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Doing Business in Côte d'Ivoire

Market Overview

Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most dynamic economies in West Africa and a transportation hub for the entire region. GDP grew by 7.5 percent in 2019 and was projected to be 6.9 percent in 2020, but due to the economic effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the IMF revised that projection to 2.7 percent. Côte d'Ivoire is a lower middle-income country with a growing consumer class, supporting a vibrant retail and restaurant sector. The Ivoirian government has implemented measures to strengthen transparency, improve governance and attract businesses, including by creating a commercial appeals court in 2017 to accelerate impartial dispute resolution. In August 2019, the country's \$524.7 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact entered into force.

The Ivoirian government prioritizes private sector-led growth and welcomes foreign investment, offering tax incentives to companies processing goods in country and industrial parks with prefabricated buildings for easy setup of light manufacturing factories. The country is also seeking to boost its hydroelectric, solar, and thermal power capacity, with three existing power plants undergoing expansion as of August 2020. Numerous business opportunities exist in agribusinesses, especially the value-added processing of cocoa, cashews, rubber, cotton, palm oil and rice. Other opportunities exist in the sale of construction equipment and machinery, and infrastructure development. Côte d'Ivoire's mining potential is significant, offering opportunities to exploit several precious metals and critical minerals, coordinated by the Ministry of Mines and Geology established in 2018. The government also updated the Investment Code in 2018 to improve the operational environment for businesses in that sector. Côte d'Ivoire is also a beneficiary of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Market Challenges

U.S. businesses have thrived in the Ivoirian cocoa sector for decades and continue to find success in the consulting and financial services industries. However, the country's French-based legal, commercial and financial systems, business practices, and technical standards are unfamiliar to many prospective market entrants. Overall English-language proficiency in Côte d'Ivoire is growing but remains limited; companies that successfully operate often select strong French speakers to lead their operations. Other obstacles include:

Slow and/or opaque decision-making in the Ivoirian government

Distance and associated higher freight rates and longer transit times from the United States than from Europe

Consolidated product packaging for French speaking countries in West Africa gives businesses operated by French speakers a cost advantage

Local importers report their belief that European suppliers offer more favorable credit terms (amount of time to repay and interest rate) than American suppliers

High customs clearance costs, added to uncertain customs clearance times for inexperienced importers

Significant delays at the Port of Abidjan, generally during customs procedures, sometimes accompanied by pressures to pay for "expediting"

Limited Ivoirian purchasing power for U.S.-made consumer goods

Market Opportunities

Leading sectors for export and investment include:

- Building and construction equipment and material - new, used and remanufactured
- Automobiles and automotive parts - new, used and remanufactured
- Plastic materials and resins (only biodegradable products are permitted)
- Information technology services including cybersecurity and database management

- Oil/gas field equipment and services
- Renewable energy equipment such as solar panels and services
- Agricultural products and services
- Medical equipment and products
- Telecommunication services and equipment
- Retail goods
- Paper and Packaging materials

Market Entry Strategy

It is recommended that U.S. companies considering doing business in Côte d'Ivoire consider the following:

Visit Côte d'Ivoire to gain first-hand knowledge of the country and the market

Talk with Ivoirian investment promotion agencies, trade associations, and relevant government regulators, to understand recent changes in benefits afforded to investors, or laws/approvals that may apply to the specific business proposition under consideration

Retain the services of a carefully vetted local agent or distributor, which, while not legally required, can provide an understanding of policies and procedures for entering the Ivoirian market

Consult and visit the U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Department of State, particularly the local U.S. Export Assistance Center, the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan (<http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/>), as well as the American Chamber of Commerce in Côte d'Ivoire (<https://amcham-ci.org/contacts>).

Leading Sectors for U.S. Exports and Investment

Leading sectors for potential export and investment include:

- Energy
- Building and construction equipment and material - new, used and remanufactured
- Automobiles and automotive parts - new, used and remanufactured
- Plastic materials and resins (only biodegradable products are permitted)
- Oil/gas field equipment and services
- Consumer products
- Agricultural products and services
- Telecommunication services and equipment
- Paper and paper board

Energy

This is a strong prospect industry sector for Côte d'Ivoire. With some of the best energy infrastructure in the region, the government is working toward making the country a West African electricity hub.

Overview

Energy is a top priority as it is essential to maintain the country's high rate of economic growth and broader development goals. The Ministry of Petroleum, Energy and Renewable Energy estimates Côte d'Ivoire's installed electrical generation capacity at 2,229 megawatts (MW). The World Bank estimates 100 percent of urban residents have access to electricity, while only 33 percent of rural inhabitants have access to electricity. The government is looking to increase rural electrification through expansion of the grid and the development of off-grid providers. Côte d'Ivoire exports electricity to its neighbors and would like to increase its exports of electricity to Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in the coming years. The Ivorian government adopted an ambitious National Development Plan in 2016 that calls for investing \$20 billion and producing 4000 megawatts by 2030, as well as pledging to achieve 42 percent of its electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030.

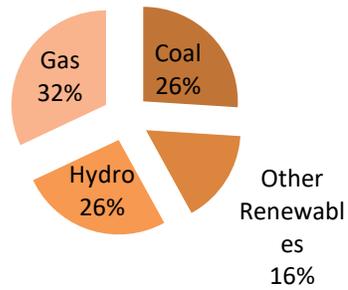
The government has undertaken significant reform of the energy sector, and new regulations have helped foster a more welcoming environment. Independent Power Producers (IPPs) compose part of the electricity service-provision network. The National Authority for Electricity Regulation (ANARE-CI) regulates Côte d'Ivoire's three IPPs; its data shows that in 2018 Ciprel produced 2939 GWh, Azito Energie produced 2833 GWh, and Aggreko produced 1009 GWh. The government wants to explore economical off-grid solutions to expand public access to electricity. Further to the government's 2016 announcement of its intention to privatize the distribution of electricity by 2020, the government awarded a 12-year electricity distribution concession to Côte d'Ivoire to Compagnie ivoirienne d'électricité (CIE) on September 30, 2020.

The Ivorian government is also exploring ways to expand and diversify its mix of energy sources. Several offshore blocks are open for oil/gas development. The government announced in 2017 plans to expand domestic natural gas production and import and install a regasification facility by partnering with the private sector through a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) consortium. In 2018, the government awarded a competitive tender to a company using U.S. equipment to develop a solar farm in the northern city of Ferkessedougou. The government is also promoting the development of biomass energy and hydroelectric power generation. In 2019, the Ministry of Energy signed a contract with a French firm to build the largest biomass power plant in West Africa.

The government's energy development plans indicate the country's present or potential need of the following energy products and services:

- New Plant Equipment and Related Systems
- Process Automation and Systems Control Equipment
- Gas-to-Power Technologies
- LNG supply and re-gasifying related systems
- Renewable Energy Solutions
- Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management (DSM)
- Transmission and Distribution Equipment

Generation Mix 2030



Source: CI-Energies

	2017	2018	2019
National Demand for Electricity	8,618	8,180	9,095
Total Export of Electricity	1,225	1,078	1,178
Total gross national production of electricity	9,796	9,830	10,433

NOTE: Figures in GWh

Source: CI-Energies Annual Report

CI-Energies Solar power projects 2020-2030

Solar power projects PV	Sites / locations	Power (MW)	Inauguration date
CI-ENERGIES /Kfw	Boundiali	30	2020
RECA	Binguébougou	20	2021
Scaling Solar	Touba- Laboua	60	2021
Poro Power	Korogho	50	2021

Biotherm	Ferkéssédougou	20	2022
Avaada	Odienne	20	2022
To be developed	Sérébou	20	2023

Source: CI-Energies

Power Africa is a market-driven, U.S. Government-led public-private partnership aiming to double access to electricity in Africa. It offers private sector entities tools and resources to facilitate doing business in Africa's power sector.

In 2016, the Electrify Africa Act institutionalized Power Africa. Learn more about the full [Power Africa toolbox](#) or other [opportunities offered by Power Africa](#).

Leading Sub-Sectors

Solar energy and renewables are promising sources of renewable energy for Côte d'Ivoire, according to the Ministry of Energy. LNG supply is also a good prospect, as is electricity produced from biomass. Improving the delivery of electricity through better transmission and the reduction of line losses is another priority.

Opportunities

Some parts of the public lighting system, and traffic lights, in Abidjan are sourced from solar energy. The government is working to improve the rural lighting system thru its Electricity for All program, National Rural Electrification Program, and donor-financed programs. The Ministry of Energy has identified the development of off-grid, solar-based solutions as one method to expand electrification.

