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Report Highlights:

The *Ghana Gist* is a new monthly roundup of regional developments relevant to U.S. food and agricultural trade, covering Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Highlights in the February 2019 edition include Ghana's exciting tourism prospects, regional port developments, leveraging of the private sector by USDA-funded projects, and various commodity sector updates.

The Ghana Gist

February 2019

Disclaimer: This monthly update provides a summary of the region's fast-changing agricultural trade landscape through information gained from field travel, various media sources, host-country contacts, and analysis of agricultural trends. Links are provided where appropriate. Inclusion in this report does not reflect USDA's, the U.S. Embassy's, or any other U.S. government agency's official point of view or policy.

GHANA:

GHANA POISED FOR UPSWING IN TOURISM: After receiving international attention for its tourism potential, Ghana will be an increasingly popular destination in 2019 and beyond. Boasting numerous sites of both cultural/historical significance and natural beauty, improving infrastructure and modern facilities will further entice visitors. A new terminal at Accra's Kotoka International Airport is the most visible evidence, and allows for further development of Ghana's international linkages. President Nana Akufo-Addo announced the 'Year of Return Ghana' in 2019, encouraging members of the African diaspora to return to Ghana to explore their heritage and reconnect with the continent. In addition to national initiatives, the World Bank recently approved a \$40 million grant for upgrading local tourist facilities. ([CNN](#), [GhanaWeb](#))

STUDY PREDICTS GE RELEASE WOULD SPUR GROWTH IN COWPEA SECTOR: A new economic study finds that domestically developed Bt cowpea would grow the local sector by 10 percent, or \$46 million, over the next six years. Ghana's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) developed a pest-resistant variety of cowpea, which expects to both reduce losses to pests and decrease insecticide applications. The variety is currently under review for commercial release. CSIR conducted the study in conjunction with the University of Ghana and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). ([MyJoyOnline](#), [Alliance for Science](#))

PAPERLESS CUSTOMS SYSTEM IMPROVES IMPORT REVENUE AND PERCEPTIONS: Data from the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) shows import revenue increased 3.9 percent in CY 2018. Credited with much of these gains is the rollout of a paperless port system in late 2017, which has reduced the time and cost of clearing goods at Ghana's ports of entry. This simplification of the customs clearance process is one factor in the country's incremental improvement in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2018, moving up to 78 out of 180 countries (ranked 81st in 2017). The Tema Port Expansion, slated for completion in June 2019, could spur additional volume and revenue. ([Business & Financial Times](#), [Ghana News Agency](#))

CÔTE D'IVOIRE:

USDA-FUNDED COCOA PROJECT SIGNS MOU WITH U.S. COMPANY: The Maximizing Opportunity in Cocoa Activities (MOCA) project, implemented by Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA), recently signed an MOU with U.S.-based Blommer Chocolate Company. The agreement will focus on cooperative management as well as methods of financing and input provision,

to improve the quality and sustainability of cocoa production. USDA's Food for Progress program funds the MOCA project, which provides capacity building throughout the cocoa value chain in Côte d'Ivoire, the world's largest producer. See Events section below for an upcoming Webinar for the private sector, hosted by CNFA and the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan. ([Abidjan.net](#), [CSR Wire](#))

GOVERNMENT CUTS CASHEW PRODUCER PRICES: On February 6, amidst unfavorable global pricing and domestic oversupply, the cashew sector's national regulatory agency reduced the floor price to CFA375 per kilo (\$0.56), 25 percent lower than the prior year's price of 500CFA. The 2019 marketing year (MY) began on February 15, and annual production of raw cashew nut (RCN) continues to grow, reaching 761,000 metric tons (MT) in 2018. While local processing increased nearly 50 percent in 2018, the country still exports over 90 percent of its production as RCN, primarily to India and Vietnam, where processing costs are much lower. Vietnam reduced its purchases the previous year, which left significant quantities unsold. Policymakers seek to process at least 50 percent of total production domestically by 2020, to capture more value domestically and decrease exposure to fluctuating RCN export demand. ([Jeune Afrique](#), [Agence Ivoirienne de Presse](#))

COMPLETION OF CANAL PROJECT SEEKS TO BOOST PORT TRAFFIC: Côte d'Ivoire recently completed a three-year widening and deepening project of the Vridi Canal, which provides access to the Port of Abidjan. The Port is by far the country's most important channel of trade, accounting for over three-quarters of customs revenue. The expansion widened the channel from 200 to 350 meters and increased depth from 14 to 22 meters, which will allow access for larger new-generation container ships. This project concludes as the Port of Abidjan plans to open a second container terminal in 2020. The Port of Abidjan is one of the largest ports in West Africa in terms of annual volume, but previously could not accommodate the largest vessels. This results in higher transit costs relative to other regional ports such as Tema and Lomé. As a result, Abidjan reportedly handles less volume than those ports and struggles to remain the preference for landlocked countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. ([RFI](#), [Slate Afrique](#))

