



Distr.
Limited
E/CN.14/ATC/4
18 January 1972

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Symposium on Intra-African Trade
Nairobi, 25 February - 3 March 1972

HOW TO FIND YOUR AFRICAN MARKETS

1. The commercial information service represents the first preparatory stage for an adequately planned export drive, whether a national export campaign, a trade delegation, a selling exhibit in a department store or a participation in an international fair. No export action, not even a private business trip can be properly prepared, if the basic facts about the market or markets concerned are not known, analyzed and evaluated. The information service should, therefore, be given a high priority in any system of export promotion activities.
2. Most recently during the Symposium on International Trade for East and Central African States, it was emphasized that the lack of mutual information in the commercial field between the African countries was a limiting factor especially as regards intra-African trade.
3. It was realized that there is a virtual lack of trade information concerning supply and demand even between neighbouring countries. This is one of the basic problems in the development of intra-regional trade.
4. The main aspects of this problem can be summarised as follows:
 - Lack of reliable trade statistics;
 - Lack of knowledge about production, supply and demand;
 - Lack of market information;
 - Lack of information about standards and quality requirements;
 - Lack of information about distribution channels;
 - Lack of information about transport and storage facilities.

5. In order to bring about a change in this situation and to offer the African governments, exporters and importers the facts they need for developing their trade exchanges, two questions are basic:

- (i) How to create reliable sources of trade information;
- (ii) How to organize a reliable and efficient exchange of trade information on a bilateral, sub-regional or even regional basis.

6. The creation of reliable sources of information is essentially a national task and should include the following stage:

- (i) Building up an efficient statistical service. For this task technical assistance is available in the various fields;
- (ii) Inventory of producers and production by the authorities concerned with industry and trade or by the organizations of the private sector;
- (iii) Creation of national trade information centres by the authorities or organizations mentioned;
- (iv) Improving and increasing the degree of organization and specialization of the industry and trade sector;
- (v) Publishing trade directories and guides with classified registers of national traders (exporters, importers, services) and informations about trade regulations, channels of import and distribution, etc.).

7. Exchange of trade information on a bilateral, sub-regional, inter-sub-regional and regional basis through:

On the bilateral and sub-regional level:

- Exchange of publications:
 - Custom tariffs;
 - Trade directories;
 - Market surveys;
 - Trade journals;
 - Official publication.
- Business contact service for exporters and importers;
- Regular meetings between representatives of the national information centres and the organizations of the business sector.

On the regional level:

- Trade symposia and conferences;
- Regional trade fairs;
- Information service of the ATC.

8. Arrangements should be made to institutionalize regular meetings on the regional level in order to exchange trade informations and experiences in the field of trade promotion. These meetings could be organized by the African Trade Promotion Association to be created and synchronized with African trade fairs.

9. It is recognized that the international commercial fairs provide one of the best and fastest media for the exchange of business information concerning supply, demand, prices, and terms of delivery. It would therefore be especially important for the development of the information services in the region to give the existing fairs an increasing commercial character, in order to develop them into real centres for product display, trade information and business contacts. In this context emphasis should be put on the information services of the national pavillions and on the establishment of a business contact service organized by ATC during the fair. These arrangements would help the business visitors to identify their sources of supply and to locate their potential markets in the region.

10. The Africa Trade Centre has started developing a commercial information service on a regional level in order to be able to facilitate contacts between exporters and importers in the region and provide information about supply, demand, marketing conditions, trade regulations, distribution channels, etc. and act as a "clearing house" for commercial information. This information service, however, has to be established as a joint effort of ATC and the national centres for trade information. As a first step ATC has initiated an inventory of products, producers and exporters of the region which it considers to be the very basis of the information and business contact service to be offered to the member countries and provide material for an African trade directory to be published in the future. ATC is planning to publish a semi-monthly newsletter; the African Trader which is intended to provide regular and wide distribution of the requisite information.

11. However, ATC urgently needs the co-operation of the national units of the region in order to be able to offer an adequate service and provide the distribution channels for the two-way flow of informations.

12. ATC believes that this co-operation of the national units already existing or to be established and of the organizations of the private sector will enable it to render a reliable and streamlined service to the development of intra-African trade, helping the governments and the traders to identify their sources of supply and their markets in the region.