

U.S. Country Commercial Guides



Côte d'Ivoire 2018

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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 key to unlocking the francophone Sub-Saharan Africa market. The economy averaged over 8 percent economic growth from 2012-2017, and strong growth is expected to continue through 2020. This positive outlook is underpinned by an improved political environment and stable inflation. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire (GOCI) supports private sector-led growth and has worked hard to improve its investment climate and build economic infrastructure to allow businesses to thrive. The country welcomes foreign investment and hopes to attract more than \$37.5 billion in private sector investments through public-private partnerships to implement its 2016-2020 National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP aims to boost sustained and inclusive growth through proposed large infrastructure projects, driven by the private sector. Côte d'Ivoire is a lower middle income country with a growing consumer class supporting a vibrant retail and restaurant sector. Côte d'Ivoire has been a business and transportation hub for the entire West African region since the early 1960s. After the end of the 2011 political crisis, Côte d'Ivoire's economy has rebounded sharply, resulting in 7.7 percent GDP growth in 2016 and 7.8 percent GDP growth in 2017. Robust growth is expected to continue with forecasts of 7.4 percent GDP growth in 2018 and 7.1 percent GDP growth in 2019.

The GOCI has implemented measures to strengthen transparency, improve governance and attract businesses. A new commercial court was created to help ensure impartiality and accelerate dispute resolution. The GOCI enacted mining and telecommunication codes to improve the operational environment for businesses in those sectors and plans to update the investment code in 2018.

Côte d'Ivoire's mining potential is significant, with untapped resources, including gold, copper, iron ore, manganese, bauxite and diamonds. In April 2014, the United Nations Security Council lifted the diamond export ban that had been in place since 2005. Recent oil discoveries have been made in the Gulf of Guinea and major projects are underway to boost the country's hydroelectric and thermal power capacity. Numerous business opportunities exist in agribusinesses, especially value-added processing of cocoa, cashews, rubber, cotton, palm oil and rice. Other opportunities exist in the sale of construction equipment and machinery; power generation; oil, gas and mining exploration; and infrastructure development. Côte d'Ivoire is a beneficiary country under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Market Challenges

U.S. business interest in Côte d'Ivoire - beyond the cocoa sector - has historically been limited, with Lebanese, French and European domination of the market. American companies have generally had less familiarity with Côte d'Ivoire's French-based legal, commercial, and financial systems. Other longstanding barriers to U.S. business engagement include the French language, business practices, and technical standards. While many Ivoirians are improving their English, overall English-language proficiency in Côte d'Ivoire remains limited, and in general companies looking to do business should select strong French speakers to lead their operations. Other obstacles include:

- Slow and/or opaque decisionmaking in the Ivoirian government;
- Higher freight rates and longer transit times from the United States than from Europe;
- Consolidated product packaging for the entire francophone region gives francophone businesses a cost advantage;
- More favorable credit terms by European suppliers to local importers;
- High customs clearance costs, added to uncertain customs clearance times for inexperienced importers;

- Significant delays at the Port of Abidjan, generally during customs procedures. Companies cite pressures to pay customs officials for “expediting” clearance.
- Uncertain legal protection due to irregular practices within the court system;
- 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;
- 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;
- Fast moving consumer goods;
- Paper and paper board.

Market Entry Strategy

For U.S. companies considering doing business in Côte d’Ivoire, we recommend the following:

- Visit Côte d’Ivoire first: exporters should gain first-hand knowledge of the country.
- Use Agents: although there is no legal requirement, retention of a local agent or distributor could facilitate entering the Ivoirian market. Agents must be carefully vetted.
- Utilize supplementary information: consult and visit the U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Department of State, particularly your local U.S. Export Assistance Center and the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan (<http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/>).

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please check [Department of State Background Notes](#).

Selling US Products & Services

Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services

Though not required by law, retention of a local agent or distributor may facilitate export to Côte d'Ivoire. Exporters should note that many established sectors have one or two large distributors, manufacturers, or agents who 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 better 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).

A problem sometimes experienced by U.S. exporters is the failure to clarify terms and conditions for agents and distributors selling U.S. products. Key factors that should be clearly addressed in written agreements include 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.

Establishing an Office

Two agencies facilitate business creation and investment promotion: *Le Centre de Facilitation des Formalités des Entreprises* (CFE), aimed at reducing business start-up time to 48 hours; and the Ivoirian Investment Promotion Center (*Centre de Promotion des Investissements en Côte d'Ivoire* or CEPICI), to aid joint-venture operations and investment in Côte d'Ivoire (<http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/>). CEPICI has established an office in Abidjan as a "one-stop shop," providing guidance to foreign investors and reducing the amount of time required for business registration and bureaucratic paperwork. With an online system to navigate formalities and apply for licenses, CEPICI claims that investors can now start a business in 24 hours. CEPICI's services include assistance with registration, incorporation, notary services, and modifying the status of or dissolving a company. There are four common business models in Côte d'Ivoire. In any of these, non-Ivoirians are allowed to hold more than 51 percent of the company's assets, although exceptions to this law sometimes occur and can be mandated by government decree. The most common business models used are:

- Joint Venture (*Association et Participation*);
- Branch of a Foreign Company (*Succursale*): The establishment of a branch of a foreign company is not allowed until it is registered with the *Tribunal de Première Instance*. Once registered, the branch is regarded as an Ivoirian judicial entity and is legally independent of the company.

- Limited Liability Company (*Société à Responsabilité Limitée* - SARL): There are no minimum capital requirements and companies need only to pay the 15,000 CFA (\$31) business registration fee. SARLs must have at least one shareholder. No share certificates are issued;
- Stock Corporations (*Société Anonyme* - SA): Stock corporations are required to have at least one shareholder. Each share must have a nominal value of at least CFA 10,000 (\$20) and there is a minimum capital requirement of CFA 10,000,000 (\$20,000) for closely-held SAs, and CFA100,000,000 (\$200,000) for publicly traded companies. Directors' meetings must be held on a regular basis. If a corporation has share capital below CFA 2.5 billion (\$5 million), there is a stock registration tax of six-tenths of one percent of the value of the stock for the company. For corporations with capital valued above CFA 2.5 billion (\$5 million), the registration tax rate is reduced.

Other business forms include regional offices, sole proprietorships, local agency or distributorship arrangements, various entities that are similar to limited and general partnerships, and state-owned or partially government-owned companies. All business entities must register with the state Commercial Registry within 30 days of commencement of activity. If SARL or SA is the chosen business type, the following must be filed with the Commercial Registry: a copy of the company by-laws; the minutes authorizing the establishment of the company (SA form only); and the name of the manager (SARL) or director (SA). Companies must submit an annual balance sheet and profit and loss accounts to the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Business entities must file a Declaration of Commencement of Business with the Tax Department of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy (<http://www.minecofin.gouv.ci/>), the Labor Department (<http://www.formation.gouv.ci/>) and the National Social Security Fund (<http://www.cnps.ci/>). If the entity contemplates the importation or exportation of goods or materials, it must register as an importer or exporter with the Department of External Trade of the Ministry of Commerce.

Prior to establishing a business in Côte d'Ivoire, it is advisable to consult a local attorney.

Franchising

There are no official regulations on franchising in Côte d'Ivoire. Parties interested in franchising must conduct discussions directly with their potential partners. Many Ivoirians are familiar with U.S. brands due to their travels, and growing consumer demand for more options makes franchising attractive in various sectors. Ivoirian companies regularly attend the International Franchise Expo searching for U.S. partners. U.S. brands Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Midas have franchise partners and after initial success are expanding.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is used in Côte d'Ivoire, but is not common practice.

Joint Ventures/Licensing

Joint ventures are permitted in Côte d'Ivoire. Please refer to the section "Establishing an Office" above.

Selling to the Government

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire is compliant with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) community framework for public procurement that includes Directives 4 and 5 on bidding processes and auditing. In particular, the directives cover the separation of auditing and regulatory functions, passage from national preference to regional preference, the taking into account of procurement for intellectual services, and the increase from 25 to 30 percent of advance payment for procurement of goods and services.

The independent National Regulatory Authority for Public Procurement (ANRMP) has financial autonomy and is charged with monitoring the application of good governance principles and enforcing fair competition for government contracts. Additional information on government tenders can be found at:

<http://www.dmp.finances.gouv.ci/> and <http://www.anrmp.ci/publications/avis-dappels-doffres>

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>).

Multilateral Development Banks (African Development Bank, World Bank)

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars to developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development through reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Office help American businesses learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders. Learn more by contacting the Commercial Liaison Offices to the AfDB (<http://www.export.gov/afdb>) and the World Bank (<http://export.gov/worldbank>). Please check the Country Commercial Guide to the AfDB for background market information (<http://www.export.gov/article?id=African-Development-Bank-Market-Overview>)

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to the "Project *Financing*" Section in "*Trade and Project Financing*" for more information. **[In Salesforce insert a link to the Project Financing Section of the CCG]**

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. The Lebanese community is strongly represented in retail operations and is well connected to the national wholesale network.

Express Delivery

International Express Delivery firms such as UPS, DHL, and Federal Express are present and mainly cover international deliveries. Local small firms handle domestic deliveries. Standard delivery time is maximum two weeks and express delivery is one week maximum to and from abroad.

