



PREFACE TO FRENCH TRANSLATION OF

**“EPAs - WHAT’S IN IT FOR WOMEN?
WOMEN IN ZIMBABWE: ISSUES IN FUTURE TRADE
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EU”**

Issues in the Zimbabwe study relevant for Francophone African countries

Despite the very different economic structures which characterise the economy of Zimbabwe and those of francophone African countries, there are a number of areas in which the case study of issues facing women in Zimbabwe under moves towards free trade with the EU, is relevant to an assessment of the situation facing women in francophone African countries.

The first and most basic common area is in the method used to identify the issues and problems facing women. The starting point in the Zimbabwe study was a review of the role of women in Zimbabwe (economic, social, political) in order to identify the main areas in which women were likely to be affected by moves towards free trade with the EU.

In the Zimbabwe study, women are identified as specific producers of economic goods, as consumers of economic goods and as consumers of government services. Specific groups of women were then identified as particular economic players, within the specific gender biased social, economic and political context in which they live. An initial assessment was then made of the likely effects on women of specific issues which will be or should be under discussion in the current trade negotiations. Given the capacity constraints faced in preparing and conducting negotiations with the EU the study also sought to prioritise the issues faced in the light of their importance to the daily realities of women in Zimbabwe.

Clearly, similar exercises will need to be undertaken in francophone African countries, if the issues arising in the on-going negotiations of greatest importance to women are to be identified and positions formulated to ensure that women’s concerns are addressed and women’s interests are protected.

Impact of CAP Reform

In Zimbabwe, agriculture plays a dominant role in the lives of most Zimbabwean women. In the study, it was recognised that issues related to the inequities of current international trade in agricultural products would be an important area in the current negotiations with the EU. With women in francophone African countries also playing a major role in agriculture and with 43% of francophone African countries having a similar dependence on agricultural exports to the EU as that of Zimbabwe (that is agricultural products accounted for at least 54% of total exports to the EU), this constitutes a second area in which the Zimbabwe case study can be relevant to francophone Africa.

In Zimbabwe it was recognised that different groups of women producers would be affected by the inequities in the current international trade in agricultural products in two ways:

- through the erosion of the value of preferential access to the EU market currently made available to ACP countries;
- through the increased price competitiveness of EU exports to the African markets.

This latter development would also affect women as consumers of food products and not just as producers of agricultural and food products. Women in francophone Africa will be similarly affected by these developments, although the specific effects are likely to be very different to those in Zimbabwe. This is particularly relevant since in francophone Africa there is a lower dependence on temperate agricultural products (which directly compete with EU production) than is the case in Zimbabwe.

Francophone African Countries	Agriculture as % of total export to the EU	Francophone African Countries	Agriculture as % of total export to the EU
Burundi	94 %	Benin	22 %
Chad	91 %	Cameroon**	20 %
Senegal	84 %	Burkina Faso	13 %
Sao Tome & Principe** ¹	81 %	Djibouti	10 %
Rwanda	78 %	Cape Verde	8 %
Mali	77 %	Guinea	6%
Cote d’Ivoire	71%	Congo**	4 %
Guinea Bissau	66 %	DRC	4%
Comoros	62 %	Central Africa Republic	3 %
Togo	56 %	Niger	2 %
Madagascar	44 %	Gabon	2%
Mauritania	27 %	Equatorial Guinea	1 %
Mauritius**	24 %		

Source: European Commission (2000) COMEXT ²

The main exports from Francophone countries are cotton, coffee and cacao, products for which demand is stagnant and prices are declining. Minor, yet emerging agricultural exports include a range of tropical and temperate fruit and vegetable products. Given the need to diversify away from these declining commodities, these non-traditional agricultural exports could well increase in importance in the coming years. In certain countries such as Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic and the Congo basic minerals (diamonds, gold, cobalt) and petroleum constitute the major export items, yet the agricultural sector remains the foundation of people’s livelihoods

Despite these differences in the composition of agricultural exports from francophone countries, there are some areas of overlap. For example, cotton production is even more important to women producers in certain francophone African countries than is the case in Zimbabwe. As a consequence the challenge highlighted in the Zimbabwe study of **identifying new areas of production into which small scale women cotton producers can profitably diversify** (given the secular decline in cotton prices, exacerbated as it is by US and EU production aids to their cotton producers), would appear to be of even more importance to women in certain francophone African countries than for women in Zimbabwe. What is more, this issue would appear to have a broader relevance in francophone Africa given the depth of the current coffee crisis and the need to foster diversification.

Against this background issues faced in Zimbabwe in newly emergent non-traditional agricultural exports (e.g. cut flowers and horticultural exports) would also appear to have certain relevance for women in a number of francophone African countries.

¹ ** non least developed countries

² see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/stat/extrd00/import/cm.htm>

However, perhaps the area of greatest shared concern for women in Zimbabwe and women in francophone African countries relates to the increased price competitiveness of EU agricultural and food product exports under a reformed CAP. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the massive increase in EU poultry meat exports (150% increase to all destinations since 1992), driven by reform of the EU cereals sector (via a substantial reduction in feed costs) saw local markets for women chicken producers severely undermined. By 2000, EU poultry meat exports accounted for 15% of total DRC imports from the EU, a level three times higher than the second most important EU export to the DRC.