Web Resources

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Ministry of Petroleum, Energy, and Renewable Energy](#)

[West Africa Power Pool](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Energies \(CI-Energies\)](#)

[National Authority for Electricity Regulation \(ANARE-CI\)](#)

[CI-Energies Projects](#)

Building and Construction Equipment and Materials

The government has continued to rebuild the country's infrastructure since the end of its post-electoral crisis in 2011, making the construction sector a promising prospect for U.S. companies.

Overview

A 2019 African Development Bank (AfDB) report estimated that the existing affordable housing gap in Côte d'Ivoire was 600,000 housing units, of which at least 200,000 are in Abidjan. According to the AfDB, this gap

will persist or grow due to high population growth rate (2.6 percent per year). The Ivoirian government is building and financing the majority of this need with private sector companies also constructing homes to fill the housing gap. The constant demand for cement is an indicator of the dynamism of the sector and the need for additional suppliers. Data from the Ivoirian National Institute of Statistics show a 23 percent increase in the production of construction materials between March 2019 and March 2020.

The \$524.7 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact with Côte d'Ivoire offers an opportunity for international firms - including U.S. companies - to win contracts in road rehabilitation/ construction and school construction. On average, worldwide, two-thirds of U.S. firms competing on MCC-related procurements are successful, according to MCC records. The Compact comprises two main projects: 1) road construction and rehabilitation, including technical assistance in road-traffic safety and maintenance management, environmental and social protection, and resettlement in greater Abidjan, and 2) secondary education construction (including school construction in and around the cities of Bouaké and San Pedro and the building of two university satellite campuses and up to four technical vocational education centers), as well as technical assistance in teacher training reforms, education information management systems, gender policy implementation and environmental, social and resettlement management. The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which is the Ivoirian government entity responsible for implementing the MCC-financed program, publishes all upcoming procurements online at: <https://www.mcacotedivoire.ci/passation-des-marches/avis-general-de-passation-des-marches.html>. MCC will also procure some services for independent engineers and evaluators. These opportunities can be found at <https://www.mcc.gov/work-with-us/mcc-business> as well as Contract Opportunities at beta.sam.gov. Please consult the MCA and MCC website regularly as requests for proposals are posted as they are approved. For additional information regarding the Compact, please consult the MCC website: <http://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/program/cote-divoire-compact>.

	2017	2018	2019
Total Imports (Cement, Construction materials)	N/A	192.9	210.3
Imports from the US (Iron and steel products, metal handle materials, excavating machinery, and non-farm tractors and parts)	7.14	6.7	9.5

NOTE: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars; N/A =Not Available;

Source: Ivoirian Ministry of Economy and Finance, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. International Trade Administration

Leading Sub-Sectors

The housing market, road construction, and other large-scale infrastructure sectors offer excellent opportunities to sell U.S.-made building materials, heavy equipment, specialized project management tools and related services.

Opportunities

In addition to the construction sector, the Ivoirian water and sanitation sectors offer international financial institution-financed projects for which U.S. companies can compete. Significant opportunities exist to sell equipment, furniture and housewares, as well as large-scale air conditioning units and refrigeration systems.

Web Resources

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPIC\)](#)

[Association of Businesses Involved in Construction and Public Works](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[Ministry of Construction, Housing, and Urbanism](#)

[National Committee for Public-Private-Partnerships](#)

Automobile/ Automotive Parts, Passenger Cars, New and Used, Trucks and Buses

The rapid growth of the Ivoirian consumer class makes this an important industry sector for this country.

Overview

In 2018, the Ivoirian government passed a law limiting the importation of private-use vehicles over five years old and mini-buses over seven years old. As a result, statistics from the Automotive Trade Professionals Association (Groupement Interprofessionnel Automobiles, Matériaux, et Equipementiers, GIPAME) show new car sales increased 16 percent from May 2018 to May 2019. Japanese brands lead the market, followed by European, Korean, and Chinese auto manufacturers. According to media reports, annual used vehicle imports decreased from 60,000 cars in 2018 to 7,000 in 2019.

The Italian automotive manufacturer Iveco formed a partnership with SOTRA, the government-owned public transportation company, and opened a vehicle assembly factory in 2018. The factory specializes in bus production and has the capacity to build 500 buses annually.

	2017	2018	2019
Total Imports (vehicles)	N/A	367.1	350.7
Imports from the United States (vehicles and spare parts)	18.6	16.6	19.1

NOTE: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars; N/A =Not Available;

Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. International Trade Administration

Leading Sub-Sectors

Best sales prospects include:

- Consumables: oil and air filters, wiper blades, hoses, gaskets and rings, engine parts, brake parts, exhaust system parts, car body parts
- Accessories: wheel covers, car/truck bed covers, car batteries, exterior accessory lights

- Auto security products
- Service equipment for electronic diagnosis, monitoring, testing and analyzing, wheel balancing, tire changing, oil changing
- Battery chargers, quick repair kits, tools, and paints

Opportunities

Excellent opportunities exist in importing U.S. second-hand cars that are less than five years old, buses that are less than seven years old, and vehicle spare parts.

Web Resources

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[Automotive Trade Professionals Association](#)

Oil and Gas Field Equipment

Côte d'Ivoire's ambition to increase its energy exports makes the oil and gas sector, particularly natural gas and liquified natural gas (LNG), a good investment prospect.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire is a net regional petroleum importer. Though the country exports petroleum, it imports crude oil for refinement in local refineries that are configured for the heavier oil produced elsewhere. It has proven oil reserves estimated at 100 million barrels and gas reserves of 1 trillion cubic feet and has the potential to become a medium-sized offshore oil producer through development of the upstream industry. The Ivoirian government reports that oil production increased from 32,287 barrels per day in 2018 to approximately 37,179 barrels per day in 2019. Natural gas production dropped nine percent, from 216 million cubic feet per day in 2018, to approximately 202.5 million cubic feet per day in 2019.

Upstream development: Steady increases in regional electricity demand have supported growth in the Ivoirian oil sector, but its oil offshore production has yet to take off. Many blocks have been delineated and are open for negotiation, and investment incentives are offered for exploration in deep and ultra-deep waters. Companies interested in exporting oil and gas production equipment to Côte d'Ivoire should work with relevant Ivoirian authorities (see list below) to understand the related tax breaks available under the Ivoirian investment code.

Downstream development: Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage (SIR), the only Ivoirian oil refinery, and its associated storage company, GESTOCI, sell refined oil. The market for petroleum products is not liberalized, so companies seeking to market petroleum in Côte d'Ivoire must do so through SIR and the Ministry of Petroleum, Energy, and Renewable Energy.

Companies currently involved in the gasoline service station market include Petroci, which has a partnership with Corlay Global, a Panamanian firm that acquired Texaco's gas stations and other marketing assets in Côte d'Ivoire; French company Total; Vivo, a spinoff from Shell; OLA Energy (Oil Libya Africa Energy), and approximately twenty-five local suppliers. Once the market for these products is fully liberalized, there will be significant opportunities for U.S. companies.

	2017	2018	2019
Total Local Production (petroleum)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports (petroleum products)	N/A	1,083	1,204
Total Imports (crude oil, petroleum products)	N/A	2,207	2,159
Imports from the US (equipment for oil and gas exploration)	31.6	26.9	54.3

NOTE: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars; N/A =Not Available;

Leading Sub-Sectors

The largest opportunities for gas and oil are currently in exploration and production of petroleum, and related services.

Opportunities

Oil and gas equipment for exploration, drilling, and storage offer opportunities for U.S. companies. As the country's thermal power plants run on natural gas and LNG, providing equipment to these sectors offers opportunities for U.S. companies. As the country looks to expand its use of renewable energies, local power plants – particularly Azito, CIPREL, and Aggreko - are trying to expand their power generation capacities.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Petroleum and Energy](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chambre of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[U.S. Energy Information Agency](#)

[Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage \(SIR\)](#)

[PETROCI](#)

[Association of Ivoirian Exporters \(APEX-CI\)](#)

Plastic Materials and Resins

The government prohibited the production, import, and distribution of plastic shopping bags for consumers in 2013 but the measure is not enforced. There is a nascent market for biodegradable plastics production and recycling.

Leading Sub-Sectors

Plastic imports consist primarily of polyethylene, hard density polyethylene, and resins. Local manufacturers use these products to manufacture plastic garbage bags, plastic cups, and containers for the food processing industry.

