Hills Coffee

From early-stage specialty startup to growing direct-trade exporter











Chepsangor Hills Coffee is a family-owned specialty estate that began in 2019 with a minimal farmer base and just USD 200 in documented export value. From the outset, the company focused on quality processing and direct trade. Through MARKUP I and MARKUP II, the company has strengthened value addition, expand market reach and continued innovation in processing. Under MARKUP II, local market reach expanded significantly through partnerships with Spring Valley Coffee and Point Zero Coffee, local roasters that export to Europe.

How MARKUP I and II supported

 <p>Regional and international market access including World of Coffee</p>	 <p>Tailored marketing and branding support</p>	 <p>Training on SCA sensory skills, green coffee analysis and coffee trading</p>
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Results at a Glance

 <p>Annual revenue USD 200 → USD 120,000</p>	 <p>Local sales 5 MT → 9 MT (+280%)</p>	 <p>Finance secured USD 30,000</p>	 <p>Farmgate pricing +40% increase</p>
 <p>Export markets 0 → 4</p>	 <p>Farmer network 0 → 240</p>	 <p>Employees 2 → 8</p>	 <p>Skills transfer 18 participants in network trained</p>

"Branding training, with a focus on digital presence, had the biggest and most lasting impact. With MARKUP's support, the company built a clear brand and a strong digital presence targeting roasters, especially on Instagram."

– Chepsangor Hills Coffee Team



Supergibs Limited

Decades-old Enterprise breaks into U.S. Retail and private label markets










SUPERGIBS COFFEE

Supergibs Limited is a well-established Kenyan coffee enterprise operating across the full value chain in partnership with approximately 10 estate farmers. Having operated for decades, the company had a domestic market presence but limited international commercial footprint. Support under MARKUP I and II helped Supergibs strengthen in-house quality control, build roast profile expertise, expand digital sales, secure new international buyers and grow its workforce.

How MARKUP I and MARKUP II supported

 <p>Regional and international market access including MSME Trade Fair and World of Coffee</p>	 <p>Tailored marketing and branding support</p>	 <p>Training on green coffee and sensory analysis and SCA roasting training</p>
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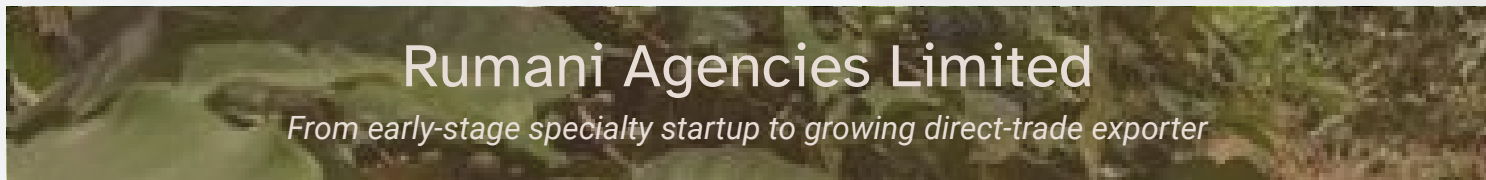
Results at a Glance

 <p>Digital sales 400% increase</p>	 <p>Local sales +50% in sales of value added brand 'Tulon'</p>	 <p>Quality control USD 230 saved per licensing contract through in-house quality control</p>	 <p>Private label services New service introduced, clients include Carrefour KE and contributes to the 3rd largest income stream for the company</p>
 <p>Export markets 2-3</p>	 <p>International market None -> Major retail breakthrough in US market</p>	 <p>Employees 35 -> 50</p>	

"Now I'm a professional roaster myself... I'm able to understand the right profiles, the right quality, and even teach others."

- Mathew Mugo, Director, Supergibs Limited





Rumani Agencies began operations in 2018 as a new trading company in a competitive field. With under two years of operation and limited formal experience in coffee, the company faced constraints including low value addition, limited export markets, and gaps in technical credibility. Support under MARKUP I and II helped Rumani strengthen coffee evaluation skills, build buyer confidence, expand export markets and move into roasted coffee with significantly higher margins.