Selling Factors & Techniques

Ivoirians are generally positive toward U.S. firms, but language and cultural barriers can create problems. Some Ivoirians are suspicious of large foreign businesses, so it is important for U.S. companies to establish and maintain a high level of personal contact if they wish to be successful. It is difficult to mount a successful enterprise via telephone, fax 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. It is often expected that foreign-owned businesses will partner with Ivoirians. 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, general consumer goods, and business. This increasing exposure to U.S. culture and the English language should continue, helping to further U.S. business interests. A number of universities and leadership schools offering business and technical training in English have opened in the past several years.

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 disturbing. Ivoirians prefer regular, face-to-face contact; in fact, personal visits are warmly welcomed. While visits may not be the most efficient method of transacting business, they are generally regarded as more effective in obtaining results. For Ivoirians, trust in a business relationship is paramount and cannot be achieved sight unseen. The cornerstone of a successful business relationship is to adapt to a business pace and life 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. There are about 130,000 Lebanese in Côte d'Ivoire, most living in Abidjan. As a group, they are very receptive to U.S. products and U.S. company representatives, and they are generally conversant in English. However, French is still their preferred language for business transactions.

eCommerce

Côte d'Ivoire's relatively good telecommunications infrastructure and growing Internet market have laid the groundwork for the further development of e-commerce.

Internet penetration has continued to climb sharply, and the rise of mobile phone internet accounts for much of this growth. The use of VOIP for international calls (first in call centers and now in homes and businesses) has also increased tremendously. No special restrictions on this service have been imposed.

Banks also have started implementation of telephone, Internet and SMS banking, in addition to ATM service. Two cell phone service providers, Orange and MTN, have partnered with banks to give customers the ability to make small payments, money transfers and utility bill payments over mobile phones. In 2008, MTN acquired AFNET (an internet service provider) and Arobase Telecom (a telecom company with a fiber-optic network), to allow for greater integration of services. The cell phone firm Moov partners with the post office to transfer money through the postal service network. The government granted 3G licenses in 2012, and an undersea cable project (African Coast Europe-ACE) by France Telecom will extend broadband internet access and the provision of multi-play services with the convergence of land line, internet and mobile. The government's plan to build 7,000 km of fiber optic to promote a wide coverage of access to telecommunication services, is ongoing and expected to complete by the end of this year 2018. Thus far, more than 2,000 km of fiber optic has been installed. According to data from the National Telecom Regulator, ARTCI, the estimated cellular penetration rate was 97.5% in 2014 ; 99.5% in 2015 and 100% in 2016. The West Africa Central Bank, *Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (BCEAO), has an inter-bank automated payment system to reduce delays in bank settlement operations. The electronic payment system has helped promote swift e-commerce though credit cards are still rarely used in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2014, MTN teamed up with the online retail shopping, Jumia (www.jumia.ci) to offer a comprehensive service to users both online and on their mobile. Côte d'Ivoire has access to PayPal , but access is limited to only buying and sending money. At present, more than ten online retail shopping websites have opened and usage by Ivoirians is increasing.

Côte d'Ivoire remains a regional hub for e-Commerce as well. WAEMU has its Interbank Electronic Banking Group (*Groupement Interbancaire Monétique_GIM-UEMOA*) in Abidjan and Côte d'Ivoire accounts for over 40% of its activity. It is standardizing many operations, such as e-payment and internet payment of taxes and utility bills (www.gim-uemoa.org).

Trade Promotion & Advertising

As Côte d'Ivoire is a major commercial hub, many advertising agencies and companies have positioned themselves in the Ivoirian market place, offering a variety of services, including publicity and sales promotion. Major advertising agencies include McCann Erickson, Ocean Olgivy, Voodoo Communications, and DC Productions. Some advertising agencies also offer marketing research and video production services. New and more sophisticated advertising activities and materials have entered the market with the emergence of a variety of advertising products and services including large billboards, moving message signs, films, and video productions. Many of these new products and services are directed toward Internet users. Over the next few years, as internet penetration rates rise, this new segment of the advertising market is expected to grow substantially. In addition to local advertising, many international TV channels -- cable TV stations such as Canal+ Horizons, TV5, and VRO, as well as antenna broadcast programs such as CNN, CFI, and others -- provide advertising in the market. Most Ivoirians still receive their news by radio, and the Ivoirian government has authorized new licenses for private radio stations. To date, 75 private radio stations are operating in the country.

Radiodiffusion Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI), the government television station, remains the country's only public station, but the government plans to increase the number of private television stations to ten as part of its transition from analog to digital. Three regulatory bodies govern the media and advertising sectors. The first is the *Haute Autorité pour la Communication Audiovisuelle* (HACA), which regulates electronic media, particularly advertising and content issues. The *Conseil National pour la Presse* (CNP) is responsible for press-related issues. The *Conseil Supérieur de la Publicité* (CSP), the national council for advertising, registers new advertising and mass communication companies.

Selected Publications:

- *Fraternité Matin* (government daily); PH: (225) 2037 0666; fax: (225) 20372545; contact@fratmat.info ; <http://www.fratmat.info/>
- *Le Patriote* (political party daily); PH: (225) 2175 4545; fax: (225) 21352785; lepatriote@afnet.net
- *L'Inter* (independent daily); PH: (225) 2121 2800; fax: (225) 21212810; interpoci@yahoo.fr
- *Notre Voie* (political party daily); PH: (225) 2249 5197; fax:22495196; lequotidiennotrevoie@yahoo.fr
- *Nord Sud* (political daily); PH: (225) 2242 9672; fax: (225) 22421595; nordsufmedia@yahoo.com
- *Le Nouveau Réveil* (political party daily) ; PH: (225) 2241 2915; fax : (225)2241 2946; lenouveaureveil@yahoo.fr
- Television:
- RTI: <http://www.rti.ci/>

Websites:

- <http://www.abidjan.net/>
- <http://www.acturoutes.info/>

<http://www.panapress.com/pana-lang2-index.html>

<https://www.ansut.ci/web/mobile/projets.php>

Pricing

U.S. exporters will find that pricing in CFA Francs (CFA), especially for repeat sales of deliveries over a six-to-twelve month period, provides a substantial commercial advantage over quoting prices in U.S. dollars. Including cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) price quotations to an Ivoirian port are more useful to Ivoirian buyers than direct factory quotations. When calculating selling prices, U.S. businesses should compare their prices to competitors, and build into their cost structure an allowance for additional costs that often arise when selling into a developing market.

Payment via confirmed irrevocable letter of credit is often preferred by U.S. exporters, particularly at the beginning of a commercial relationship. However, insistence on L/C payment terms may limit the U.S. exporter's rate of market penetration. European suppliers often effectively use seller-financing in the Ivoirian market to accommodate customers and capture market share. Foreign competition often grants credit of 60 to 90 days for consumer goods and 24 months for machinery and equipment. European banks often quote liberal terms and may discount paper for their exporters who are pursuing long-term credits. Competitive credit terms are an important factor in purchasing decisions and may be part of an effective marketing strategy in Côte d'Ivoire.

Pricing is liberal and directed by the market (supply and demand), except for a few sectors such as petroleum and gas, power, and water. In these exceptions, the government oversees or regulates pricing.

Sales Service/Customer Support

After-sales support and services is essential for U.S. marketing success in Côte d'Ivoire. Support is especially critical and expected for high-tech or heavy industrial equipment such as computer hardware and software, telecommunications and networking equipment, photocopiers, vehicles and construction equipment, and air conditioning/refrigeration units. Successful U.S. companies include service packages in the final agreement. French language service manuals, frequent personnel training, and a reasonable inventory of spare parts are also crucial. U.S. businesses should consider having a plan for technology transfer, capacity building and training of personnel.

Protecting Intellectual Property

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property (IP) rights in Côte d'Ivoire. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect your IP. Second, IP may be protected differently in Côte d'Ivoire than in the United States. Third, rights must be registered and enforced in Côte d'Ivoire under local laws. For example, U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in Côte d'Ivoire. There is no such thing as an "international copyright" that will automatically protect an author's writings throughout the entire world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country depends on the national laws of that country. However, most countries do offer copyright protection to foreign works in accordance with international agreements.

Granting patent registrations are generally based on a first-to-file or first-to-invent, depending on the country basis. Similarly, registering trademarks is based on a first-to-file or first-to-use, depending on the country, so you should consider how to obtain patent and trademark protection before introducing your products or services to the Ivoirian market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and the U.S. government cannot enforce rights for private individuals in Côte d'Ivoire. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. 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. <https://ci.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/attorneys/>.

While the U.S. Government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if the rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the U.S. government can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should U.S. Government advice be seen as a substitute for the responsibility of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in Côte d'Ivoire require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with Côte d'Ivoire's laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

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 both Côte d'Ivoire and the United States. These include:

- The U.S. Chamber and local American Chambers 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)

IP Resources

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

- For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the US and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: **1-866-999-HALT** or visit www.STOPfakes.gov.
- For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: **1-800-786-9199**, or visit <http://www.uspto.gov/>.
- For more information about registering for copyright protection in the United States, contact the U.S. Copyright Office at: **1-202-707-5959**, or visit <http://www.copyright.gov/>.
- For more information about how to evaluate, protect, and enforce intellectual property rights and how these rights may be important for businesses, please visit the "Resources" section of the STOPfakes website at <http://www.stopfakes.gov/resources>.

For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit: www.stopfakes.gov/businesss-tools/country-ipr-toolkits. The toolkits contain detailed information on protecting and enforcing IP in specific markets and also contain contact information for local IPR offices abroad and U.S. Government officials available to assist SMEs.

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background on these principles please link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and also [Corruption](#).

Due Diligence

The U.S. Embassy in Abidjan <https://ci.usembassy.gov> can assist U.S. companies with researching the bona fides of companies based in Côte d'Ivoire. Such assistance ranges from a simple due-diligence check to the more sophisticated International Company Profile.