Opportunities

The Ivoirian plastics industry needs new technology to adapt to the policy of manufacturing bio-degradable and recyclable products. The government offers tax incentives for companies entering light manufacturing, which includes the recycling industry.

Web Resources

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[Ministry of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Union of Large Industrial Businesses in Côte d'Ivoire \(UGEI\)](#)

Agricultural Chemicals, Agricultural Machines and Equipment

As the world's top cocoa and cashew producer, agricultural inputs are a top prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

There is no local production of agricultural chemicals in the country. Blending factories import foreign formulas or ingredients to reproduce formulas. To operate in this field, companies must have a license provided by the Ministry of Agriculture. The primary end-users of agricultural chemical imports are Ivoirian farmers grouped in cooperatives and professional associations, as well as large agribusinesses.

	2017	2018	2019
Imports from the US	21.4	5.29	3.73

NOTE: All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars; N/A =Not Available

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. International Trade Administration

Leading Sub-Sectors

The Ivoirian government welcomes the importation of environmentally friendly agricultural inputs. Since 2016, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development has been engaged in a campaign to stop the sale and utilization of counterfeit and expired agricultural inputs. The government is also very interested in developing Ivoirian agricultural processing capacity,

Opportunities

Modern and environmentally friendly fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides, equipment for their application, and related services represent the best business opportunities. The best sales prospects for U.S. firms range from fertilizers to fungicides to orthophosphates, particularly in cocoa production, as well as in the palm, rubber, fruit, cashew, timber, and cotton industries. Light and medium agricultural machinery, such as for domestic fruit and nut processing, could also be a profitable sub-sector for U.S. firms.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#)

[Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development](#)

[National Agronomic Research Center \(CNRA\)](#)

[Crop Life Côte d'Ivoire](#)

[Inter-professional Fund for Agricultural Research](#)

[National Agency to Support Rural Development](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Cotton and Cashew Council](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Coffee and Cocoa Council](#)

[Organization of Agriculture Professionals in the Cotton Sector \(Intercoton\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire's Export Promotion Agency](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

Telecommunication, Services and Equipment

This is a top prospect sector for this country as its services heavily impact the ability of other sectors to perform business activities.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire has one of the most developed telecommunication sectors in West Africa. The sector constitutes approximately 10 percent of GDP and annually contributes approximately \$800 million to the country's budget. The national Telecommunications Code was updated in 2012, and the regulator regularly updates the code with decrees. In its 2019 annual report, the National Telecom Regulator (ARTCI) estimated that the cellular penetration rate was 143 percent (most people have at least 2 SIM cards, often for different mobile networks). Between 2018 - 2019, the number of subscribers increased by 10.6 percent. Almost 100 percent of mobile accounts are pre-paid. As of September 2020, there are three major mobile phone operators (Orange, MTN, MOOV) providing service to a total of 39 million subscribers. On average, ARTCI estimates 2G and 3G service covers over 90 percent of the population, and 4G service approximately 59 percent (the majority of which is in Abidjan). No companies offer 5G service at this time, though the government has expressed the intention to bring 5G service online by mid-2023. Mobile money penetration is 67 percent. The number of mobile money subscribers increased by 37.2 percent from 2018 to 2019. Less than one percent of the population has a fixed telephone line.

Over 98 percent of Ivoirians who access the internet do so via mobile devices. Three companies (Orange, MTN, MOOV) provide mobile internet services. Mobile internet subscribers increased 27 percent between 2018 and 2019, and the sector realized a 37 percent increase in revenue. In the fixed residential and business high-speed internet market, Orange, MTN, VIPNET, provide service. The market is small, but growing with fixed internet subscriptions increasing 29 percent from 2018 to 2019 and revenue increasing by 9 percent over the same period. The market comprises fixed LTE services (50 percent), ADSL (38 percent), and fiber to home (FFTH) (10 percent).

Leading Sub-Sectors

The best prospects for U.S. telecommunication equipment and service providers include voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment and services, wireless networks equipment and services, DSL equipment, GSM solutions and applications, call centers, fiber-optic cables, and billing solutions, mobile banking technologies and cyber-security solutions.

Opportunities

Given interest in modernizing the sector, the Ivoirian telecommunication market is growing for the full range of telecommunication equipment and components, including copper and fiber optic cables, central office switches, cellular stations, data communications satellites, microwave communication equipment, and data storage.

Web Resources

[Ministry of Digital Economy and Post](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Association of Technology Information and Communications Operators in Côte d'Ivoire](#)

[Union of Telecommunications Businesses in Côte d'Ivoire](#)

[West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly](#)

[African Telecommunications Union](#)

[African Forum for Utility Regulators](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[Telecom Regulatory Board \(ARTCI\)](#)

[Biotechnology Park](#)

Paper and Packing Material

This industry sector is to be developed; opportunities to export to this nascent sector exist.

Overview

No paper mills produce raw paper material in Côte d'Ivoire. Imported raw paper materials are transformed into toilet paper, notebooks, boxes, packages, and other consumer items.

Leading Sub-Sectors

The best prospects for U.S. businesses include paperboard used for cement bags, cardboard-grade paper for banana and pineapple packaging, photographic paper, and printing paper for newspapers, magazines, and books. Distributors include companies specializing in photocopy paper, leading importers of miscellaneous goods and products, and printing companies.

Opportunities

Good opportunities exist in importing U.S. craft paper, granulated polyethylene, bleached craft and softwood pulp.

Web Resources

[Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Côte d'Ivoire Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

Agricultural Sector

Côte d'Ivoire is the world's top exporter of cocoa beans and cashews. This sector has high-growth potential as the government and donors implement programs to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural yields, increase in country agro-processing and expand the variety of agricultural products it exports.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire has large agriculture export potential as Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD) estimates 53 percent of the national territory is dedicated to agricultural use. Agriculture accounts for 16 percent of GDP and approximately 60 percent of export receipts, according to the World Bank, and employs two-thirds of the population. Côte d'Ivoire is a net exporter of major cash crops grown by small- and large-scale farmers including: cocoa, coffee, rubber, cotton, palm oil, cashew nuts, and bananas. The country imports wheat, corn meal, and dairy products and has become the fifth largest rice importer in the world.

The country's main agricultural products are, for the most part, exported unprocessed. The government is keen to promote the processing of cashew nuts, cocoa, palm oil (bio-fuels), and other value-added products. Domestic cashew production reached 900,000 tons in 2020, of which less than 10 percent will likely be domestically processed. To increase local cashew processing, the Ivoirian government offers an incentive of \$0.69 per kg of cashew processed to companies that process cashew nuts.

(<http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/en/?tmp=image-top&p=investment-code>).

Opportunities

Rough rice, rice seeds and rice cultivation equipment could offer business opportunities since the Ivoirian government aims to be self-sufficient in rice production by 2030. The government appointed a Minister for Rice Promotion in August 2019 to oversee this initiative. To meet the demands of its growing consumer class, Côte d'Ivoire has become a major importer of cereals, prepared fruits, nuts, and vegetables. There is also a growing demand for beverages, spirits, meats, and prepared foods.

Web Resources

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[Organization of Agriculture Professionals in the Cotton Sector \(Intercoton\)](#)

[Cotton and Cashew Council](#)

[Coffee and Cocoa Council](#)

[Palm Oil Council](#)

[National Agency for Rice Development \(ONDR\)](#)

Customs, Regulations and Standards

Trade Barriers

Potential barriers to U.S. exports and investment include:

- Côte d'Ivoire's relatively small market size; limited market data; and perceived European domination of the market
- An opaque government procurement process
- Inadequate enforcement of intellectual property rights
- Uncertain legal protection due to an inefficient court system
- Prohibitively expensive air and sea freight rates and long transit times

Some of these barriers are becoming easier to navigate with time. Air and sea freight rates and transit times from the United States have decreased significantly over the past several years due to increased direct service by sea shipping companies and airlines.