How MARKUP I and II supported

Regional and international market access including World of Coffee

Training on SCA sensory skills, green coffee analysis and coffee trading

Results at a Glance

<p>Annual revenue USD 200 → USD 120,000</p>	<p>Export volume 1 MT → 4.2 MT (+320%)</p>	<p>Export value USD 100,000 → USD 600,000 (+600%)</p>	<p>Employees 2 → 8</p>
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"MARKUP came in at a critical time. It helped us build the skills, exposure, and credibility that we are now growing from."

– James Kariuki, Co-founder
Rumani Agencies Limited



Sakami Coffee

Estate builds long-standing partnership & expands organic offering



Sakami Coffee was established in 2004 by Gloria and Jarmo Gummerus and introduced coffee in 2011. The farm has grown to approximately 60,000 trees on the mineral-rich volcanic slopes of Mount Elgon. Despite steady growth and a strong commitment to quality, reliable market access remained a major challenge for nearly a decade. Support under MARKUP I and II helped Sakami strengthen its market access, technical confidence, certification profile and buyer network.

How MARKUP I and II supported

Market access and B2B support including World of Coffee

Training on quality grading and cupping and technical know-how.

Results at a Glance

<p>Annual revenue USD 70,000 → USD 400,000 (+471%)</p>	<p>Export volume 13,000Kg → 23,000 Kg (76.9%)</p>	<p>Employees 2→8</p>	<p>Investments BASF infrastructure support secured</p>
<p>Certifications 0→2</p>	<p>Partnerships 5+ year partnership with Dutch distributor</p>	<p>Export markets 0→4</p>	

"MARKUP provided the foundation – skills, exposure, and connections – that allowed us to access markets and grow. Now I know what our coffees are worth. I am confident at the negotiating table, and I know how to speak their language"

– Gloria Gummerus, Co-founder, Sakami Coffee



Participation in World of Coffee Event (Geneva)



40 coffee companies participated in the World of Coffee, Europe's largest coffee trade fair, held in Geneva this year. With support from the EU-EAC MARKUP II programme, their participation facilitated valuable market linkages within the EU market and beyond. It also provided an opportunity to gather market intelligence on consumer demand trends, competitor offerings, and emerging opportunities in the global coffee sector. We had conversations with several participants to learn about their experiences.



Showcasing Kenyan Leather Companies at Africa Sourcing & Fashion Week (Nairobi)

Nairobi: 17 leather footwear and accessories manufacturers and tanneries from Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tanzania exhibited at the Africa Sourcing and Fashion Week (ASFW) 2025 held in Nairobi, Kenya.

As part of the European Union (EU)-funded EU-East African Community (EAC) MARKUP II programme, the International Trade Centre (ITC) facilitated the participation of these leather businesses specializing in footwear and accessories from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan. The delegation also included business support organizations (BSOs) and key institutional partners.

This initiative created new business opportunities and significantly boosted international visibility for East Africa's leather sector.



Watch on Youtube



KENYA ON THE GLOBAL PAGE

Regional & International Visibility

On the sidelines, ITC also hosted a high-level panel discussion titled “The Future of East Africa’s Regional Leather Industry: Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities.” in partnership with the African Leather and Leather Products Institute (ALLPI).

The panel brought together industry experts, policymakers, and business leaders to address key challenges facing the sector, including limited value addition, infrastructure deficits, and environmental sustainability.

Jimmy Odhiambo, the current EAC Chair, Ministry of Investments, Trade, and Industry Kenya in his opening remarks said: *“This forum is instrumental in highlighting the vital role that leather associations can play in creating a more creative, inclusive and competitive industry. Associations are the connective tissue of the value-chain. They amplify voices, foster collaboration and create pathways to scale.”*

Angela Becaty, ITC Regional Coordinator for the EU-EAC MARKUP II programme, said: *“The demand for footwear is growing in the EAC. If we could fill the gaps in demand through locally produced leather footwear, there is a potential to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. ITC reaffirms its strong commitment to the EAC Secretariat and all our Partner States. With support from the EU, through MARKUP II, we’re here to support capacity building, policy alignment, and improved access to regional and international markets.”*

EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & INNOVATION

Access to Finance & Trade Facilitation

East Africa’s First Packaging Directory for SMEs launched



“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.

EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & INNOVATION**Access to Finance & Trade Facilitation****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.