Local Professional Services

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan maintains a list of attorneys, notaries, and tax accountants. The list is found at <https://ci.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/local-resources-of-u-s-citizens/attorneys/>

Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>

Ivoirian Export Promotion Organization (APEX-CI) : <http://apex-ci.org/>

Banque Nationale d'Investissement (BNI): <http://www.bni.ci>

Banks in Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.africa-trade.ci/documentation/ci-banks.htm>

Shipping Companies <http://www.africa-trade.ci/documentation/ci-shipping.htm>

Hotels in Abidjan and Ivory Coast: <http://www.africa-trade.ci/documentation/ci-hotels.htm>

Principal Business Associations

The American Chamber of Commerce in Côte d'Ivoire has been accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and counts more than 20 members, mostly U.S. businesses including a few local ones.

American Chamber of Commerce in Côte d'Ivoire

President: Hervé Koffi

Executive Secretary: Aissata Bamba, aissata.bamba@gmail.com

Tel: +225 20-30-66-30

Fax: +225 20-32-64-93

Email: president@amchamci.com

Website: <http://www.anwacc.org/amcham-cote-divoire/>

The Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Côte d'Ivoire, CGECI, is the federation of the most important Ivorian business associations and businesses. It has an important voice before the government and is open for U.S. Businesses: www.cgeci.ci

Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

There are no current specific limitations or restrictions on U.S. products or services in Côte d'Ivoire. U.S. Embassy Abidjan, a U.S. Commercial Service partner post, is your starting point for using our assistance to do business in Côte d'Ivoire. <https://gh.usembassy.gov/embassy/accra/sections-offices/foreign-commercial-service/>

Web Resources

- [Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)
- [Ivoirian Export Promotion Organization \(APEX-CI\)](#)
- [Customs Office](#)
- [Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)
- [Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire](#)
- [Official Site of Côte d'Ivoire's Prime Minister](#)
- [Banque Nationale d'Investissement \(BNI\)](#)
- [Banks in Côte d'Ivoire](#)
- [Shipping Companies](#)
- [Export-Import Bank](#)
- [Hotels in Abidjan and Ivory Coast](#)

Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments

Leading sectors for 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 one of the best energy infrastructure in the region, the government has grand ambitions of 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. The Ivoirian government adopted an ambitious National Development Plan that calls for investing \$20 billion and producing 4000 megawatts by 2030. So far, the government has been able to keep up with that plan through extensions of existing thermal power plants.

Such interest in energy is not new. Up until two decades ago, the country was heavily reliant upon hydroelectric power and fell into an energy crisis when the electricity output from its dams was drastically reduced due to droughts. Côte d'Ivoire became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to turn to independent power producers (IPPs) to meet energy demand. Allowing private firms to operate in this sector gave Côte d'Ivoire the ability to respond rapidly to its growing energy needs. Today, there are three IPPs in Côte d'Ivoire: Ciprel (556 megawatts), Azito Energie (440 MW), and Aggreko (210 MW). The grid has reached 49% of coverage and the electricity access rate is 80%. The electricity sector has undergone significant reform and new regulations have helped foster a more welcoming environment. The government wants to explore economical off-grid solutions to expand public access to electricity. The government announced that it will privatize the distribution of electricity by 2020.

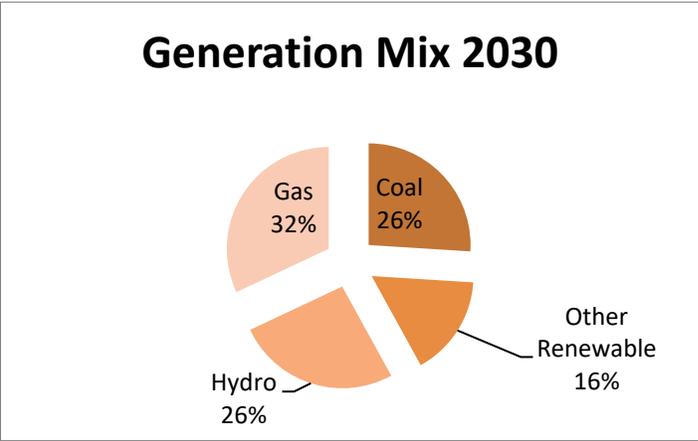
As Côte d'Ivoire continues to look for investors in the power sector, the government is exploring ways to expand its energy resources. Several offshore blocks are open for oil/gas development. The government announced plans to expand domestic gas and import and install a regasification facility through a LNG consortium in association with the private sector. Two new thermal plants will operate on coal. In 2018, the government awarded a competitive tender to a company using U.S. equipment to develop a solar farm. The government is also promoting the development of biomass energy using discarded cocoa shells.

Côte d'Ivoire's installed electrical generation capacity is estimated at 2,200 megawatts (MW). Urban electrification is pervasive and most urban-dwellers have access to electricity. The government is increasingly focused on rural electrification through expansion of the grid and the development of off-grid providers. Côte d'Ivoire regularly exports electricity to its neighbors and is setting its sights on increasing its exports of electricity to its neighbors Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in the coming years.

The Ivoirian government is giving priority to hydroelectric projects to increase generation of renewable and less expensive energy. In order to develop this type of project, the government is focusing on public-private partnerships. The government's goal of developing a balanced energy mix should encourage private hydroelectric production as well as the use of new and renewable sources of energy. This ambition is reflected in energy policies designed to enable private sector initiatives.

Products and services with immediate need or potential in Côte d'Ivoire include:

- 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



Electricity Demand and Export

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Estimated)
National demand	7,752.97	8,485.47	9,318.69	9,890
Total Exports	855.09	1,648.00	1,550.00	1,750.00
Total Imports	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Imports from the U.S.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Figures in GWh ; N/A = Not Available

Launched in 2013, Power Africa is a market-driven, U.S. Government-led public-private partnership to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan 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 [Power Africa](#).

Leading Sub-Sectors

Solar energy and renewables are promising as they are relatively cost-effective and sustainable. LNG supply is also a good prospect. The government has shown interest in developing biomass using discarded cocoa shells. 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 rural lighting system is still a challenge and the development of off-grid solutions using solar is in demand.

Web Resources

- [Bureau National d’Etudes et de Développement \(BNETD\)](#)
- [Côte d’Ivoire’s Investment Promotion Centre \(CEPICI\)](#)

[Ministry of Energy](#)
[Côte d'Ivoire Energies](#)
[Agence Nationale de Régulation du secteur de l'électricité](#)
[Annual report from CIE](#)

Building and Construction Equipment and Materials

For a country still trying to catch up on nearly a decade of neglect of its infrastructure, the construction sector is a very promising sector for U.S. companies. The signing of the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s compact with Côte d’Ivoire provides a possibility for U.S. companies to win contracts in road and school construction and rehabilitation.

Overview

The housing need in Côte d’Ivoire is estimated at 400, 000 to 600, 000 units, with a yearly increase of 50, 000. The Ivoirian government is planning to address the need of 400,000 new homes (200,000 of which are needed in the economic capital of Abidjan). There are 71 construction sites in progress to address this need, but this will only cover a small portion of overall demand. So far, only 12,785 houses have been completed, of which 4,003 have been delivered.

Building and construction has been one of the leading growth sectors since 2011. From 2016 to 2017, 40.5% of the imported construction equipment came from the U.S. The constant demand for cement shows the dynamism of the sector and the need for more suppliers. The four cement producers established in the country struggle to satisfy demand despite their 2.9 million metric tons of production capacity. The Ministry of Industry recently announced that four new cement producers will begin operations soon. The MCC compact with Cote d’Ivoire will fund two main projects: 1) a road construction and rehabilitation project focused on Abidjan, and 2) a school construction project in and around the cities of Bouaké and San Pedro. Please consult the MCC website <http://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/program/cote-divoire-compact> for more details.

Telecommunications firms, including cellular telephone companies and Internet providers, have continued to make substantial investments in infrastructure, facilities and equipment. The government launched important infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges in the country. The government set up a committee to promote Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) to invite companies to negotiate and bid on work on a variety of infrastructure projects. In the coming years, the building and construction market is expected to continue to grow, given the government’s priority of addressing the housing shortage and crumbling infrastructure nationwide. Stronger macroeconomic growth and foreign investment (from private and public lending institutions) suggest there will be a robust construction sector for the foreseeable future.

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	73,900	11,802	2,497	5,475
Total Imports	218,100	332,384	111,638	325,775
Imports from the US	5,300	3,222	270	425

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

NOTE:; N/A =Not Available

Leading Sub-Sectors

The housing market, road construction, and other large-scale infrastructure sectors offer excellent opportunities to promote American-made building materials, heavy equipment, specialized project management tools and related services. U.S.-made large-scale air conditioning units and refrigeration systems could do well in the Ivoirian market. Construction equipment (new and remanufactured) and related spare parts could be attractive in the Ivoirian marketplace, particularly if the U.S. Dollar-CFA exchange rate is favorable.

Opportunities

In addition to the building and construction sector, the Ivoirian home remodeling market has the potential to grow significantly over the long term. Significant opportunities exist in retail providing equipment, furniture and housewares.

Web Resources

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI): <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.cci.ci/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci>

Ministry of Construction: <http://www.construction.gouv.ci/>

Public-Private-Partnership Committee: <http://www.ppp.gouv.ci/projets>

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

The rapid rise in wealth of the Ivoirian consumer class makes this is an important industry sector for this country.