For more information on and help with addressing trade barriers please contact:

International Trade Administration

Enforcement and Compliance

(202) 482-0063

ECCcommunications@trade.gov

<http://trade.gov/enforcement/>

Import Tariffs

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which also includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The customs regime is similar across all ECOWAS member states (<http://www.ecowas.int>). Ivoirian customs authorities collect ECOWAS's Common External Tariff and transfers proceeds to the ECOWAS treasury. Côte d'Ivoire's import tariff is based on the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) and the classification of a given imported good. ECOWAS's maximum total tariff rate is 35 percent. Côte d'Ivoire imposes additional taxes on imports of fish (between 5 percent and 20 percent), rice (between 5 percent and 10 percent), alcohol (45 percent), tobacco (36 percent), cigarettes (36 percent), certain textile products (20 percent), and petroleum products (between 5 percent and 20 percent). The Ivoirian government also applies a tax of approximately \$1.67 per kilogram to all imports of frozen meats. Côte d'Ivoire applies minimum import prices (MIP) to certain products such as cooking oil, cigarettes, sugar, used clothing, concentrated tomato paste, broken rice, matches, notebooks, tissues, polypropylene sacks, alcohol, and milk, to avoid exporters "dumping" products on the Ivoirian market. Ivoirian customs imposes special taxes on meat and poultry imports, and specific excise taxes on tobacco products and alcoholic beverages. In addition to these taxes, imports from countries that are not ECOWAS members are subject to a five percent tax for raw materials and inputs for local manufacture, 10 percent for semi-finished goods, and 20 percent for finished products. In addition, a one percent charge is levied on the cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value of imports, except those destined for re-export, transit, or donations for humanitarian purposes under international agreements.

The national value added tax (VAT) levied on all imported goods, is 18 percent. In addition to the 18 percent VAT, the government also imposes a 2.6 percent tax on all imports, though foreign tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are taxed at 15 percent. Most of the duties are based on *ad valorem* rates, which are

imposed on the current export price from the country of sale or origin and any shipping and insurance expenses incurred. The method of value assessment in use is based on the Brussels Definition of Value (BDV).

Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which is scheduled to enter into force January 1, 2021 after COVID-19 delayed the original projected 2020 date. As of September 2020, signatories have not completed tariff negotiations.

The ECOWAS Common External Tariff (CET) Schedule (listed below) includes permanent and temporary duties and taxes:

Import Requirements and Documentation

Permanent customs duty and taxes

Categories	Duties	Products
0	0 percent	A limited list of essential social goods (e.g., books and drugs)
1	5 percent	Convenience goods, raw materials
2	10 percent	Inputs and semi-finished Products
3	20 percent	Final consumption goods and other products
4	35 percent	Final processed consumption goods (e.g., chocolate bars)

Source: National Single Customs Window Platform

Permanent customs duties and taxes also include:

- A statistical tax of 1 percent of CIF value on goods except goods in warehouses, on duty-free entry for re-export, or in transit, donations, and goods exempted by international agreements.
- ECOWAS imposes three community levies on all imports into ECOWAS from non-ECOWAS member countries: a 1 percent community solidarity levy; 0.5 percent community levy; and 1 percent statistical tax, even on products imported under a duty exemption procedure.

- The tax computation includes the CIF value, statistical tax (1 percent) and VAT (18 percent). Special taxes, depending on the nature of the imported goods, may apply.

Temporary and Sliding Taxes

The seasonal, or temporary, import tax (*taxe conjoncturelle à l'importation*) protects local production of vegetables, rice, onions, and potatoes when world prices drop and threaten local producers. This sliding tax varies from 2.5 to 5 percent, depending on the product category. It also applies to imports of select finished products such as matches, tomato paste, candy, and powdered milk that compete with locally produced equivalents. Special taxes, such as excise duties, depending on the nature of the imported goods, also may apply.

For more information, see:

[Economic Community of West African States](#)

[West African Economic and Monetary Union](#)

[Ivoirian Customs Office](#)

[National Single Customs Window Platform](#)

There are no import policies specifically targeting goods of U.S. origin. Textile imports are subject to government authorization. For imports above \$956 (478,000 CFA), the importer must establish an anticipated import declaration form (FDI) in the computerized customs clearance system. The importer can submit the FDI online via the National Single Customs Window Platform (guce.gouv.ci), a customs broker, or one of the two authorized inspection companies (*Conseils Techniques Appliqués* (CÔTECNA) or Webb Fontaine. Both importer and exporter are required to obtain a registration number at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Department of Promotion of External Trade. The importer must show proof of his/her registration with the trade registry and the tax registration office as well as his/her fiscal status. However, imports of cotton and 100 percent cotton products, such as the "Wax and Resin" textile cloth most often used in traditional African clothing, require an import license from the Department of Promotion of External Trade. Imports of alcoholic beverages are also subject to import license requirements from the Department of Promotion of External Trade and special labelling that states "For sale in Côte d'Ivoire."

The importer must give yearly statistics to the Foreign Trade office. Other tasks that can be done via the National Single Customs Window Platform include: request import certificates and licenses, obtain an exemption license, receive a manifest electronically, and pay transaction fees.

Documents required for most goods shipped into Côte d'Ivoire include:

- **Commercial Invoice:** Two French-language copies of the freight invoices are required. No specific form is required, but all invoices must contain the names of the exporter and consignee, number and types of packages, marks and numbers on the packages, net and gross weights, CIF value, terms of sale, and a thorough description of the merchandise. Note that the importer will usually need a signed duplicate invoice to speed the release of the imported goods from customs. This should be sent via air courier and arrive in Côte d'Ivoire prior to the arrival of the merchandise.
- **Certificate of Origin:** Two certified copies are required.
- **Packing List:** A packing list is not legally required, but such lists are usually considered essential in accelerating the time required for customs clearance.

- **Bill of Lading (or air waybill):** There are no regulations specifying content of a bill of lading. Importers should include clear marks of identification and the name and address of the consignee of the goods. Shipping marks on the goods must correspond exactly to numbers on bills of lading/invoices.
- **Pro-forma Invoice:** Persons wishing to import goods are required to attach six copies of this invoice to the application for an import license and/or the intent to import. A pro-forma invoice may also be required when presenting an application to Ivorian authorities to ship bonded goods through the country.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

In addition to the requirements described under import/export documentation, all packages containing U.S.-produced merchandise must be clearly labeled “MADE IN THE U.S.A.,” or they will not be allowed to enter the country. For high-tech equipment (e.g., telecommunications equipment, photocopiers, computer hardware and software), French-language keyboards, symbols, instruction manuals, operating systems and applications software are critical to the success of a product. Do not assume the user speaks or understands English. The equipment must be adapted to run as specified by European electrical and metric standards.

Generally, retailers prefer consumer products be labeled in French. Manufactured food products are required to state the country of origin and display an expiration date. If an expiration date does not appear on the label, health officials may interpret the date of manufacture as an expiration date and deny entry to the product. Therefore, it is best to include both dates.

U.S. Export Controls

The United States imposes export controls to protect national security interests and promote foreign policy objectives. The U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Export Enforcement (EE) is responsible for the enforcement of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). BIS works closely with U.S. embassies, foreign governments, industry, and trade associations to ensure that exports from the United States are secure. In accordance with the EAR, BIS officials conduct site visits, also known as End-Use Checks (EUCs), globally with end-users, consignees, and/or other parties to transactions involving items subject to the EAR, to verify compliance.

An EUC is an on-site verification of a party to a transaction to determine whether it is a reliable recipient of U.S. items. EUCs are conducted as part of BIS’s licensing process, as well as its compliance program, to determine if items were exported in accordance with a valid BIS authorization or otherwise consistent with the EAR. Specifically, an EUC verifies the bona fides of recipient(s) of items subject to the EAR, to include: confirming their legitimacy and reliability relating to the end use and end user; monitoring their compliance with license conditions; and ensuring such items are used and/or re-exported or transferred (in-country) in accordance with the EAR.

BIS officials rely on EUCs to safeguard items subject to the EAR from diversion to unauthorized end uses/users. The verification of a foreign party’s reliability facilitates future trade, including pursuant to BIS license reviews. If BIS is unable to verify the reliability of the company or is prevented from accomplishing an EUC, the company may receive, for example, more regulatory scrutiny during license reviews or be designated on BIS’s Unverified List or Entity List, as applicable.

BIS has developed a list of “[red flags](#)”, or warning signs, intended to discover possible violations of the EAR.

Also, BIS has “[Know Your Customer](#)” guidance.

BIS provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one- to two-day seminars and focus on the basics of exporting as well as more advanced topics. Check a [list of upcoming seminars and webinars](#).

BIS also provides [online training](#).

The EAR does not regulate transactions involving all U.S. goods, services, and technologies. Other U.S. Government agencies regulate more specialized exports. For example, the U.S. Department of State's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls has authority over defense articles and services. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the [BIS website](#) or in Supplement No. 3 to Part 730 of the EAR.

The EAR is available on the [BIS website](#) and on the [e-CFR](#) (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations).

The [Consolidated Screening List \(CSL\)](#) is a list of parties for which the United States Government maintains restrictions on certain exports, reexports or transfers of items. The CSL consolidates a number of smaller lists of restricted parties that are maintained by a variety of U.S. Government agencies, including the Department of Commerce, as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of potential parties to regulated transactions.