The MSME Financing Gateway launched in Kenya

The MSME Financing Gateway, a revolutionary digital platform tailored to address the unique challenges faced by MSMEs in securing financing was also launched in Kenya.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) developed the MSME Financing Gateway for the East African Community (EAC) under the first phase of the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP) funded by the European Union. The Gateway now launched in the second phase of EU-EAC MARKUP and to be hosted by the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), will allow users to access financing instruments, business, and sustainable development services available in a country, filter, analyse and match their needs, and then link directly to providers at no cost.

This multi-lingual platform works on mobile phones, computers or tablets and is easy for hosts to maintain. Subscribers will also be able to receive updates and notifications via e-mail informing them about new facilities and resources. Providers will be able to update their data through easy-to-use templates and an administrators' workflow system.

The Gateway will be instrumental in supporting MSMEs to thrive and contribute to the economic development of their communities.

Non-Tariff Measures Self-Assessment Tool Supporting Trade Readiness



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.

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.

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.

EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & INNOVATION**Access to Finance & Trade Facilitation**

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.

ITC-Certified Packaging Supplier Directory for East African SMEs

Introducing the first-ever ITC-certified packaging suppliers directory.

Small businesses across East Africa often face a common challenge: finding reliable, high-quality, and affordable packaging. For many SMEs, this becomes a barrier to growth, limiting their ability to improve products, meet market standards, or expand into new markets.

SME-Friendly Packaging Suppliers

To help address this, the International Trade Centre (ITC), under the European Union (EU) funded EU-East African Community (EAC) MARKUP II programme, has launched a new and first-of-its-kind online directory of packaging suppliers who have been verified as SME-friendly.

This tool, developed entirely through MARKUP II, aims to make it easier for SMEs in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda to access trusted packaging partners.

The directory brings together suppliers who have been assessed and certified by the ITC. Being “SME-friendly certified” means a supplier has demonstrated strong customer service, consistent product quality, affordable pricing, and experience working with small businesses. It also means they have taken steps to address the packaging challenges that many SMEs in the region encounter.

Explore the Directory Here



EXPANDING MARKET ACCESS & INNOVATION

Access to Finance & Trade Facilitation

Why is this useful for SMEs?

SMEs can access this directory free of charge and quickly find packaging solutions that suit their needs. This directory not only makes it easier for SMEs to identify trustworthy suppliers; it also gives certified suppliers the chance to raise their visibility. Any packaging manufacturer or distributor operating in the MARKUP II countries can apply for certification at no cost. Successful suppliers are featured in the directory,

making it easier for SMEs to find them and increasing their credibility among potential clients.

Free Certification for Suppliers

Suppliers interested in joining the directory can contact packaging@intracen.org to find out whether they qualify for the free SME-friendly certification. With this new directory, East African SMEs now have a clear, reliable pathway to better packaging and stronger growth.

DRIVING SME COMPETITIVENESS

Boosting Key Sectors

Coffee Sector Support Improving Quality and Export Readiness

"Coffee unites people around the world, and I was happy to expand my business network with coffee professionals. This was my first experience attending a roasting training. I also learned the importance of precise timing and temperature control while roasting. One of the highlights was learning about development time and its impact on attributes such as flavour, colour, and taste, something so important for being successful in specialty coffee markets," explained John Seroney, Co-founder and Director at Sumseron Coffee & Tea Ltd.

Amid the growing Nairobi coffee scene, a group of dedicated small roasting business owners and roasting artisans gathered for an invaluable training session.

"With advanced roasting techniques, I can fine-tune flavour profiles and consistently produce high quality coffee beans that appeal to specialty coffee consumers," said Edwin Mwangi of Torch Coffee.

The training aimed to deepen the participants' understanding of the art and science of coffee roasting, equipping them with the precision needed to elevate their craft to meet the ever-discerning requirements of coffee consumers. This initiative, provided by the second phase of the European Union (EU) – East African Community (EAC)

Market Access Upgrade Program (EU-EAC MARKUP II) project, funded by the EU, aims to contribute to driving the domestic consumption of coffee as a complementary market for Kenya coffee producers and to boost youth entrepreneurship and employment in cafes and roasteries.

The training led by renowned coffee expert Asli Yaman under the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) coffee roasting module, brought together participants from enterprises such as Utake Coffee, Sumseron Coffee and Tea, Torch Coffee Kenya, Coffee Lounge, Jowam Coffee Traders, Rumani Agencies, and others.

