1. Introduction
Benin is part of two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) - the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD).
- ECOWAS has 15 member states. All member states are part of the ECOWAS Free Trade Area (FTA), 14 of which are in the process of implementing the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET). Qualifying imports from approved ECOWAS producers are imported into Benin duty-free, and Benin does apply the ECOWAS CET on imports from outside the REC.
- CEN-SAD currently has 24 member states aspiring to establish an Economic Union which includes the free movement of goods, services and commodities. There is currently no free trade agreement in place.

2. Intra-Africa Trade
For 2019, 21% of Benin’s world exports & 25% of world imports were to and from the rest of Africa. Intra-Africa exports amounted to US$180 million (1% less than in 2018) & intra-Africa imports to US$711 million (8% more than in 2018).

The main export products are cotton, frozen chicken cuts and edible offal, cotton seed, cement clinkers & woven cotton fabrics. The main import products are electrical energy, petroleum oils, fertilisers, palm oil & frozen jack and mackerel. Apart from South Africa & Cameroon, Benin mainly trades with fellow CEN-SAD & ECOWAS member states.

Intra-Africa exports to countries outside ECOWAS are levied duties in the respective destination markets. Of the top 10 import products from outside ECOWAS, only liquefied urea is imported into Benin duty-free.

Main destination markets
- Nigeria, Egypt, Niger, Burkina Faso & Ivory Coast

Main source markets
- Togo, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria

% change in exports to & imports from main African trade partners (2018 to 2019)
- South Africa, Chad, Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Togo, Nigeria, Egypt, Niger, South Africa, Morocco, Mauritania

Trade balance with designated trade partners 2018 & 2019
- Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Niger, Ivory Coast, Togo, South Africa, Morocco, Mauritania

% change as destination market & % change as source market
- 50, 0, -50, -25, 25, 50

Trade balance 2018 & 2019
- Trade balance 2018, Trade balance 2019
Intra-Africa tariffs & non-tariff cost of trade

Qualifying goods from ECOWAS member states enter Benin duty-free, while imports from CEN-SAD countries, which are not ECOWAS member states (including Egypt, Morocco, Somalia & Tunisia) and the rest of Africa are levied the MFN applied duty, which is the ECOWAS CET. The ECOWAS CET has five tariff bands - duty-free, 5%, 10%, 20% and 35%.

2% of Benin’s world exports (33% of intra-Africa exports) are to African countries not ECOWAS member states. Export products include cotton, petroleum oils, light vessels, oil cake, groundnuts & hot-rolled iron bars and rods mainly exported to Egypt, Cameroon & Algeria. All of the top 10 products exported to countries outside ECOWAS face import duties in the respective destinations.

29% of intra-Africa imports (7% of world imports) are sourced from outside ECOWAS. Benin mainly imports fertilisers, frozen jack & petroleum oils from non-ECOWAS countries. Of the top 20 products imported into Benin from outside ECOWAS only liquefied butanes & ammonium are imported duty-free.

Intra-Africa exports to countries outside ECOWAS

Categories of MFN duties & % of 2019 imports in each category

Of the top 20 import products, the highest tariffs (20%) are applicable to imports of carton bags, wheat or meslin flour, cane or beet sugar & military weapons. 10% duty is levied on imports of electric conductors, petroleum oils, frozen jack & horse mackerel, frozen fish n.e.s. frozen sardines, frozen huck, cement, odoriferous mixtures and iron or steel structures. 5% duty is imposed on imports of fertilisers, magnetic or optical readers & self-propelled tamping machines. Liquefied butanes and ammonium are imported into Benin duty-free.

The non-tariff cost of bilateral trade between Benin & designated African trade partners

The ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database include the cost of transportation and the time to complete import procedures and obtain necessary information as non-tariff costs affecting bilateral trade between trade partners. The data shows that Benin’s bilateral trade with some west African countries like Cameroon, Senegal & Burkina Faso is more costly than trade between Benin and non-African countries like France and China. Benin’s manufacturing trade with Egypt, Cameroon & Senegal is is higher than with China, France and South Africa. Benin’s agricultural trade with non-African countries like China and France is less costly than trade with African trade partners like Morocco, Cameroon, Togo, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana & Ivory Coast.