Overview

Total imports in this sector have held steady in the past five years. However, the used automobile market has been growing for the past several years with a rising share of American cars. The Ivoirian government's passage of a law in 2018 limiting the importing of vehicles more than a certain number of years old will limit some of this resale market. Market liberalization measures related to used vehicles and weak credit availability for potential buyers of new cars are prime factors in the growth of the second-hand car market, which represents 78% of the market. To reduce used vehicles and boost new vehicle trade, used vehicles are taxed according to the age.

Spare parts and accessories are a potential lucrative sector in the automobile market. Currently, spare parts and accessories in Côte d'Ivoire are expensive. The market for such products should grow due to the age of the existing automobile fleet and the increasing number of used vehicles. Côte d'Ivoire's automotive trade professionals are grouped within an association (Groupement Interprofessionnel Automobiles et Matériels et Equipements – GIPAME). The sector provided approximately \$64 million of tax revenue to the government.

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

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	18,7	18,219	1,772	1,925
Total Imports	287,9	319,537	99,502	350,120
Imports from the US	10,3	17,191	6,078	7,527

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Leading Sub-Sectors

Best sales prospects include:

- Consumables: oil and air filters, wiper blades, rubber 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: alarms and steering wheel locks
- 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 and buses (seven-year age limit), spare parts, security/anti-theft devices and safety devices.

Web Resources

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci>
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.cci.ci/>
Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>
Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci>

Oil and Gas / Field Equipment

This is among the best prospects industry sector for this country.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire has proven oil reserves estimated at 100 million barrels and gas reserves of 1 trillion cubic feet (<http://www.eia.gov/countries/countrydata.cfm?fips=IV>). Côte d'Ivoire has the potential to become a medium-sized offshore oil producer through development of the upstream industry. The country is a net exporter of petroleum, though it imports crude oil to be refined in local refineries that are configured for the heavier oil produced elsewhere. The Ivoirian government reports that oil production was approximately 34,000 barrels per day in 2017 and that gas production reached approximately 216 million cubic feet per day. Côte d'Ivoire is a net regional energy exporter.

Upstream development: Growth in the oil sector has been supported by steady increases in regional electricity demand, but production had been declining due to a lack of investment. Despite some early favorable discoveries, oil offshore production has yet to take off unlike in Ghana. However, U.S. companies report the Ivoirian authorities are very cooperative and in general the environment for exploration is good. Companies interested in exporting oil and gas production equipment to Côte d'Ivoire should work with the Ivoirian authorities to understand the related tax breaks available under the Ivoirian investment code. Investment credits are now offered for exploration in deep and ultra-deep waters. Many blocks have been delineated and are now open for negotiation.

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

Companies currently participating in the gasoline service 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; Total; Vivo, a spinoff from Shell; LibyaOil, which purchased ExxonMobil's Côte d'Ivoire unit in early 2007; and approximately twenty-five local suppliers. The larger companies own shares in the refinery. Should the market for these products be fully liberalized, there will be significant opportunities for U.S. companies.

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	13,9	2,674,152	1,324,381	1,845,620
Total Imports	144,1	2,631,723	1,078,362	1,320,420
Imports from the US	21,9	129,998	96,377	155,430

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

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, supply and production;

Opportunities

The oil and gas equipment market offers opportunities for U.S. companies.

Web Resources

Ministry of Petroleum and Energy : <http://www.energie.gouv.ci/>

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.ci/>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.cci.ci/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>

U.S. Energy Information Agency, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/>

S.I.R. (Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage), <http://www.sir.ci/>

PETROCI, <http://www.petroci.ci/>

Plastic Materials and Resins

The government has mandated that this industry sector be restructured into biodegradable plastics production and recycling.

Overview

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	172,2	205,272	52,783	70,580
Total Imports	442,4	395,287	136,436	165,750
Imports from the US	48,2	48,581	16,892	36,585

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

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

Leading Sub-Sectors

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

Opportunities

Demand for plastic goods has increased substantially in recent years, and U.S. companies have had some success exporting to meet Ivoirian demand. The Ivoirian plastics industry is in need of new technology to adapt to the new market policies of making them bio-degradable and recyclable. The recycling industry for plastics is just beginning in Côte d'Ivoire.

Web Resources

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.cci.ci/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>

Agricultural Chemicals, Agricultural Machines and Equipment

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

Overview

The primary end-users of agricultural chemical imports are Ivoirian farmers grouped in cooperatives and professional associations, as well as large companies involved in the agro-industry. Light agricultural machinery is common, mostly of Asian origin. Medium and heavy machinery is used by large agro-industries.

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	26,700	35,062	12,345	16,750
Total Imports	152,660	322,907	109,956	120,110
Imports from the US	2,3	4,010	1,058	1,890

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

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

Leading Sub-Sectors

The best sales prospects for U.S. firms range from fertilizers to fungicides to orthophosphates, particularly in cocoa production. Such products also have high export potential in the palm, rubber, fruit, cashew, timber, and cotton industries. Medium and light agricultural machinery could be a profitable segment for U.S. firms. Given the great interest in developing the Ivoirian agricultural processing sector, U.S. firms have great possibilities in this area.

Opportunities

Modern and environmentally friendly fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides, equipment for their application, and related services represent the best business opportunities. Government incentives encourage domestic cashew processing and the sector is a good business opportunity for U.S. firms.

Web Resources

Côte d'Ivoire's Export Promotion Agency: <http://www.apex-ci.org/>

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire: <http://www.cci.ci/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>

Association Nationale des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles de Côte d'Ivoire, <http://www.anopaci.com/>

Telecommunication, Services and Equipment

This is a top prospect industry sector for this country.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire has one of the most developed telecommunication sectors in West Africa. According to data from the National Telecom Regulator, ARTCI, the estimated cellular penetration rate was 130.62% in 2018 (most people have at least 2 SIM cards, often for different mobile networks). There are three major mobile phone operators in the market, with a total of 22.4 million subscribers. In the Internet market, there are 5 companies providing high-speed internet access.

The two companies that provide fixed line service in the country are Arobase, owned by MTN, and Côte d'Ivoire Télécom, the former state-owned company that was sold to France Télécom in 1997. A new telecommunications code was adopted on March 21, 2012 to adapt the regulatory environment to technological changes. The sector represents approximately 10% of GDP and annually contributes approximately \$800 million to the country's budget.

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan-April)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	6,300	12,554	4,147	4,915
Total Imports	107,539	292,668	65,746	98,850
Imports from the US	1,114	6,973	9,776	13,950

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

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

Leading Sub-Sectors

Best prospects for U.S. suppliers in the telecommunication sector include prepaid calling cards, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) equipment and tools, wireless networks, Wi-Fi equipment, Wi-max equipment, CDMA equipment, DSL equipment, GSM solutions and applications, call centers, fiber-optic cables, and billing solutions, mobile banking technologies.

Opportunities

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

Web Resources

Ministry of Post, Information and Communication Technologies : <http://www.telecom.gouv.ci/>

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.ci/>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.cci.ci/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>
Telecom Regulatory Board: <http://www.artci.ci/>
Biotechnology Park: <http://www.vitib.ci/>

Paper and Paper Board

This industry sector is to be developed; opportunities to contribute exist.

Overview

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

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

	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Exports	52,327	66,118	20,422	32,850
Total Imports	132,719	131,661	53,353	90,050
Imports from the US	7,543	4,802	1,624	2,455

(total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Leading Sub-Sectors

Best prospects 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 specialized in photocopy paper, leading importers of miscellaneous goods and products, and printing companies.

Opportunities

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

Web Resources

Association of Industrial companies and Services: www.fnisci.net/

Côte d'Ivoire's Investment Promotion Centre (CEPICI), <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/>

Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Côte d'Ivoire <http://www.chamco-ci.org/>

Bureau National d'Etudes et de Développement (BNETD): <http://www.bnetd.ci/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci>

Agricultural Sector

This industry sector provides a variety of export agricultural products.

Overview

Côte d'Ivoire has a large agriculture potential as 75 percent of the national territory constitutes arable agricultural land. Agriculture accounts for 25 percent of GDP and 60 percent of export receipts. The sector employs two-thirds of the population. Côte d'Ivoire is a net food exporter of major cash crops grown by small farmers including: cocoa, coffee, rubber, cotton, palm oil, cashew nuts and bananas. The country imports rice, wheat, corn meal and dairy products.

The main agricultural products are exported raw or unprocessed. Currently, opportunities exist for U.S. companies in processing cashew nuts, cocoa, palm oil (bio-fuels), and other value-added products. Côte d'Ivoire is the world top producer and one of the world's top exporters of cashews. Production of cashews has grown from 635,000 tons in 2015 to more than 650,000 tons in 2016. And this year's production is 750,000 tons of which less than 10% is processed. To increase this rate, the Ivoirian government, through additions to the fiscal facilities in the investment code, has decided to give an incentive of \$0.69 per kg of cashew processed. (<http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/en/?tmp=image-top&p=investment-code>).

With the demands of a growing consumer class, Côte d'Ivoire is a major importer of grains such as rice and cereals, and prepared fruits, nuts, and vegetables. There is also a growing demand for beverages, spirits, and meat.

Customs, Regulations & 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 French and European domination of the market;
- Use of French language, business practices, and technical standards; the cost of producing sales collateral and packaging for the francophone region;
- Higher freight rates and longer transit times between the United States and Côte d'Ivoire, in comparison to connections with Europe;
- Favorable credit terms by European suppliers to local importers;
- A tendency to award tenders as sole source or with limited transparency in the bidding process;
- Uncertain legal protection due to an inefficient court system;
- Limited and costly financing resources for U.S. exporters and Ivoirian buyers;
- Limited Ivoirian purchasing power;

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 transportation providers as well as increased competition.

