

The principal RTAs comprising ACP States



Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS): Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines



Caribbean Community (CARICOM): Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago



South Pacific Applied Geosciences Community (SOPAC)

SOPAC member countries include: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu



Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC): Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and São Tomé and Príncipe



Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL): Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda



Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA):

Angola, Burundi, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe



Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS): Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe



Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina

Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo



Mano River Union (MRU): Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone



Southern African Development Community (SADC):

Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe



West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA):

Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo

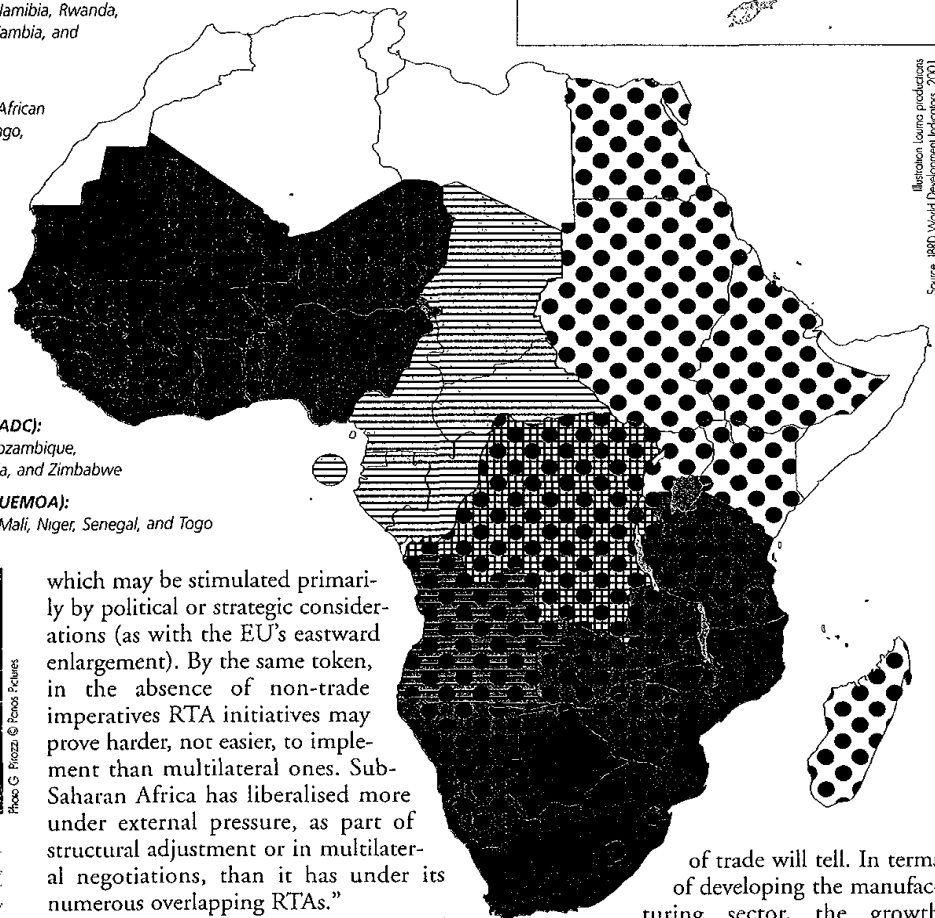
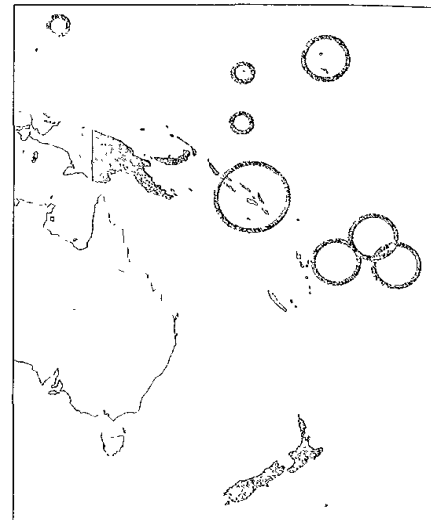
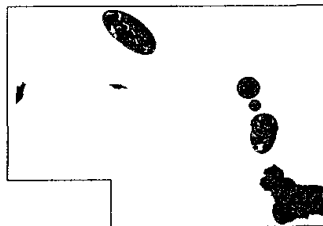


Illustration: Laura Prosser
Source: IBC World Development Indicators, 2001



Photo: G. Prosser © Photos Pictures

Regional trade is a reality

The new ACP-EC Cotonou Agreement provides that in 2002 the EU and regional trade blocs in the ACP States (e.g. CARICOM in the Caribbean, SADC in Southern Africa, SOPAC in the Pacific) will enter into negotiations on Regional Economic Partnership Agreements. The new Agreements should be concluded by 2008 and will provide for free trade between the EU and the ACP regional trade blocs. The moves towards free trade would begin in 2008 and could take as long as a further 12 years.

The World Trade Organisation which, in theory, encourages open and free trade with neither preferential nor protective agreements between trading nations, does in fact allow regional trading agreements, on the understanding that they help participants to prepare for unrestricted trade.

which may be stimulated primarily by political or strategic considerations (as with the EU's eastward enlargement). By the same token, in the absence of non-trade imperatives RTA initiatives may prove harder, not easier, to implement than multilateral ones. Sub-Saharan Africa has liberalised more under external pressure, as part of structural adjustment or in multilateral negotiations, than it has under its numerous overlapping RTAs."

The same does not apply, it must be pointed out, in other ACP regions. In the Pacific, and to an even greater extent in the Caribbean, with its dynamic CARICOM, regional trade has succeeded in developing a wider market, in achieving the intended economies of scale, and in helping economies adjust to multilateral free trade. The woes of some sectors, such as the banana industry, in the context of globalisation have been mitigated to some extent by CARICOM efforts to facilitate their transition to niche marketing or alternative production.

Is the obvious preference of several ACP economies for regional trade, to ask the famous question, a building block or a stumbling block on the road into the world economy? Time, statistics and the balance

of trade will tell. In terms of developing the manufacturing sector, the growth potential is clear. Some argue that it is this growth, with associated improvements in living standards, which will then pull agricultural trade along. In terms of enabling the required growth in the agricultural sector, perhaps more is needed. In a world where sometimes artificial borders such as 'regions' are increasingly crossed not only by winds, birds and viruses but also by global trading opportunities and the attractions of electronic commerce, you need to stand on some rather firm ground to persist in that preference, and to protect it.

Contact: International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO
ITC, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Fax +41 22 733 44 39
Email: itcereg@intracen.org
Website: www.intracen.org