U.S. export licenses are not necessarily required for firms that seek to sell goods and services in Côte d'Ivoire. Exporters should check with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security on items that could be considered dual-use or on items that could potentially violate U.S. arms control rules. See additional information at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security: <http://www.bis.doc.gov/index.htm>

A list that consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the U.S. Treasury into a single search, as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of potential parties to regulated transactions, is available here: <http://developer.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list.html>

Temporary Entry

A new or temporary business may apply to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for "Admission Temporaire," or temporary entry, of its goods that will be processed and then re-exported. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry grants this status on a case-by-case basis on goods that will be re-exported to other countries. Prior authorization from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Customs office and a deposit is required. Exceptional or occasional temporary admission includes goods for repair, exhibitions, fairs, and testing. Temporary admission of company material implies a partial customs taxation of the materials.

Most business travelers bring laptop computers into the country without difficulty. Traveling with desktop computers or other electronic equipment may pose a problem if the equipment is new or the quantity is such that it may be suspected of being brought into the country for resale. Travelers should be prepared to demonstrate the business purpose of such equipment and may submit a letter to the Director General of Customs to request temporary entry permission for expensive equipment.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has liberalized the importation of goods and services. There are no quotas, and importers do not need prior authorization or import licenses for the vast majority of products.

Exceptions include:

Some types of textile products are subject to authorization requirements by the Ministry of Commerce's Department of External Trade.

Petroleum products are subject to prior authorization from the Ministry of Petroleum, Energy and Renewable Energy.

Livestock and animal products (including hides and skins) are subject to prior authorization from the Ministry of Animal Husbandry.

Beverages containing more than 20 percent alcohol are subject to license from the Ministry of Commerce's Department of External Trade.

Pharmaceutical, medical, and beauty-health care products must be registered/approved with the [Direction de la Pharmacie, du Médicament et des Laboratoires \(DPML\)](#).

Customs Regulations

Payment of import duties and taxes must be made within 20 days of arrival of the goods. Late payments will incur an additional penalty; the rate of the penalty is dependent on the type of product. The average time of customs clearance depends on the type of goods being imported. The clearance times for products whose specifications are in customs' database generally vary from 48 hours to a week. Goods that customs have not previously processed can take much longer as customs officials are unfamiliar with them. A quicker customs clearance is possible for businesses that have established professional customs records with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Customs Office.

For more information and help with customs issues, contact:

Direction Générale des Douanes
BP V 25 Abidjan
Tel: (225) 2025 1500/ 2025 1526
Fax: (225) 2025 1514
<http://www.douanes.ci/>

Standards for Trade

OverviewThe national standard and certification agency is Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation (CODINORM) <http://www.codinorm.org/>. CODINORM is a non-profit body created in September 1992 by the private sector with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's authorization. CODINORM provides standards for business development, risk prevention, health, fair commercial transactions, and consumer protection. Webb Fontaine is the government contractor providing e-governance software for goods value inspection at the ports and airport.

Standards

CODINORM has contracts with two companies, Webb Fontaine and CÔTECNA Inspection Ltd., to undertake all qualitative and quantitative checks on goods shipped to or through Ivoirian Customs.

CODINORM has an agreement with ASTM (www.astm.org/GLOBAL), an American Standards organization, allowing CODINORM free access to the ASTM library of more than 12,000 international standards. This serves as the basis for comparing Ivoirian national standards with American standards, helping American firms navigate standards issues.

Testing, Inspection and Certification

CODINORM accredits testing laboratories authorized to operate in Côte d'Ivoire and grants approval for and disseminates Ivoirian government information on standards. CODINORM requires that all products made in Côte d'Ivoire demonstrate proof of compliance with applicable laws and norms. Specifically, CODINORM requires *Norme Ivoirienne* (NI) labeling, or a certificate of compliance delivered by a certification product body accredited on the basis of an international standard (such as ISO/CEI 65 OR EN 45011). A growing number of Ivoirian companies have become ISO9000 certified.

Webb Fontaine handles import inspection duties in Côte d'Ivoire for general merchandise and determines the real value of imports based on WTO provisions. CÔTECNA Inspection Ltd. performs services related to temporary imports, and exports of petroleum products and forestry products. All goods entering Côte d'Ivoire with a free-on-board (FOB) value in excess of one million CFA (approximately US\$2,000) must be inspected by the inspection company at the point of origin to ensure that invoice valuation is consistent with the goods actually shipped. An inspection certificate is then used as the basis for customs valuation. Exporters should note that the inspection process is triggered by the local (Ivoirian) importer when he/she files a declaration of intent to import, also known as an import declaration form (FDI).

The fee charged by Webb Fontaine for inspection services is 0.75 percent of the FOB value of the merchandise to supply on the market. CÔTECNA receives 1.05 percent of the FOB value of merchandise, 0.8 percent for oil and 1 percent for wood before export.

A certificate of conformity for the supply of some products is required. For foreign exporters, Webb Fontaine's Center of Export Relations is responsible for issuing the certificate of conformity. For local companies, Webb Fontaine issues a certificate of product compliance during its semi-annual inspections. All exporters to Côte d'Ivoire must have a certificate of conformity for customs clearance.

Publication of Technical Regulations

The Official Journal is the national gazette. Proposed technical regulations are not published for comment. Final regulations are published in the Official Journal.

Contact Information:

Webb Fontaine Côte d'Ivoire
Immeuble Plein Ciel
Boulevard Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
26 BP 822 Abidjan 26 Ruling Center Help Desk
Telephone: (225) 2121 2395
Fax: (225) 2125 1225 Skype: wfci_helpdesk
Email: info@webbfontaine.ci
<http://www.webbfontaine.ci/>

Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation

Angle Blvd Latrille rue K115 villa 195
01 BP 1872 Abidjan 01
Tel: (225) 2001 1074
Fax: (225) 2241 5297
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Edmond KOUASSI,
Director of the Information Center:
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Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify to the WTO proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. (www.nist.gov/notifyus) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country or countries and industry sector(s) of interest and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated web site are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Trade Agreements

Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to or member of the following:

- African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which has been signed and ratified by 30 countries in Africa.
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which includes 15 countries in West Africa.
- West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. Under the WAEMU treaty, Côte d'Ivoire has undertaken to coordinate its economic, financial, and structural policies with most francophone partners in the region.
- Organisation pour l'Harmonization en Afrique du Droit des Affaires (OHADA), an organization that harmonizes a broad range of African legal systems that previously were characterized by a wide disparity in business law, codes, rules, regulations and local conventions affecting business. The agreement creates a number of uniform acts and sets up organizations when necessary to implement the acts.

Côte d'Ivoire has qualified as a beneficiary country to export a large number of goods in the United States tariff-free under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) since 2011. AGOA is set to expire in 2025. Côte

d'Ivoire ratified an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union in 2016.

Web Resources

- [African Growth and Opportunity Act](#)
- [Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa \(OHADA\)](#)
- [West African Economic and Monetary Union \(WAEMU\)](#)
- [Economic Community of West African States](#)
- [Webb Fontaine Côte d'Ivoire Conformité](#)
- [Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation \(CODINORM\)](#)
- [Ivoirian Government Foreign Trade Platform](#)

Licensing Requirements for Professional Services

Some key professional services require a license from the government to operate. License issuance in the following professions requires registration with the professional association. Ivoirian law stipulates that to operate in these key professional services, specialists must be Ivoirian nationals.

Pharmacists: license from the Ministry of Health

Legal Practitioners: license from the Ministry of Justice

Notaries: License from the Ministry of Justice

Selling U.S. Products and Services

Though not required by law, retention of a local agent or distributor may facilitate more rapid import into Côte d'Ivoire. Many established sectors have one or two large distributors, manufacturers, or agents that already supply a large portion of the market, while several smaller agents vie for niche markets. Exporters should assess the sales potential of all prospective partners in a market sector before deciding which one to choose. An agent or distributor should possess a thorough understanding of the market and be fluent in both French and English or get the assistance of a professional interpreter. Both parties should agree on the amount of sales support (if any) to be provided, as well as future expectations. If the exported product requires servicing, qualified personnel and a reasonable inventory of spare parts must be considered. Exporters should be aware that agents and distributors commonly represent several product lines, and there are no legal regulations requiring that agreements be exclusive, although a contract can stipulate exclusivity. The exporter should provide appropriate literature and documentation in French for effective communication with potential customers. European competitors market their geographic proximity as a competitive advantage (e.g. provision of a technician or a part on short notice).