For more information and help with trade barriers please contact:

- International Trade Administration
Enforcement and Compliance
(202) 482-0063
ECCcommunications@trade.gov
<http://trade.gov/enforcement/>

Import Tariff

Côte d'Ivoire's tariff structure is composed of two basic customs charges: (1) a fiscal duty, and (2) a customs duty. The maximum combined rate is 35 percent. The government also imposes a statistical tax of 2.6 percent on all declarations, a single rate of value added tax (VAT) of 18 percent, special levies on meat and poultry imports, and specific excise taxes on tobacco products and alcoholic beverages. Tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are taxed at 15%. 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 (CIF). The method of value assessment in use is based on the Brussels Definition of Value (BDV).

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU, or in French, UEMOA), which also includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The customs regime is similar for all WAEMU member states (<http://www.uemoa.int/>). All third countries pay duty and tax on products, whatever their point of entry, based upon the Common External Tariff (CET) schedule. Since January 1, 2015 when the CET entered into force, there have been some slight changes in customs duties for some products. The Common External Tariff Schedule (listed below) includes permanent and temporary duties and taxes:

Import Requirements & Documentation

Permanent customs duty and taxes

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

Permanent customs duty and taxes also include:

- Statistical fee: 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;
- The Community Levy of Solidarity (PCS) applies to all imports (except those from WAEMU countries) at a single rate of 1 percent. In some cases, goods are exempt from the PCS;
- ECOWAS community levy: 0.5 percent of the CIF value;
- Special taxes on fish (20 percent), rice (between 5 and 10 percent), alcohol (45 percent), tobacco and cigarettes (between 30 and 35 percent), and cooking oil products (between 20 and 44 percent);
- VAT collected by the customs office is based on the single rate of 18 percent. The tax computation includes the CIF value added to the entry duty and the statistical fee.

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. The 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 local production.

For more information, see:

West African Economic and Monetary Union: <http://www.uemoa.int/>

Ivoirian Customs Office: <http://www.douanes.ci/>

There are no import policies targeting U.S. companies which are still in effect. Textile imports are subject to government authorization. For imports above \$956 (CFA 478,000), the importer must establish an anticipated import declaration (DAI) in the computerized system of customs clearance. The importer must collect the DAI through the customs broker or inspection company (CÔTECNA or Webb Fontaine) handling the shipment. Both importer and exporter are required to obtain a registration number at the 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" is required. The importer must give yearly statistics to the External Trade office.

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

Commercial Invoice: Two copies of the freight invoices in French 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 Ivoirian authorities to ship bonded goods through the country.

Webb Fontaine Inspection Certificate: Issued by the inspecting Webb Fontaine Ruling Center delivered to the importer in Abidjan.

Labeling/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, consumer product labels must be in French for a product to be acceptable for purchase by importers and consumers. Manufactured food products must be labeled in French and must have 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

U.S. export licenses are not 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 for “Admission Temporaire,” or temporary entry, of its goods. The Ministry can also attribute this status to goods that will be re-exported to other countries if a bonded warehouse is not used. In either situation, temporary-entry status is granted on a case-by-case basis.

Temporary admission of goods status is applied to goods that will be processed and then re-exported. Granting of such status is subject to the prior authorization of the customs office and requires a deposit. Exceptional or occasional temporary admission includes goods for repair, exhibitions, fairs, and testing. Temporary admission of company material implies a partial custom 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. Business travelers should be prepared to demonstrate the business purpose of the equipment and may want to request temporary entry permission for expensive equipment.

Prohibited & 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, and Energy;
- Livestock and animal products (including hides and skins) are subject to prior authorization from the Ministry of Animal Husbandry.
- Alcoholic beverages containing more than 20% of 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)*, <https://www.dpml.ci/>

Customs Regulations

There are no restrictions on imports and exports. Payment of import duties and taxes must be made within 20 days of arrival of the goods. A penalty rate is added in cases of late payment. The average time of customs clearance depends on the type of goods being imported. Officially, for the “green circuit” (most products), the clearance time varies from 10 minutes to 24-48 hours. For the “red circuit” (products that require additional inspection), the clearance ideally takes about one week, though it can take much longer. The “white circuit” provides a quicker customs clearance, but this is only granted to businesses that have established professional customs records. However, anecdotally, we hear of some companies that have waited weeks for their goods to clear the port.

Contact information:

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

Overview

The national standard and certification agency, Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation (CODINORM, see <http://www.codinorm.org/>), 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, the Swiss and Dubai based firm Webb Fontaine, and the Swiss firm CÔTECNA Inspection Ltd., to undertake all qualitative and quantitative checks on goods shipped to or through Ivorian Customs.

CODINORM now has an agreement with ASTM (www.astm.org/GLOBAL), an American Standards organization, allowing them to have free access to the ASTM library of more than 12,000 international standards, to use them as adaptation, or as basis of their national standards, and send reports to ASTM in return. This will help American firms navigate any standards issues.

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Testing, inspection and certification

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL: <http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/> Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country(ies) 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.

Publication of technical regulations

Conformity Assessment

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 an FOB value in excess of CFA 1 million (\$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 a DAI (*Déclaration Anticipée d'Importation*).

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, the 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 bi-quarterly inspections. All exporters to Côte d'Ivoire must have a certificate of conformity for customs clearance.

Product Certification

CODINORM requires that all products made in Côte d'Ivoire demonstrate proof of compliance with applicable laws and norms. Specifically, 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), is required. A growing number of Ivoirian companies have become ISO/9000 certified.

For further information please contact:

Webb Fontaine Côte d'Ivoire
Immeuble Plein Ciel
Boulevard Valery 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/>

Accreditation

CODINORM accredits testing laboratories authorized to operate in Côte d'Ivoire.

CODINORM grants approval for and disseminates Ivoirian government information on standards.

For further information, please contact:

Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation
Angle Blvd Latrille rue K115 villa 195
01 BP 1872 Abidjan 01
Tel: (225) 2001 1074
Fax: (225) 2241 5297

<http://www.codinorm.org>

Edmond KOUASSI, Director of the Information Center: edmondkouassi@codinorm.ci +225-22-41-17-91

Contact Information

The Political and Economic Section Chief at U.S. Embassy Abidjan is David Mosby. The Economic and Commercial Officer is Jeremy Chen: ChenJH2@state.gov. The Economic Specialist at U.S. Embassy Abidjan is Mr. Amantchi Beugre: BeugreAG@state.gov. The Commercial Assistant at the U.S. Embassy Abidjan is Mr. Yaya Ouattara: OuattaraY@state.gov. The Embassy's telephone number is +225-2249-4000.

Trade Agreements

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the following:

- 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.
- OHADA (Organisation pour l'Harmonization en Afrique du Droit des Affaires), 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.

On October 25, 2011, the U.S. Government granted Côte d'Ivoire re-certification 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), <http://www.agoa.gov>. AGOA is set to expire in 2025. The European Union and Côte d'Ivoire has signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

Web Resources

- [African Growth and Opportunity Act](#)
- [OHADA \(Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires\)](#)
- [West African Economic and Monetary Union \(WAEMU\)](#)
- [Economic Community of West African States \(ECOWAS\)](#)
- [Côte d'Ivoire Customs](#)
- [Webb Fontaine Côte d'Ivoire Conformité](#)
- [Côte d'Ivoire Normalisation](#)

Investment Climate Statement

Executive Summary

Côte d'Ivoire offers fertile soil for U.S. investment, and the Ivoirian Government is keen to deepen its economic cooperation with the United States. The 2012 investment code is considered generous with incentives and few foreign investor restrictions. Currently the government is reviewing the investment code to try to make it even more favorable. According to the most recent numbers available, in 2016 U.S. direct investment in Côte d'Ivoire rose by 68.2 percent to 185 million. The most fruitful areas of investment for U.S. businesses are in oil and gas exploration and production; agriculture and value-added agribusiness processing; power generation and renewable energy; and infrastructure. Improvements in the business environment include a one stop shop for registering businesses and the implementation of a single user identification number for business creation. Legally, complaints to the Commercial Court of Abidjan, rulings from the Commercial Court, and electronic land registration are now available online.

Following a credible and peaceful election in 2015, in which President Ouattara was overwhelmingly reelected to a second term, a new constitution was adopted in 2016 and a new Senate was established in April 2018. Legislative and municipal elections are planned for the last quarter of this year. The country's political stability will face serious challenges as the 2020 presidential elections approach. Economically, Africa's second fastest growing economy since 2012 is experiencing rapid progress in all sectors. The largest economy in francophone Africa, Côte d'Ivoire's growth attracts migrants and outside investors. The IMF expects GDP growth to continue at 7.3 percent in 2018, led by growth in the industrial and service sectors.

Despite the country's progress, investor challenges remain. The government lacks proper command and control of much of the armed forces. Soldier mutinies in January, February, and May 2017 paralyzed the country and renewed worries about political stability, although foreigners and foreign interests were not targeted. To resolve the crisis, the government acceded to most of the soldiers' demands for bonuses and back pay, and by promising to refocus its efforts to reform the military. Despite these promises security sector reform remains incomplete primarily due to a lack of government will. The government has also failed to make real progress on national reconciliation and impartial justice, undermining the full consolidation of democracy. Côte d'Ivoire suffered its first terrorist attack in March, 2016 on the beaches of Grand Bassam, for which Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility. Ivoirian security forces responded quickly, however, demonstrating the capacity of the country's special operations units has improved over the past few years.