Similar disruptions of agricultural markets of importance to women producers in francophone African countries could well occur in other areas, as reform of the CAP continues and the EU seeks to negotiate the elimination of customs duties on EU exports to francophone African markets.³ In this context, governments of francophone African countries will need to identify those product areas of greatest importance to women producers and seek to protect these markets from unfair competition under moves towards free trade.

In this context, issues raised in the Zimbabwe case study with regard to the sugar sector, particularly related to women’s involvement in value added food processing for local and regional markets, would also appear to be relevant to women in francophone Africa, be it in other areas of value added food processing.

However, it should be borne in mind, that to date governments have paid little attention to this level of detailed preparation. As a consequence, it is likely to fall to women’s organisations in the countries concerned to pressure their governments to ensure that the economic space for women producers supplying national and regional markets is successfully maintained through the provisions and mechanisms established under any future trade agreements with the EU.

Government revenues and fiscal implications

Looking beyond the agricultural sector, the Zimbabwe study recognised that women were important consumers of government services. It also recognised that moves towards free trade with the EU would have serious implications for government revenues earned from import taxes and hence for the governments ability to continue to finance the provision of basic services of importance to women. This would also appear to be an important issue in francophone African countries, many of which have an even higher dependence on customs duties collected on imports from the EU than is the case for Zimbabwe. This is particularly the case in the countries of the CEMAC, where the average revenue loss across the region as a whole would be 9.9%. Countries such as Chad, Central African Republic and the Congo would however be much more severely affected.⁴

Countries in CEMAC	Estimated tariff loss
Cameroon**	8.2 %
Central African Republic	14.1 %
Chad	18.2 %
Congo**	14.1 %
Equatorial Guinea	5.0 %
Gabon	6.5 %

Elsewhere in francophone African countries incurring some of the highest government revenue losses include newly least developed Senegal and conflict torn Ivory Coast. For the countries of UEMOA, the 2000 study on the likely implications of regional economic partnership agreements concluded that because of the difficulties the UEMOA countries will have in raising domestic tax revenue to compensate for the fiscal losses arising from moves towards free trade

³ This of course needs to be weighed against the benefits women will gain as consumers from the availability of cheap EU food products

⁴ This needs to be seen against the background of World Bank and IMF concerns over the state of government finances when budget deficits exceed 5%.

with the EU and the precarious nature of the budgetary balance in these countries, transitional financial assistance will be needed from outside if budgetary constraints are not to lead to the failure of any regional economic partnership agreements.

Against this background, as in Zimbabwe, measures will need to be set in place to support fiscal diversification in ways which minimise the extra tax burden placed on poor women. Equally, steps will need to be taken to identify those areas of government expenditures of greatest importance to women, in order to insulate such expenditures from any government budget cuts arising from moves towards free trade with the EU. Here again governments appear to be paying insufficient attention to a detailed consideration of these issues and it is likely to fall to women’s organisations in the countries concerned to place these issues firmly on the agenda of concerned policy makers.

The Case of Least Developed Countries

A further area where the Zimbabwe study has a particular relevance to francophone African countries is the consideration it gives to the very different situations which least developed countries find themselves in compared to non-least developed countries. In the case of Zimbabwe, given the likely costs of moves towards free trade with the EU, the question was raised whether it would not be better for Zimbabwe to seek reclassification as a least developed country.⁵

The issues behind this debate are particularly relevant to francophone African countries since 87% of these countries, with a population of over 157 million people, are classified as least developed. As such the vast majority of francophone African countries have a recognised right under WTO rules to non-reciprocal trade preferences. Indeed, the EU has recognised this right through its ‘Everything But Arms’ initiative, which grants full duty, special levy and quota free access to the EU for all originating products, except arms, munitions and, on a transitional basis ending in 2008, sugar, rice and bananas. Unlike the Cotonou trade provisions the “Everything But Arms” trade regime is not subject to any challenge at the WTO.⁶

The question arises why should least developed francophone African countries give up the right to non-reciprocal trade preferences in favour of reciprocal preferential economic partnership agreements which are likely to carry significant adjustment costs (which are likely to be borne mainly by women in these countries) with no guarantee that the long term theoretical benefits will actually be realised. This is an important issue which needs to be debated within and between francophone African countries. It is a debate of particular importance to women in francophone African countries, for as the Zimbabwe case study highlights, when it comes to economic adjustments, it is generally women who carry the greatest burden of adjustment and who are worst placed to gain from the so-called benefits.

It is against this background that APRODEV has translated the Zimbabwe case study into French, in the hope that it will stimulate much needed debate and analysis.

Brussels, March 2003

⁵ A step made increasingly relevant by the precipitous economic decline which has occurred in the last two years in Zimbabwe.

⁶ Of course the EBA regime is a unilaterally established trade regime and is not a contractually binding agreement. This leads some to suggest that this makes the arrangement insecure and therefore discourages investment. This is highly misleading. Politically, if the EU were to withdraw the regime it would face severe criticism and undermine its efforts in the WTO to win LDC support for its broader positions on international agricultural trade issues.-