U.S. exporters sometimes experience problems when failing to clarify terms and conditions with agents and distributors selling U.S. products in advance of entering into a partnership. Key factors that should be clearly addressed in written agreements include the geographic regions to be covered, type of relationship (distributor or agent), exclusivity, payment terms for products or commissions, currency of payments, actions taken to address currency fluctuations, renewals of the agreement including specific parameters for performance and promotional activity, provisions for termination of the relationship, licensing or protection of intellectual property rights, and provisions for dispute settlement. The U.S. Commercial Service provides a range of fee-based services www.buyusa.gov that can help U.S. companies locate reliable local agents and distributors through an International Partner Search (IPS), which is a customized search for qualified local representatives, agents, or distributors. More assistance can be provided through additional services, including the International Company Profile (ICP), and the Gold Key Service (GKS). Information regarding these programs is available through the U.S. Commercial Service website as well as by contacting your Export Assistance Center.

Distribution & Sales Channels

The principal venues of commercial transaction are: wholesale and/or retail outlets, either in a local market, local shop or at an established chain; a direct sales force; an agent or distributor; established wholesalers or dealers; and selling directly to the government, cooperatives, and other local organizations. Exporters should consider the requirements of the product and its potential market when choosing a distribution channel.

Most wholesale establishments and modern retail outlets are concentrated in Abidjan. These include company headquarters, regional offices, banking branches, insurance companies, supermarkets, car dealerships and specialty stores. Most small shops and retail stores are sole proprietorships whose owners have limited management capability.

E-Commerce

Côte d'Ivoire's telecommunications infrastructure and growing internet market have laid the groundwork for the further development of e-commerce. The e-commerce sector also offers investors an opportunity to provide cyber-security technology services to secure online payments.

Assessment of Current Buyer Behavior Market

The government announced in late 2019 its intention to expand e-commerce options. At present, at least ten online retail shopping websites have opened and their usage by Ivoirians is increasing. E-commerce is also expanding through social media. U.S. businesses interested in entering this market should plan to employ various payment modes, including cash on delivery, as many Ivoirians do not have credit cards.

Local eCommerce Sales Rules and Regulations

E-commerce companies receive many of the same incentives as other companies provided in the Investment Code. The Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (ARTCI) regulates the sector and reports to the Ministry of Digital Economy and Post. A license is required to engage in e-commerce and the firm must be registered with the government's Investment Promotion Center.

Local eCommerce Business Service Provider Ecosystem

The West African Central Bank (*Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*, BCEAO) has an inter-bank automated electronic payment system to reduce delays in bank settlement operations. The system has helped promote swift e-commerce, though credit cards are still not used outside of major cities as often as they are within them.

Côte d'Ivoire is a regional hub for e-commerce as well. WAEMU's Interbank Electronic Banking Group (*Groupement Interbancaire Monétique_GIM-UEMOA*) is located in Abidjan; Côte d'Ivoire accounts for over 40 percent of its activity. The GIM-UEMOA is standardizing many operations, such as e-commerce payments and internet payment of taxes and utility bills (www.gim-uemoa.org).

Selling Factors & Techniques

Ivoirians are generally interested in buying U.S.-made products, and Ivoirian businesspersons are generally open to partnering with U.S. business, but language and cultural barriers can create problems. Some Ivoirian businesspersons are suspicious of large foreign firms, so it is important for U.S. companies to establish and maintain a high frequency of personal contact if they wish to be successful. It is difficult to mount a successful enterprise via telephone or internet connections alone, as many Ivoirians prefer initial face-to-face contact before engaging with an overseas partner. Yet despite differing business styles, Ivoirians generally respect the United States, welcome U.S. products, and encourage U.S. investment in Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire maintains strong historical, cultural, and economic links with France. However, increasingly, young Ivoirians prefer a North American university education over a French one. Younger generations have been exposed to American culture through travel, sports, film, technology, internet, and general consumer goods. This exposure to U.S. culture and the English language is likely to continue, helping to further U.S. business interests. A number of Abidjan-area universities and leadership schools offer business and technical training in English.

Ivoirians are, in general, extremely polite and rather formal, and it is customary to greet everyone that one meets. Even a long-term partner or business contact is usually greeted with an exchange of pleasantries, followed by a handshake and inquiries about one's health, family, and relatives. While coming to the point directly is admired in American culture, Ivoirians tend to be more reserved and patient, and some may, in fact, view the straight-forward manner of many Americans as off-putting. Ivoirians tend to prefer regular, face-to-face contact; visits are generally more effective in obtaining results than remote communication. For Ivoirians, trust in a business relationship is paramount and cannot be achieved sight unseen. The cornerstone of a successful U.S.-Ivoirian business relationship is adapting to a pace of business that is different than that of the United States.

The Lebanese community plays an important role in business in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in retail, wholesale, and processing. That community is generally receptive to U.S. products and U.S. company representatives, and many of its members are conversant in English. However, French is still generally the preferred language for business transactions.

Trade Financing

Methods of Payment

While traditional trade finance instruments such as letters of credit, collections, and funds transfers are available to exporters, the associated fees are high in Côte d'Ivoire compared to those of other regions. If a letter of credit is chosen, the exporter should require an irrevocable, confirmed letter of credit to ensure prompt, reliable payment. The [United State Department of Agriculture's \(USDA\) West Africa Regional GSM-102 Credit Guarantee Program](#) provides access to financing for imports of agricultural products. The payment guarantee to the U.S. exporter is for a minimum of 90 days and a maximum of one year. The GSM-102 program is generally available only to importers with a good credit history and substantial assets with the guarantor bank. In addition, USDA's regional Supplier Credit Guarantee Program offers a 65 percent guarantee for credit extended directly from a U.S. exporter to an importer. The U.S. Export-Import Bank also offers financing to foreign buyers of U.S. goods and export credit insurance to U.S. exporters.

For more information about the methods of payment or other trade finance options, please read the Trade Finance Guide available at <https://www.trade.gov/trade-finance-guide-quick-reference-us-exporters>.

Banking Systems

Banks are expanding their networks, especially in the secondary cities outside Abidjan as domestic investment has increased upcountry. The total number of bank branches increased from 324 in 2010 to 694 branches in 2018 (latest data available).

Côte d'Ivoire's commercial banking sector is undergoing privatization as the government is seeking to reinvigorate the sector. Some public banks have large numbers of nonperforming loans. The BCEAO is common to the eight member states of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WEAMU). Most Ivoirian banks are compliant with the BCEAO's minimum capital requirements.

Foreign banks are allowed to establish operations in Côte d'Ivoire. They are subject to prudential measures and regulations of the Banking Commission of the WAEMU.

Foreign Exchange Controls

There are no restrictions on the transfer or repatriation of capital and income earned, or on investments financed with convertible foreign currency. Once an investment is established and documented, the government regularly approves remittances of dividends and/or repatriation of capital. The same holds true for requests for other sorts of transactions (e.g. imports, licenses, and royalty fees). Some companies have reported delays of up to two weeks when using the BCEAO to convert funds from CFA to another currency.

Funds associated with investments funded with convertible currency can be converted into any world currency.

As a member of the WAEMU, Côte d'Ivoire uses the West African Franc (XOF), also called the CFA. The French Treasury holds the international reserves of WAEMU member states and supports the fixed exchange rate of 655.956 CFA to the Euro. In December 2019, the Ivoirian President and French President announced the forthcoming transition from the CFA to another common regional currency to be called the Eco, which will not require WAEMU countries to hold 50 percent of their foreign exchange reserves with the French treasury; details about the timeline or modalities of the change have not yet been published.

US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Ivoirian Bank	U.S. Correspondant Banks
SGBCI	Société Générale (SocGen)
BIAO	Crédit Commercial de France (CCF)
BICICI	BNP Paribas
Attijariwafa Bank	Crédit Agricole, NY
Citibank	Citibank
United Bank of Africa (UBA)	UBA, NY
Ecobank	Citibank NY, and Bankers Trust
BACI	Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi, New York
Standard Chartered Bank	Standard, NY

Protecting Intellectual Property

Côte d'Ivoire does offer copyright protection to foreign works in accordance with international agreements to which it is a signatory. Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a signatory to the Paris Convention For the Protection of Intellectual Property, Trademark Law Treaty, and the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

The Ivoirian Intellectual Property Protection Office (OIPI) receives and examines applications for Industrial Property Titles and transmits them to the African Organization of Intellectual Property (www.oapi.int). OIPI generally registers patents on a first-to-file or first-to-invent basis, depending on the type of IP. Similarly, registering trademarks is based on a first-to-file or first-to-use, depending on the country. It is recommended that American businesses review OIPI regulations before introducing patented or trademarked products or services to the Ivoirian market. OIPI staff can provide advice on the application process for an Industrial Property Title. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in

Ivoirian law. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request; or see <https://ci.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/attorneys/>.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these organizations, based in the United States, that can assist companies with IP concerns. These include:

- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
- International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
- International Trademark Association (INTA)
- The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy
- International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

Foreign companies should consider several general principles for effective protection of their intellectual property. For background, link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and [Stopfakes.gov](#) for more resources.