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 the slowness and lack of transparency in government decision-making hinders investment. The Ivoirian government set up the Appeal Court of the Commercial Court of Abidjan in 2017, and other commercial jurisdictions will be progressively established throughout the country. The Office of Taxation has established online declaration and payment of taxes in order to expand the tax base, decrease opportunities for corruption, and improve fiscal transparency.

Legally, women do not face restrictions on investment development, but have historically faced discrimination and a lack of access to credit that has hindered the extent of their ownership.

Measure	Year	Index/Rank	Website Address
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TI Corruption Perceptions	2017	103/175	http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview
World Bank's Doing	2017	139/190	http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings
Global Innovation Index	2017	112/127	https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator
U.S. FDI in Partner Country (\$M USD, stock positions)	2016	USD 185 million	http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/
World Bank GNI per capita	2016	USD 1,520	http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD

Openness to and Restrictions upon Foreign Investment

Policies Toward Foreign Direct Investment

The government actively encourages Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and is committed to doubling foreign investment over the next several years. Foreign companies are free to invest and list on the regional stock exchange (BRVM), which is based in Abidjan and dominated by Ivoirian and Senegalese firms. With the inception of the regional exchange, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) members established the Regional Council for Savings and Investment, a regional securities regulatory body.

In most sectors, there are no laws that limit foreign investment. There are restrictions on foreign investment in the health sector, law and accounting firms, and travel agencies. Although there are regulations designed to control land speculation, in urban areas foreigners own significant amounts of land. Free-hold tenure in rural areas is difficult to negotiate and inhibits outside investment. Land tenure disputes exist all over the country, owing to the lack of formal private land ownership in most areas. Most businesses, including agribusinesses and forestry companies, circumvent this by acquiring long-term leases. Companies that wish to purchase land must have the property surveyed before obtaining a title. Surveying is tightly controlled by a small oligopoly of companies, and can often cost more than the value of the parcel of land.

Côte d'Ivoire's investment promotion agency, the Centre for the Promotion of Investment in Cote d'Ivoire (CEPICI), facilitates foreign investment, and its services are available to all investors. CEPICI provides its services through a one-stop shop to facilitate business creation, operation, and expansion; requests incentives in the investment code and for access to industrial land; promotes and attracts national and foreign investments; has an action plan to improve the business climate; and serves as an exchange platform for the public and private sectors. More information is available at <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/>

Côte d'Ivoire maintains an ongoing dialogue with investors through various business networks and platforms, such as CEPICI, the Ivoirian chamber of commerce (CCI-CI), the association of large enterprises (CGECI), and the bankers' association (APEBF-CI).

Limits on Foreign Control and Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

Foreign investors generally have access to all forms of remunerative activity on terms equal to those enjoyed by Ivoirians. The government encourages foreign investment, including in the privatization of state-owned and public firms, although in most cases the state reserves an equity stake in the new company.

There are no significant limits on foreign investment, nor are there legal differences in the treatment of foreign and national investors, either in terms of the level of foreign ownership or sector of investment. There are no laws specifically authorizing private firms to adopt articles of incorporation or association that limit or prohibit foreign investment, participation, or control, and no such practices have been reported.

Banks and insurance companies are subject to licensing requirements, but there are no restrictions designed to limit foreign ownership or to establish subsidiaries of foreign companies in this sector. Investments in health, law and accounting, and travel agencies are subject to prior approval and require appropriate licenses and association with an Ivoirian partner. Nevertheless; foreign companies operate successfully in all of these service sectors.

The government does not have an official policy to screen investments and its overall economic and industrial strategy does not discriminate against foreign-owned firms. There are indications in some instances of preferential treatment for firms from countries with longstanding commercial ties to Côte d'Ivoire.

Other Investment Policy Reviews

Côte d'Ivoire has not conducted an investment policy review (IPR) through the OECD.

A Trade Policy Review was last done by the WTO in July 2012 and can be found at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp366_e.htm.

Bilateral Investment Agreements and Taxation Treaties

UNCTAD does not provide an IPR report for Côte d'Ivoire, though there are statistics on FDI in the country profile at

<http://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/384/index.html>.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire provides information about sector policies and business opportunities in various reports. More information can be found at: <http://www.cepici.gouv.ci/en/> or at: www.gcpnd.gouv.ci/.

Business Facilitation

The government has engaged in business facilitation efforts through a series of reforms using the World Bank Doing Business index as a reference to improve the business environment. These include the acceleration of business creation to 24 hours, the issuing of a construction permit in 26 days, the establishment of a one-stop shop for external trade, the establishment of a single tax declaration form, the protection of minority shareholders, and insolvency resolution.

Côte d'Ivoire's online information portal containing all documents dedicated to business creation and registration (<https://cotedivoire.eregulations.org/>) is managed by CEPICI. All the necessary documentation for registration is available online. The one-stop shop for business registration takes between 24-48 hours and has all the agencies under a single roof, allowing for a more simplified approach to business creation. Businesses have noted the one-stop shop has been very successful in speeding up registration.

The registration process is generally equitable toward women and underrepresented nationalities, and there have not been any reports of discrimination.

Outward Investment

Côte d'Ivoire does not promote or incentivize outward investment. The government does not restrict domestic investors from investing abroad.

Legal Regime

Transparency of the Regulatory System

The government has taken steps to encourage a more transparent and competitive economic environment, and the IMF, World Bank, EU, and other large donors continue to urge the government to make further reforms. The government aims for transparency in law and policy to foster competition and provide clear rules of the game and a level playing field for domestic and foreign investors. Transparency of the regulatory system, however, is a concern in Côte d'Ivoire, as companies complain that regulations are issued with little warning and without a period for public comment.

In general, regulatory authority exists at the national level and is the most relevant for foreign businesses. For most industries or sectors, regulations are developed through the relevant ministry. In the telecommunications, electricity, cocoa, coffee, cotton, and cashew sectors, the government has established control boards or independent regulatory agencies to regulate the sector and establish prices. Regulation is reviewed on data-driven assessments, as regulatory bodies regularly publish and promote access for the business community and development partners to their data. Quantitative analysis and public comments are made available.

There are no informal regulatory processes managed by non-governmental organizations or private sector associations.

Côte d'Ivoire's accounting, legal, and regulatory procedures are consistent with international norms, though businesses often complain about the system's lack of clarity and the government's poor communication. Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of African Business Law (OHADA), which is common to 16 countries and adheres to the West African Economic and Monetary Union's accounting system. In accounting, companies use the SYSCOA system. SYSCOA complies with international norms in force and is a source of economic and financial data.

Draft bills and regulations are not published and made available for public comment. Still, the National Assembly debates most legislation, and the government often holds public seminars and workshops to discuss proposed plans with trade and industry associations.

Key regulatory actions are published in the Journal Officiel de la République de Côte d'Ivoire and each regulatory body provides regulatory actions (laws, decisions, and sanctions) on its website. The regulatory enforcement mechanisms are made accountable to the public through the private and public institutions tasked with controlling and regulating these sectors. There is no centralized online location where regulatory actions or their summaries are published similar to the Federal Register. The website abidjan.net makes the Journal Officiel available for purchase online.

The regulatory body ANRMP ensures transparency and compliance with administrative processes. Consumers, trade associations, private companies, and individuals have the right to file complaints with ANRMP to ensure that the government follows administrative processes.

Post does not have knowledge of any recent regulatory system, including enforcement reforms, that has been announced since the last ICS report. Regulatory reforms announced in prior years have been fully implemented, with the goal to create an enabling business environment, foster competition, and build investors' confidence in the economy.

International Regulatory Considerations

The Ivoirian government accounts for regional bodies in public procurement by incorporating directives 4 and 5 from the WAEMU into bidding processes and auditing, as well as into the regulation of public procurement within the Union. The public procurement code harmonizes public procurement policy and is in compliance with WAEMU directives. Changes include the separation of auditing and regulating functions, the transformation from a national to a regional system of procurement for intellectual services, and an increase from 25 to 30 percent of advance payment for the initial procurement of goods and services. The ANRMP regulates public procurement with a view to improve governance and transparency. It may sanction entities which do not comply with public procurement regulations.

Côte d'Ivoire's laws, codes, professional association standards, and regional directives are incorporated in the country's regulatory system. European norms are often followed due to Côte d'Ivoire's free trade agreement with the EU.

Côte d'Ivoire has been a WTO member since 1995 but has not notified all draft technical regulations to the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade. Côte d'Ivoire signed the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in December 2013 and ratified it in December 2015. There have been notable efforts to implement the TFA requisites with the establishment of the TFA National Committee to coordinate its implementation. Other efforts include the USAID trade facilitation support program which has helped in the national implementation of the TFA.

Legal System and Judicial Independence

Côte d'Ivoire's legal system is based on the French civil law model. The law guarantees the right to own and transfer private property. While this right is respected in most instances, the law regarding rural land tenure make it prohibitively difficult to do so. The court system enforces contracts.

Côte d'Ivoire is signatory to the Organization for the Harmonization of Corporate Law in Africa (OHADA) that provides common corporate law and arbitration procedures for the 16 member states.

The Commercial Court of Abidjan handles business cases. Mediation is also available through the Ivoirian legal framework in addition to the Commercial Court and the Arbitration Tribunal. Following the recommendations of business associations and commercial law experts, in August 2017, the government established the Court of Appeals of the Commercial Court of Abidjan. The IMF has recommended the creation of other commercial jurisdictions in the interior of the country.

