

INTRODUCTION...

COOPERATION FOR FAIR TRADE IN AFRICA (COFTA) is an institutional regional platform for International Federation for Alternative Trade Network (IFAT) for Africa members. It is a forum that offers regional opportunities to members to pursue common fair trade goals and aspirations.

Fair Trade is a viable participatory and self actualising impact oriented economic model for rural transformation and a practical mechanism for poverty alleviation in Africa. It potentially has capacity to facilitate easy development of small and micro enterprises for mass job creation and income generation in African rural communities.

The International Federation for Alternative Trade IFAT is one such instrument that can facilitate the realisation of this empowerment mechanism for the disadvantaged producers because of its global and rural community based orientation.

At the start of IFAT beginning in 1994, about four African members joined the network. Membership growth since then has been very slow compared to other regions of the world. Over this nine years period, the growth of African membership in IFAT has been very slow in covering most part of Africa due principally to lack of effective mobilisation, coordination and commitment. Arusha in 2001 provided an impetus for more interest and existence of sub- regional platforms such as KEFAT in Kenya and other similar initiatives in West Africa, which are potentially enthusiastic, but need further coordination and transformation into a continental forum.

There is urgent need therefore to develop proactively a coordinating framework that can facilitate a strategic direction for the take off and institutionalisation of the African regional forum of IFAT'

GENERAL GOALS...

The goals of COFTA are;

1. To provide a forum for constructive collaboration and networking among Africa members of IFAT to facilitate meaningful contribution to the development of fair trade movement and the economic empowerment of the disadvantaged Africa producers.
2. To co-operate in marketing fair-traded products in local, regional and international markets with the aim of increasing the market share of African fair traded products.
3. To work together in mobilising the resources required for product development, production capacity strengthening, marketing and exporting of fair trade products from Africa with the aim of scaling up

sales and market share thus creating wealth for the marginalized producers.

4. To strengthen African membership in the fair trade movement by mobilisation and recruitment of new members and supporting their applications to join IFAT.
5. To monitor the local, regional and global socio economic and political environment which may impact on African fair traded products and to disseminate relevant information to member organisations for strategic focus?
6. To lobby National Governments, the African Union, E.U, NEPAD, WTO, and take opportunities of other multi lateral initiatives and bodies such as COTONOU, AGOA and others in order to develop a conducive policy environment that facilitates market access for African fair traded products.
7. To provide an institutionalise framework that can easily arbitrate between members and other stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES...

The objectives are:

1. Lobbying and advocacy through the use of workshops and seminars, joint delegations to concerned parties, alliances with other regional chapters of IFAT and partners, the media etc on specific or general concerns.
2. Marketing facilitation through product development, market information dissemination, joint website, joint participation in regional and international fairs, organising annual regional trade fairs/exhibitions, consolidation of orders and co-ordination of team buyer visits.
3. Capacity building through the facilitation of skills upgrading, management training, exchange learning's, product design and development and production capacity development.
4. Contributing to the promotion of fair trade through increased membership from Africa and disseminating information that raises public awareness on the principles and practices of fair trade
5. To lobby National Governments, the African Union, E.U, NEPAD, WTO, AGOA and capitalize on opportunities presented by other multi lateral initiatives and bodies such as ([Cotonou Agreement](#)), AGOA and NEPAD and others in order to develop a conducive policy environment that facilitates market access for African fair traded products.