Selling to the Public Sector

The Ivoirian government incorporates WAEMU directives into its public procurement bidding policy, processes, and auditing. Recent changes include separating auditing and regulating functions, transitioning from a national to a regional system of procurement for intellectual services, and increasing advance payment for the initial procurement of goods and services from 25 to 30 percent.

Selling to the Government

The National Regulatory Authority for Public Procurement (ANRMP) regulates public procurement with a view to improving governance and transparency. It has the authority to sanction private entities and individuals that do not comply with public procurement regulations. Additional information on government tenders can be found at:

<https://www.anrmp.ci/publications/avis-dappels-doffres-53842>

For projects financed by multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, the *Bureau National d'Etudes Techniques et de Développement* (BNETD) (<http://www.bnetd.ci>) usually acts as an executing agency representing the ministry involved. There is a charge for the bid documents, which are normally in French. Government payments are centralized through the *Banque Nationale d'Investissement* (BNI), which acts as the government's bank (<http://www.bni.ci>).

U.S. companies bidding on government tenders may also qualify for U.S. Government advocacy. A unit of the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, the Advocacy Center, coordinates U.S. Government interagency advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters bidding on public sector contracts with international governments and government agencies. The Advocacy Center works closely with our network of the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide and inter-agency partners to ensure that exporters of U.S. products and services have the best possible chance of winning government contracts. Advocacy assistance can take many forms but often involves the U.S. Embassy or other U.S. Government agencies expressing support for the U.S.

bidders directly to the foreign government. Consult [Advocacy for Foreign Government Contracts](#) for additional information.

Financing of Projects

Commercial lenders tend to rely more on collateral than on prospective income and cash flow. Financing is generally available for short-term (one year or less) private sector projects. Since the 1994 devaluation, inflation has remained substantially under control. Banks continue, however, to extend credit only to a limited group of borrowers—mostly large companies—that are deemed good credit risks. Medium- to long-term infrastructure projects, even private-sector projects, are often financed by foreign assistance programs, rather than by commercial banks.

Multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (<http://www.ifc.org>) provide funding for agribusiness, small business and infrastructure projects.

U.S. Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank: <http://www.exim.gov/>) financing is available for short- and medium-term private sector transactions. Ex-Im Bank's Direct Loan Program offers foreign buyers medium- and long-term loans for up to 85 percent of the contract price at fixed interest rates for the purchase of U.S. capital equipment. Financing also may be available through the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (<https://www.dfc.gov>) or the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (<http://www.ustda.gov>), depending on the structure and ownership of the project.

Multilateral Development Banks and Financing Government Sales

Price, payment terms, and financing can be a significant factor in winning a government contract. Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB). A helpful guide for working with the MDBs is the [Guide to Doing Business with the Multilateral Development Banks](#). The U.S. Department of Commerce's (USDOC) International Trade Administration (ITA) has a Foreign Commercial Service Officer stationed at each of the five different Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the World Bank. The African Development Bank (AfDB), which is headquartered in Cote d'Ivoire's capital of Abidjan, has a dedicated Foreign Commercial Service officer to assist U.S. businesses interested in bidding on AfDB procurement contracts.

Learn more by contacting:

- [Global Markets/Commercial Service Liaison Office to the World Bank](#)
- [World Bank project procurement](#)
- [World Bank corporate procurement](#)
- [Commercial Liaison Office to the African Development Bank](#)
- [AfDB project procurement](#)
- [Trade Finance Guide: A Quick Reference for U.S. Exporters](#),
- [Export-Import Bank of the United States](#)
- [U.S. International Development Finance Corporation](#)
- [U.S. Trade and Development Agency Sub Saharan Africa Initiatives](#)
- [SBA's Office of International Trade](#)

- [USDA Commodity Credit Corporation](#)
- [International Finance Corporation](#)

Business Travel

French is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire. Business correspondence, catalogues, and advertising materials prepared in French are essential to being readily understood by potential partners and buyers. Business cards, or *cartes de visite* are widely used. U.S. businesspeople ordinarily have their title and their firm's name translated into French. As a rule, business customs in Côte d'Ivoire are similar to, but perhaps more formal than, customs in the United States. Ivoirian managers in large commercial enterprises tend to follow a Western business dress code comparable to that of any large U.S. city. Tropical-weight suits and clothing are appropriate throughout the year and an umbrella is essential during the April to July and October to November rainy seasons. Some businesses close during the month of August, and high-level officials generally take vacation during the same period. Additionally, some businesses and shops close for lunch from 12:30 p.m. until 2:30 or 3:30 p.m. Banks are open until 4:00 PM on weekdays.

Travel

Advisory

The Department of State provides information on travel to all countries, including Côte d'Ivoire:

[Côte d'Ivoire International Travel Information](#)

[U.S. Embassy in Abidjan website](#)

Visa Requirements

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire requires U.S. citizens to have a valid Ivoirian visa for entry into Côte d'Ivoire, as well as a passport with more than six months of remaining validity. Americans should be aware that some major airlines and travel agents continue to misadvise travelers due to out-of-date information. U.S. Citizens traveling to Côte d'Ivoire should check with the nearest Ivoirian Embassy or Consulate for details regarding the latest visa procedures and fees. Please note that e-visas are now available upon arrival if travelers have completed all the necessary pre-enrollment procedures and have printed an e-visa receipt at <http://www.snedai.com/e-visa/> prior to departure. For information regarding documents to enter Côte d'Ivoire, see <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/cote-divoire.html>

U.S. companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States are advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following link(s): [State Department Visa Website](#)

Currency

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which uses the Franc CFA, a convertible currency but one that is not easily exchanged outside the WAEMU region.

The WAEMU has unified foreign exchange regulations. Under these regulations, there are no restrictions for transfers within the community, and designated commercial banks are able to approve routine foreign exchange transactions inside the community. The transfer abroad of the proceeds of liquidation of foreign direct investments no longer requires prior government approval.

Telecommunications/Electronics

There are three cellphone service providers in Côte d'Ivoire (Orange, MTN, MOOV). There is 3G coverage throughout most of the country; 4G/LTE service is widely available in Abidjan. It is advisable for travelers to check with their cell phone service providers regarding international roaming possibilities, charges, and ability to use another carrier's network. Travelers can buy SIM cards and data units easily at kiosks throughout

Abidjan and in most major cities. Wifi is available in most hotels. U.S. travelers to Côte d'Ivoire should bring adaptors as electrical outlets are European in style and 220 Volts.

Transportation

Félix Houphouët-Boigny International Airport in Abidjan is Côte d'Ivoire's main airport. In terms of passenger and freight volume, the airport is one of the largest in the region. As of August 2020, international airlines providing service to Abidjan include: Air France, Kenya Airways, Brussels Airlines, Middle East Airlines, ASKY, Senegal Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Air Côte d'Ivoire, Emirates, Royal Air Maroc, Mauritania Airways, Air Burkina, Air Algeria, Tunis Air and CEIBA, Corsair, Turkish Airlines, Egypt Air, and South African Airways. Aéroport International d'Abidjan (AERIA), a private company, manages the Abidjan airport. Other cities in Côte d'Ivoire with commercial domestic flights are Bouaké, Korhogo, Man, Odienné, and San Pedro, which are serviced by Air Côte d'Ivoire.

Language

French is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire. Business correspondence, catalogues, and advertising materials prepared in French are essential to being readily understood by potential buyers. English is a second (or third) language for some people; do not assume that English is widely spoken or well-understood. Certified interpretation services are available for hire and can cost approximately \$300-500 per day.

Health

Travelers are reminded that they must bring with them a yellow World Health Organization booklet bearing a valid stamp for Yellow Fever inoculation or risk being denied entry into Côte d'Ivoire until an inoculation can be administered (at the airport). Appropriate malaria prophylaxis is also strongly recommended. For more information on health-related travel issues in Côte d'Ivoire, visit: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>.