COFFEE PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS SET TO GROW: Following a MY 2016/17 characterized by drought conditions in coffee growing regions and bottlenecks at the port midway through MY 2017/18, Côte d'Ivoire's coffee exports are set to rebound slightly in MY 2018/19 (Oct-Sep), currently estimated at 78,000 MT. The country is the second largest producer of Robusta coffee in Sub-Saharan Africa after Uganda, producing a projected 84,000 MT in 2018/19. Côte d'Ivoire exports primarily to Algeria, the continent's second-largest consumer. Current production and trade pales in comparison to pre-2000 levels. ([USDA PSD](#), [Commodafrica](#))

LIBERIA / SIERRA LEONE / TOGO:

POROUS BORDERS PRESENT CHALLENGES FOR REVENUE COLLECTION: Liberian authorities currently struggle to collect import revenue due to porous borders, particularly with Guinea and Sierra Leone. Liberia's relatively high import duties and fees, in addition to reportedly long wait times and logistics costs at the Port of Monrovia are all potential drivers of this trend, in which it is more economical to land goods at the ports in Freetown or Conakry and transit goods informally into Liberia. Of Liberia's 176 entry points, only an estimated 46 are currently guarded. ([AllAfrica](#))

FLOUR PRICE SPIKE IN FREETOWN: Due to a sudden surge in the price of flour on the local

market, bread prices increased markedly in Sierra Leone beginning on February 19. Authorities actually reduced duties on wheat and flour recently, but simultaneously undertook stricter collection to which local traders reportedly responded negatively. Food expenses consume a major proportion of household incomes, and average Sierra Leoneans feel price fluctuations quite acutely. With only one flourmill in country, Sierra Leone imports wheat sporadically, and primarily relies on imported flour from Turkey and the European Union.

LOMÉ PORT EXPERIENCES SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN TRAFFIC: The Port of Lomé, which tripled its number of containers handled from 2013 to 2017, continues to grow in regional importance. The opening of a new container terminal facilitated this increase, and spurred an additional 25 percent growth in traffic for the first half of 2018. Lomé appears to be growing in preference for transshipments to/from the Sahel. ([Togo First](#), [Quartz](#))

REGIONAL:

ALIGNMENT OF GHANA-CÔTE D’IVOIRE COCOA SECTORS: At the outset of MY 2018/19 in October 2018, the world’s two largest cocoa producers agreed on a number of initiatives to better align their sectors. Côte d’Ivoire discontinued its previous system of auctions in favor direct sales to exporters, a model that Ghana currently employs. It also increased the maximum amount of beans that can be marketed on a daily basis to take advantage of price movements. Through the first week of February, Côte d’Ivoire sold an estimated 400,000 MT through the new system in the 2018/19 campaign. It also raised its farm gate price for cocoa beans to CFA 750 per kilo (\$1.31 USD) to align more closely with Ghana’s GHC 7.6 per kilo (\$1.43 USD). The disparity in floor prices between the two countries in previous seasons is a potential cause of lost sales through informal cross border trade. ([Jeune Afrique](#), [Nasdaq](#))

WEST AFRICA’S CHANGING DAIRY LANDSCAPE: With population growth and rising prosperity driving demand for dairy products, there is increasing interest among multinational dairy companies in the West African market. To date, the vast majority of commercialized production derives from imported milk powders, as local production remains seasonal, inefficient, and largely confined to local producing communities. However, the development of local dairy industries appears to be gaining in popularity as a compliment to imported products. In 2018, Ghana agreed upon protocols for the import of U.S. cattle. See July 2018 GAIN report entitled “*Ghana Opens Market to U.S. Cattle*”. According to available statistics, dairy imports in FAS Accra’s coverage area totaled \$224 million in 2017. ([Commodafrica](#), [CIRAD](#))

Upcoming Agriculture/Trade Events:

Date(s)	Event	Location
March 6	Webinar, <i>Premium Cocoa Opportunities in Côte d’Ivoire</i> , hosted by U.S. Embassy Abidjan and USDA-funded MOCA Project (Register here)	Remote
April 4	National Seed Trade Association of Ghana (NASTAG) 9th Annual Preseason Agribusiness Networking & Exhibition Forum	Tamale, Ghana
May 7-9	Joint Côte d’Ivoire/Ghana Buyers Delegation to Seafood Expo	Brussels,

	Global	Belgium
May 18-21	Ghanaian Buyers Delegation to the National Restaurant Association Show	Chicago, USA
May 22-23	4th Annual Cassava & Starch Exhibition	Accra, Ghana
Summer 2019 (TBD)	18th Annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
October 5-9	Ivorian Buyers Delegation to Anuga Trade Fair	Cologne, Germany
November 11-22	Agriculture and Animal Resources Exhibition (SARA)	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
November 19-21	6th Annual AgroFood West Africa International Trade Show	Accra, Ghana