Côte d'Ivoire's judicial system is ostensibly independent, but magistrates are sometimes subject to political or financial influence. Judges sometimes fail to base their decisions on the legal or contractual merits of the case and are seen to rule against foreign investors in favor of entrenched interests. The greatest complaint from investors is the slow process. Cases are often postponed and appealed without a reasonable explanation, moving from court to court for years or even decades. With international assistance, the government is making an effort to reform the judiciary system to make it more efficient and transparent.

Regulations or enforcement actions are appealable and adjudicated in the national court system.

Laws and Regulations on Foreign Direct Investment

The major law affecting foreign investment is the 2012 Investment Code. The code is considered generous as it has no restrictions on foreign investment or the repatriation of funds. The code offers incentives, including tax reductions and in some cases exemptions from value added taxes (VAT) on equipment for private investors. The code also includes planned industrial zones, which offer benefits to investors such as special tax treatment

for periods ranging from 8 to 15 years, depending on the location of the investment. There are also incentives to promote sectors, such as low-cost housing construction, factories, and infrastructure development, which the government considers key to the country's economic development. In mining, the 2014 Mining Code allows a period for holding permits for ten years with a possibility to extend for two more years on a limited permit area of 400 square kilometers. The code has spurred investment in the sector.

CEPICI provides a one stop shop website for investment. More information on Côte d'Ivoire's laws, rules, procedures, and reporting requirements can be found at:

www.apex-ci.org/;

www.cepici.gouv.ci/

Competition and Anti-Trust Laws

The Ministry of Commerce, Handicraft and Small Business Promotion through the Commission on Anti-Competition Practices is responsible for reviewing competition-related concerns under the 1991 competition law, which was updated in 2013. The National Authority for the Regulation of Public Tenders is responsible for reviewing the awards of contracts.

No significant competition cases were reported over the past year.

Expropriation and Compensation

There is no history of public expropriations. Private expropriation to force settlement of contractual or investment disputes continues to be a problem. Local individuals or local companies, using what appear to be spurious court decisions, have challenged the ownership of some foreign companies in recent years. On occasion, the government has blocked the bank accounts of U.S. and other foreign companies because of ownership and tax disputes.

In cases of illegal expropriations, Côte d'Ivoire law affords claimants due process. Even so, perceived corruption and lack of capacity in the judicial and security services have resulted in poor enforcement of private property rights, particularly when the entity in question is foreign and the plaintiff is Ivoirian or a long-established foreign resident.

Dispute Settlement

ICSID Convention and New York Convention

Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and a signatory to the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral awards.

In cases where the firm does not meet the nationality conditions stipulated by Article 25 of the Convention, the code stipulates that the dispute be resolved within the provisions of the supplementary mechanisms approved by the ICSID.

Investor-State Dispute Settlement

Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to investment agreements subject to binding international arbitration of investment disputes. Côte d'Ivoire recognizes and has been known to enforce foreign arbitral awards, but enforcement is inconsistent.

Côte d'Ivoire does not have Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) or a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States.

In the past 10 years, foreign investors have had investment disputes, which are often resolved through arbitration or an amicable settlement. One U.S. firm was involved in tax and customs disputes over its investment in the cocoa sector. As a result, the U.S. firm chose to divest its holdings. One U.S. dispute still ongoing involves the decision of the government to nullify a memorandum of understanding with a U.S. company to fulfill sanitation work.

As a signatory to the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, local courts are obliged to enforce foreign arbitral awards.

Post is not aware of any history of extrajudicial action against foreign investors, including U.S. firms.

International Commercial Arbitration and Foreign Courts

The Abidjan-based regional Joint Court of Justice and Arbitration (CCJA) provides a means of solving contractual disputes. The arbitration tribunal has the ability to enforce awards more quickly, but the use of the tribunal in lieu of the court system has been limited.

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of OHADA, whose provisions of 1999 have replaced domestic law on arbitration. The unified law is based on the UNICITRAL model law.

Judgments of foreign courts are recognized but difficult to enforce in local courts. To avoid working through the Ivoirian legal system, some investors stipulate in contracts that disputes must be settled through international commercial arbitration. Yet, even if stipulated in the contract, decisions reached through international arbitration or through the African regional arbitration body are sometimes not honored by local courts.

Côte d'Ivoire's domestic courts have no preferential treatment for state-owned enterprises involved in investment disputes.

Bankruptcy Regulations

As a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of African Business Law (OHADA), Côte d'Ivoire has both commercial and bankruptcy laws that address the liquidation of business liabilities. OHADA is a regional system of uniform laws on bankruptcy, debt collection, and rules governing business transactions. OHADA permits three different types of bankruptcy liquidation: an ordered suspension of payment to permit a negotiated settlement; an ordered suspension of payment to permit restructuring of the company, similar to Chapter 11; and the complete liquidation of assets, similar to Chapter 7. Creditors' rights, irrespective of nationality, are protected equally by the Act. Bankruptcy is not criminalized. Monetary judgments resulting from a bankruptcy are usually paid out in local currency. Côte d'Ivoire is ranked 77 out of 190 countries for ease of resolving insolvency, according to the World Bank's Doing Business Report.

The joint venture Credit Info -Volo West Africa manages regional credit bureaus in the WAEMU.

Industrial Policies

Investment Incentives

Côte d'Ivoire's 2012 Investment Code offers incentives, including tax reductions and in some cases exemption from VAT on equipment for private investors. Under this code, new industrial zones are planned, and investors will benefit from special tax treatment for periods ranging from 8 to 15 years, depending on the location of the investment. The code provides incentives to promote sectors that are key to the country's economic development, such as low-cost housing construction, the creation of factories, and infrastructure development.

The Investment Code, the Petroleum Code, and the Mining Code delineate incentives available to new investors in Côte d'Ivoire.

Foreign Trade Zones/Free Ports/Trade Facilitation

Created in 2008, the free trade zone for information technology and biotechnology (VITIB) is located in the city of Grand Bassam. In 2014, VITIB inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi technology park at Grand Bassam with a loan of \$20 million from India's EXIM bank. Current plans are to develop a technology corridor on VITIB land in Grand Bassam. Bonded warehouses do exist, and bonded zones within factories are allowed. High port costs and maritime freight rates have inhibited the development of in-bond manufacturing or processing, and there are consequently no general foreign trade zones.

Performance and Data Localization Requirements

A. Employment and Investor Requirements:

The Government strongly encourages investors and firms to hire Ivoirian employees, but this is not a requirement. The 2012 Investment Code (Article 14) guarantees the freedom to designate senior management and board members.

Citizens of Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) countries can legally work in Côte d'Ivoire. For other nationalities, visa/work and residence permits are required and the investment agency CEPICI facilitates their acquisition. The process is not onerous and does not inhibit the mobility of foreign investors and their employees.

There are no government-imposed conditions on permission to invest, including tariff and non-tariff barriers.

B. Goods, Technology, and Data Treatment:

The government does not generally place conditions on location, local content, equity ownership, import substitution, export requirements, host country employment, and technology. But, the KFC restaurant that opened in April 2018 was required to use locally-sourced chicken. The government also makes use of a number of tax exemptions and customs exonerations to incentivize companies to do more value-added processing in-country.

Cellular telephone companies must meet technology and performance requirements to maintain their licenses. Côte d'Ivoire does not have any known requirements for foreign IT to turn over source code or provide access to encryption. There are no requirements that prevent or unduly impede companies from freely transmitting customer or other business related data. Data transmission or transfer is subject to prior authorization of the telecom regulatory board ART-CI. Côte d'Ivoire's law on data protection requests prior declaration or authorization by ART-CI for any data processing. ART-CI is responsible for the oversight of local data storage.

C. Investment Performance Requirements:

There are no performance requirements for investments.

Protection of Property Rights

Real Property

The Ivoirian civil code provides for enforcement of private property rights and the government has undertaken reform efforts to secure property rights. Mortgages and liens exist. Secured interests in property are enforced by the Land Registry Office of the Ministry of Finance. In the World Bank's Doing Business report, Côte d'Ivoire is ranked 113 out of 190 countries for registering property.

Foreign and/or nonresident investors who wish to lease land must obtain a permit for the development of the site, as well as a bylaw from the prefecture or sub-prefecture for the occupation of the site.

In Côte d'Ivoire, 96 percent of land does not have a clear title. The government has committed to securing the remaining portion within 10 years. The government has made efforts to raise awareness on land titling throughout the country and to streamline procedures for obtaining land titles. In 2018, the World Bank approved a program to build the capacity and institutions to support implementation of the national rural land tenure security program and register customary land rights in selected rural areas. All land that is to be titled must be professionally surveyed. The surveying, which must be performed by one of the few companies allowed to execute surveys in Côte d'Ivoire, can cost more than the value of the land. The status of the land from which thousands of refugees were forced to move during the 2011 post-election conflict has not been resolved. Much of that land is now occupied by squatters, many of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from neighboring countries to the north of Côte d'Ivoire, particularly Burkina Faso. A lack of titles and an overlap of modern land-tenure law and common practice hinder resolution of the land tenure issue.

If property legally purchased is unoccupied property, ownership cannot be reverted to other owners (such as squatters).

Financial mechanisms are available for the securitization of properties for lending purposes. Post does not have knowledge of any federal, regional, or local authorities working with any international bodies to develop secured lending capabilities for investors. The lack of clear title for most land restricts the ability of lenders to support many projects.