Participants also learnt about the new Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) protocols and were awarded a certificate from the SCA.

DRIVING SME COMPETITIVENESS

Boosting Key Sectors

Leather Manufacturing Training Enhancing Value Addition and Skills



18 participants representing 11 Kenyan, 1 Tanzanian and 1 Rwandese SMEs including 3 Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) staff members attended a training that covered assembly and construction techniques for manufacturing leather belts and bags.

In focus were finishing techniques that each company would be able to employ and rework one of their products to create a new version that meets the criteria of luxury/high-end leather goods.

Participants also visited KIRDI common facilities and equipment that can be availed for assembly and construction techniques of leather accessories.

The training allowed for experience and knowledge sharing between more advanced and less mature companies.

The training was conducted with support from the second phase of the EU-EAC MARKUP II programme.

Kenyan Companies Showcased at Regional Textile and Leather Events



The 3rd edition of the East Africa Textile and Leather Week (EATLW) 2024 concluded with remarkable success, drawing in 2,150 visitors from over 30 countries over the course of three days at the Sarit Expo Centre in Nairobi.

This premier event showcased the best in the textile, leather, and fashion industries across East Africa, and provided an invaluable platform for networking, innovation, and sustainable development.

The opening ceremony in May was led by Dr. Juma Mukhwana, Principal Secretary for the State Department of Industry, Ministry of Investments, Trade, and Industry.

A significant highlight of the event was the participation of over 100 exhibitors from over 30 countries, including 11 exhibitors from Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Tanzania.

DRIVING SME COMPETITIVENESS

Empowering Entrepreneurs



The East African Women in Business Platform (EAWiBP), conducted a five-day Master Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop in Nairobi. The training, titled "Communicating About My Business for Market Success," equipped women entrepreneurs with the tools to better position their businesses for regional and international trade.

Women Entrepreneurs Strengthened Through Master Trainer Programmes in Nairobi

Held in early September, the workshop brought together 12 Master Trainers from all six East African Community (EAC) Partner States—Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. These trainers will play a key role in rolling out the program nationally, ensuring a ripple effect of knowledge and capacity-building across the region.

The training later expanded to include 30 women entrepreneurs from Kenya, offering a hands-on learning experience that fostered peer exchange and practical application of key communication strategies.

Key objectives included:

- Strengthening communication, leadership, and facilitation capacities of trainers
- Adapting training content to fit local contexts and varying business maturity levels
- Promoting regional peer learning and harmonized approaches to capacity building
- Creating a strong network of certified trainers to scale the program across EAC countries

Enhancing business communication skills, developing compelling narratives for market engagement, and increasing business visibility and competitiveness were the focus areas of the training. Under the MARKUP II framework, ITC's SheTrades initiative continues to support women entrepreneurs by improving their access to global markets through skills development, networking, and trade opportunities.



Young agripreneurs supported through the MARKUP Youth Agribusiness Accelerator

MARKUP Youth Agribusiness Accelerator officially kicked off in mid-September, selecting 90 exceptional youth-led enterprises from Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. The programme aims to equip agripreneurs aged 18–35 with the technical, business, and market skills needed to scale sustainable agribusinesses.

Over four months, participants aged 18–35 took part in targeted training modules designed to address the most pressing gaps in youth agribusiness—

from productivity and value addition to business modeling and financial management. These online sessions were complemented by in-person engagements, where entrepreneurs reflected on their progress, exchanged experiences, and received mentorship from business support organizations including the Westerwelle Foundation (Rwanda), Hive Colab (Uganda), and Africa Harvest (Kenya). Mentors offered practical insights, helping participants navigate challenges and apply new skills directly within their enterprises.

Improving market access

A core pillar of the Accelerator was improving market access, one of the biggest barriers faced by young MSMEs. Through partner BSOs, youth entrepreneurs showcased their products at high-profile trade fairs and B2B platforms, including the Uganda International Trade Fair (UGITF), the East Africa Coffee Market & Conference (EACMC), and the East Africa MSME Trade Fair.

EACMC

12 youth agripreneurs participated in the EACMC held from 28–30 October 2025 in Nairobi, engaging with over 1,000 regional and international coffee stakeholders. Supported enterprises—from green bean producers to roasters—built new business connections, explored export pathways, and gained insights into EUDR requirements, sustainable processing, and digital tools. One participant secured an export agreement with a Germany-based buyer.