Business visitors to Côte d'Ivoire often find the climate hot and humid. It is advisable to take precautions to avoid excessive fluid loss and dehydration from perspiration. Increased intake of non-alcoholic beverages is advised, as well as wearing loose-fitting cotton clothing. Excessive sun exposure should be avoided. Côte d'Ivoire is less than five degrees from the equator, and the sun is very intense. Sunburn will occur rapidly. Always use sun block with UVA and UVB protection (minimum SPF 30) when visiting the beach. Beaches near Abidjan can be dangerous because of treacherous surf, riptides, and undertows. Pools at large hotels are filtered, cleaned regularly, and are normally safe for swimming.

Many major hotels in Abidjan have their own water purification systems, though travelers should confirm this upon check-in. Tap water and ice should be avoided absent a confirmed purification system. Freezing water into ice cubes is not sufficient to kill amoeba and giardia parasites. Bottled water is widely available and safe to drink. Uncooked vegetables and salads may be eaten if they have been soaked in a dilute solution of bleach (one tablespoon in a gallon of water) or potassium permanganate for 15 minutes. Meat should always be thoroughly cooked. Cooked fresh fish and shrimp are generally safe. Pasteurized milk and milk products from sealed cartons or bottles are safe to consume, as are imported cheeses, butter, cream, and ice cream that has been properly stored.

In 2019, HIV prevalence among people aged 15-49 was estimated at 2.9 percent. Tuberculosis is the number one cause of death among people living with HIV. Tuberculosis skin tests are suggested after long stays in Côte d'Ivoire. There are many "polycliniques," or private health care facilities, in Abidjan, including Polyclinique Farah in Marcory, which is located across the bridge from the Embassy and is frequently used by U.S. Embassy personnel in country. It is the largest private hospital in Abidjan, offering both in-patient and out-patient services, as well as imaging, laboratory services, and specialists for consultations. Groupe Médical du Plateau is another full-service private hospital, located in the heart of Abidjan's Plateau business district. Most medical professionals at private health care facilities speak little or no English. Unfortunately, while there are ambulances that do eventually respond to medical emergencies, the quality of pre-hospital emergency care is poor and response can be hindered by traffic jams.

Local pharmacies are well stocked with medications manufactured primarily in Europe. Prices are generally cheaper than in the United States. However, available supplies vary, and counterfeits are pervasive. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to bring a good supply of any essential medications.

The Ivoirian government has implemented a number of measures to decrease the transmission of COVID-19 since the country registered its first case on March 11, 2020, to include encouraging social distancing and wearing a face covering in public spaces, though enforcement of these measures is sporadic. COVID-19 testing and treatment is free at government facilities, which are much more prolific in Abidjan than in smaller cities.

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

Time in Côte d'Ivoire is GMT + 0, which is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (from November to March) and four hours ahead the rest of the year. Côte d'Ivoire does not observe daylight savings time. Businesses are normally open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. Business establishments and the government are normally closed on public holidays in Côte d'Ivoire, though retail outlets and restaurants are often open. The U.S. Embassy in Abidjan is closed on all the Ivoirian holidays listed below. Additionally, it is closed on the following U.S. (Federal) holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day (U.S.), Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. For more information, see:

<https://ci.usembassy.gov/holiday-calendar/>

Date	English Name
January 1	New Year's Day
Variable Christian	Easter Monday
May 1	Labor Day (Ivoirian)
Variable Christian	Ascension
Variable Christian	Pentecost Monday
August 7	Independence Day (Ivoirian)
August 15	Assumption
November 1	All Saints Day
November 15	National Peace Day
December 25	Christmas
Variable Islamic	Prophet's Birthday
Variable Islamic	Revelation of the Qur'an

Variable Islamic	End of Ramadan
Variable Islamic	Feast of the Sacrifice

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

Duty-free entry is permitted for apparel and personal effects that are for personal or household use by the traveler and are not for sale, and of instruments and tools for professional use. No customs or entry duty is required for visitors carrying laptop computers and cellular telephones for their own use. All other goods, as well as tobacco and alcoholic beverages, whether imported for personal use or sale, are subject to duty.

Travelers seeking to import any vehicle (including trailers or cycles) or other goods intended for their use, convenience or comfort, but not for consumption, must deposit at the time and place of importation a sum equal to the duty that would be imposed. In July 2018, the government-imposed limits on the age of vehicles imported into Côte d'Ivoire. The vehicle or goods must then be exported at the end of the stipulated period. These conditions also apply to articles imported for exhibition or demonstration and subsequent re-export. If the prescribed conditions are not met, the visitor will be liable for the full duty of the vehicle or goods imported. A guarantee may be made by an authorized organization, however, in which case no deposit is required. The organization thereby assumes the liability for the duty if the vehicle or goods are not re-exported within the prescribed period.

Investment Climate Statement (ICS)

The U.S. Department of State Investment Climate Statements provide information on the business climates of more than 170 economies and are prepared by economic officers stationed in embassies and posts around the world. They analyze a variety of economies that are or could be markets for U.S. businesses. Topics include Openness to Investment, Legal and Regulatory systems, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property Rights, Transparency, Performance Requirements, State-Owned Enterprises, Responsible Business Conduct, and Corruption.

These statements highlight persistent barriers to further U.S. investment. Addressing these barriers would expand high-quality, private sector-led investment in infrastructure, further women's economic empowerment, and facilitate a healthy business environment for the digital economy. To access the ICS, visit the U.S. Department of State [Investment Climate Statement](#) website.

Executive Summary

Côte d'Ivoire offers a fertile environment for U.S. investment, and the Ivoirian government is keen to deepen its commercial cooperation with the United States. The Ivoirian and foreign business community in Côte d'Ivoire considers the 2018 investment code generous with incentives and few restrictions on foreign investors. Côte d'Ivoire continues structural reforms to improve the business climate, including by executing major projects under the 2016-2020 National Development Plan (NDP) and the 2019-2020 social program (PSGouv). But the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will affect current and future investments, causing delays and postponements, cost increases, and logistics issues.

U.S. businesses operate successfully in the following Ivoirian sectors: oil and gas exploration and production; agriculture and value-added agribusiness processing; power generation and renewable energy; IT services; digital economy; banking; insurance; and infrastructure. In 2019, Côte d'Ivoire improved in the World Bank's Doing Business ranking of 190 countries, moving from 122 to 110. Improvements in the business environment included the implementation of a single taxpayer identification number system for business creation, introduction of an online case management system to process cash refunds of Value Added Tax, and making contract enforcement easier by publishing reports on commercial court performance and progress of cases.

Economically, Côte d'Ivoire is among Africa's fastest growing economies and is the largest economy in francophone Africa. Also home to the headquarters of the African Development Bank, Côte d'Ivoire attracts regional migrant labor and a significant expatriate professional community. The IMF initially projected GDP growth to continue at 7.3 percent in 2020, led by growth in the industrial and service sectors. With the

negative effects of COVID-19 on the country's economic output, however, the IMF revised its projection to 2.7 percent, though still positive.

Despite improvements, doing business with the government remains a significant challenge. The government has awarded a number of sole source contracts without competition and at times disregarded objective evaluations on competitive tenders. An overly complicated tax system and a slow, opaque government decision-making process hinder investment. Other challenges include weak access to credit for small businesses, corruption, and the need to broaden the tax base to relieve some of the tax-paying burden on businesses.

Following a credible and peaceful election in 2015 in which President Ouattara was overwhelmingly re-elected to a second term, the country adopted a new constitution in 2016 and established an upper legislative house (Senate) in April 2018. Fraud and violence in certain locations marred legislative and municipal elections in 2018. The lack of consensus in the composition of the Independent Electoral Commission, controversial reforms to the electoral code and amendments to the constitution, and the judicial exclusion of major opposition candidates from the 2020 presidential race, have aggravated the country's internal political divisions. On the other hand, President Ouattara's announcement that he will not seek a third term – which, he argued, he could have done because of the new constitution – could contribute to institutionalizing democracy.

Côte d'Ivoire suffered a terrorist attack in March 2016 in the popular tourist town of Grand Bassam. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for this attack and continues to pose a major terrorism threat on the northern borders. Côte d'Ivoire has since improved its domestic and international coordination efforts to combat the increasing the terrorist/violent extremist threat from the Sahel, and contributes to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Ivoirian women are not legally prohibited from starting businesses, acquiring credit, or buying property. They nonetheless have historically faced discrimination, including lack of access to credit, that has hindered women's business ownership.

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link to the U.S. Department of State [Countries & Areas](#) website.