EAC MSME Trade Fair

From 7–16 November, seven agripreneurs also took part in the 25th EAC MSME Trade Fair in Uganda, using the platform to test product appeal, meet potential buyers, and strengthen their presence in regional markets.

By combining technical training, mentorship, and real market exposure, the MARKUP Youth Agribusiness Accelerator is helping young East Africans build resilient, investment-ready agribusinesses—and positioning a new generation of entrepreneurs to compete confidently in regional and international markets.



Kenya Bureau of Standards Testing Schemes Accredited to International Standards



The National Accreditation Body for Kenya, KENAS has accredited Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) Proficiency Testing (PT) Scheme to ISO/IEC 17043.

A joint effort by EU EAC MARKUP II, Trade Mark and PTB supported the process that enabled KEBS to attain 21 accredited proficiency testing programmes. Out of these, 4 programmes focus on MARKUP II priority leather.

Significance of this achievement

The KEBS PT scheme accreditation is a key milestone in its efforts to enhance recognition. This implies that any laboratory successfully participating in a PT programme under the KEBS PT scheme would be recognized as competent in testing the respective commodities.

Additionally, the test methods applied by the individual laboratories may be accredited to relevant international standards because successful participation in proficiency testing programmes is a crucial step for laboratories seeking accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025.

Support to KEBS

The International Trade Centre supported the update and adoption of the Road Map for Accreditation of Proficiency Testing (PT) Providers, targeted for completion by July 2025. The revised roadmap was endorsed by the Testing Technical Subcommittee in December 2024, marking a key step toward strengthening quality infrastructure in the East African Community (EAC). To build capacity, ITC provided tailored training and advisory services to PT service providers across the EAC Partner States, focused on key international standards: ISO/IEC 17043 – General requirements for the competence of PT providers, ISO 13528:2022 – Statistical methods for interlaboratory comparisons, ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for auditing management systems and with a tailored hands on support to KEBS, TBS and UNBS.

In June 2025, at the request of KEBS, Kenya hosted a MARKUP II Regional Training for Assessors in Nairobi, with 15 participants from Partner States. The training included practical auditing exercises based on KEBS' own PT system documentation and a guided laboratory tour, offering hands-on experience and in-depth understanding of PT operations.

Steps Taken to Strengthen Tanzania's Quality Infrastructure

Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) and Uganda Bureau of Standards (UNBS) are also progressing steadily with their PT systems and aim for accreditation by the end of 2025.

A retreat workshop was held in Bagamoyo, Tanzania supported by the EU-EAC MARKUP II programme in collaboration with the TBS.

EU EAC MARKUP II continues to provide technical support, including documentation reviews and gap closure assistance, to ensure timely progress and sustainable quality assurance in the region.

In 2006, the EA Standards Committee established EAC Partner States' Proficiency testing schemes with a view to facilitating accreditation of test methods. In 2021 a Proficiency Testing Scheme EAC Peer GAP Assessment was conducted, with the Trademark East Africa (TMEA)'s support.

MSMEs Supported Through Quality Coaching Programmes



The EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme Phase II (MARKUP II), has partnered with three national Quality Associations to provide coaching support to 25 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya.

Through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) signed with the National Quality Association of Tanzania (NQAT), the Quality Assurance Association of Uganda Ltd. (QAAUL), and the Association of Quality Professionals (AQP) in Kenya, this collaboration aims to enhance the capacity of MSMEs in quality and food safety. Focused on the MARKUP priority sectors—coffee, cocoa, avocado, spices, and leather in these countries—the Quality Associations will equip enterprises with the skills necessary to meet international market standards and increase exports.

The establishment of these Quality Associations was a key achievement of the first phase of the EU-EAC MARKUP programme, which concluded in January 2023. Their continued involvement in MARKUP II underscores the sustainability of the project's impact, ensuring long-term capacity-building and ongoing support for quality compliance in the region.

As part of this partnership, the Quality Associations are also leading awareness-raising activities and providing training sessions designed to improve MSMEs' ability to implement quality standards and food safety practices. This initiative aligns with ITC's broader mission of strengthening trade-related technical assistance, fostering regional integration, and supporting MSME growth across East Africa.



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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