Intellectual Property Rights

The Ivoirian Civil Code protects Intellectual Property (IP) rights; the government's Office of Industrial Property (OIP) is charged with ensuring the protection of patents, trademarks, industrial designs, and commercial names. Patents are valid for ten years, with the possibility of two five-year extensions. Trademarks are valid for ten years and are renewable indefinitely. Copyrights are valid for 50 years. The Ivoirian Copyright Office has a labeling system in place to prevent counterfeiting and protect audio, video, literary, and artistic property rights in music and computer programs. In general, protection of intellectual property rights in Côte d'Ivoire is weak and the government has limited resources for IPR protection. While Ivoirian IP law is in conformity with standards established by the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), enforcement is weak due to a lack of custom checks at the country's porous borders, which limit the law's impact.

No IP related laws or regulations have been enacted in the past year.

Legally the government must protect intellectual property on exported and imported goods. Customs has the power to seize products imported with equipment installed, detained, marketed, or illegally supplied. Such seizures, generally of counterfeit consumer goods, are routinely publicized on government websites and media outlets, although statistics on seizures are unavailable. BURIDA's police unit has sometimes held raids against retail outlets and street vendors to confiscate pirated CDs and DVDs and also instituted legal proceedings against counterfeiters. IPR violations are prosecuted and sanctions vary from three months to two years of imprisonment and from \$163 to \$8,000 fines.

Côte d'Ivoire is not listed in USTR's Special 301 report.
Côte d'Ivoire is not listed in the notorious market report.

For additional information about national laws and points of contact at local IP offices, please see WIPO's country profiles at <http://www.wipo.int/directory/en/>

Financial Sector

Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

Government policies generally encourage foreign portfolio investment.

The Regional Stock Exchange (BRVM) based in Abidjan covers the eight countries of the WAEMU and trades equity securities. An effective regulatory system exists to facilitate portfolio investment through the West African Central Bank (BCEAO) and the Regional Council for Savings Investments (CREPMF). There is sufficient liquidity in the markets to enter and exit sizeable positions.

Government policies allow the free flow of financial resources into the product and factor markets.

The central bank BCEAO respects IMF Article VIII on payment and transfers for current international transactions.

Credit allocation is based on market terms and has increased to support the private sector and economic growth, specifically for large businesses. Banks lend to the private sector, offering short-term and long-term loans and overdraft facilities. Foreign investors can acquire credit on the local market.

Money and Banking System

The banking sector is composed of twenty-eight commercial banks and two credit institutions. Banks are expanding their networks, especially in the secondary cities outside Abidjan as domestic investment has increased upcountry. The total number of bank branches has increased from 324 in 2010 to 666 branches in 2017.

Côte d'Ivoire's banking sector is improving with all but four banks complying with the minimum capital requirements. Some public banks have had large numbers of nonperforming loans. The government is privatizing the commercial banking sector in order to reinvigorate the banks and remove low performers from government accounts.

The estimated total assets of the five largest banks are around \$9 billion.

The central bank BCEAO is common to the eight member states of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WEAMU) and manages regulations.

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. Côte d'Ivoire lost no known correspondent banking relationships in the past three years. No known correspondent banking relationships are in jeopardy.

Post is not aware of the implementation of blockchain technologies in banking transactions.

Alternative financial services available include mobile money and microfinance for payments, transfers, and finances. Mobile money has become a very popular way to make payments and more Ivoirians prefer mobile money over banking, but it has yet to expand to offering full financial services.

Foreign Exchange and Remittances

Foreign Exchange Policies

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).

Funds associated with investments funded with convertible currency are freely convertible into any world currency.

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the WAEMU which uses the West African Franc (XOF), known as the CFA, a convertible currency. The French Treasury continues to hold the international reserves of WAEMU member states and supports the fixed exchange rate of 655.956 CFA to the Euro.

Remittance Policies

There are no recent changes or plans to change investment remittance policies that either tighten or relax access to foreign exchange for investment remittances.

There are no time limitations on remittances. Remittances for Ivoirians were about \$386 million in 2017 or 0.9 percent of GDP.

Sovereign Wealth Funds

Côte d'Ivoire does not have a sovereign wealth fund.

State-Owned Enterprises

Companies owned or controlled by the state are subject to the laws and tax code. The Ivoirian government still holds substantial interests in many firms, including the refinery SIR (49 percent), the public transport firm (60 percent), the national television - RTI (98 percent), the national lottery (80 percent), the national airline Air Côte d'Ivoire (58 percent), and the land management agency - AGEF (35 percent). Of the SOEs, 28 are wholly government owned, 15 are majority owned, eight are with a blocking minority, and 30 are minority owned. Each SOE has an independent board. The government has begun the process of divestiture for some state-owned enterprises, and had targeted 15 for sale during 2015, but the program has not been completed. The Ivoirian government is an active participant in banking, agri-business, mining, and the telecom industry.

The list of SOEs can be found here: www.budget.gouv.ci/.../Liste%20du%20portefeuille%20de%20%20

There are no laws or rules that offer preferential treatment to SOEs. They are subject to tax burdens and policies as private companies, though sometimes SOEs develop large arrears on items such as electricity bills. The Corporate Governance of SOEs in Côte d'Ivoire does not meet the standards of the OECD, but the government has made some efforts to improve it. Private and public enterprises compete under the same terms and conditions, and senior management of SOEs may report to a ministry or board of directors, whose seats are allocated to senior government officials, political leaders, representatives of civil society, and other public entities. SOEs are required to publish annual reports, hold regular meetings of the board of directors, and have financial statements reviewed by certified accountants and private auditors.

Privatization Program

In 2014, the Government proposed a program to privatize a quarter of public enterprises, including approximately 15 public or semi-public enterprises, banks, the sugar company Sucrivoire (SIFCA), and \$232 million of investments the government holds in Industrial Promotion Services (IPS)-Aga Khan Foundation projects. At the urging of the IMF, the government is continuing the privatization of banks including Versus Bank, NSIA Bank, and the housing finance bank BHCI.

Foreign investors are encouraged to compete.

These programs have a public bidding process in French. No website on privatizations is available.

Responsible Business Conduct

The private sector, the government, NGOs, and local communities are becoming progressively aware of the importance of Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) regarding environmental, social, and governance issues in Côte d'Ivoire.

Investment projects in energy, infrastructure, agriculture, forestry, waste management, and extractive industries are required by decree to provide an environmental impact study prior to approval. Foreign businesses, particularly in mining, energy, and agriculture, often provide social infrastructure, including schools and health care clinics, to communities close to their sites of operation, often at the request of the government. Some companies complain that these requests can be quite numerous. Companies are not required under Ivorian law to disclose information relating to RBC, although many companies, especially in the cocoa sector, publicize their work. Cocoa companies publicize efforts to improve sustainability and combat the worst forms of child labor. As part of public procurement reform, the Ministry of Budget plans to include social needs in public procurement contracts to support job creation, fair trade, decent working conditions, social inclusion, and compliance with social standards. On the environment, suggested reforms include the selection of goods and services that have a smaller impact on the environment.

There have not been high profile instances of a private sector impact on human rights or resolution of such cases in the past year.

The government, through the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, sets workplace health and safety standards and is responsible for enforcing labor laws.

The uniform Act of Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which is common to 17 countries including Côte d'Ivoire, outlines corporate governance standards that protect shareholders.

There are government-funded agencies in charge of monitoring business conduct. Human rights, environmental protection, and consumer NGOs report misconduct and violations of good governance practices.

While international firms are aware of OECD guidelines and international best practices in RBC, most local firms have limited familiarity with international standards.

Côte d'Ivoire is EITI compliant and discloses revenues and payments in the oil, gas, and mineral sectors. More information can be found at: www.cnitie.ci/.

Corruption

Corruption is a concern for businesses in Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire endorsed ordinance no. 2013- 660 related to the prevention and the fight against corruption. The High Authority of Good Governance covers corruption issues and requires that all public officials submit asset declarations at the beginning and end of their tenures in office. The country's financial intelligence office CENTIF has broad authority to investigate suspicious financial transactions, including those of government officials. Despite the establishment of these bodies there have been no prominent public corruption cases despite credible allegations of widespread corruption. These watchdog agencies are generally regarded as lacking the power and will to actively combat corruption.

The laws extend to family members of officials and to political parties. The country's Code of Public Procurement No. 259 and the associated WAEMU directives cover conflicts-of-interest in awarding contracts or government procurement.

Under the Ivorian Penal Code, a bribe by a local company to a foreign official is a criminal act.

Some private companies use compliance programs or measures to prevent and detect bribery of government officials. U.S. firms underscore to their Ivorian counterparts that they are subject to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA).

Côte d'Ivoire ratified the UN Anti-Corruption Convention, but the country is not a signatory to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. In 2016, Côte d'Ivoire joined the Partnership on Illicit Finance, which obliges it to develop an action plan to combat corruption.

There are no special protections to NGOs involved in investigating corruption.

Corruption in many forms is deeply engrained in public and private sector practices and remains a serious impediment to investment and economic growth in Côte d'Ivoire. Many companies cite corruption as the major obstacle to investment in Côte d'Ivoire. It has the greatest impact on judicial proceedings, contract awards, customs, and tax issues. Lack of transparency and failure to follow the government's own tender procedures in the awarding of contracts lead businesses to conclude bribery was involved. Businesses have reported encountering corruption at every level of the civil service, with some judges appearing to base their decisions on bribes. Clearance of goods at the ports often require substantial "commissions," and the Embassy has heard anecdotal accounts of customs agents rescinding valuations that were declared by other customs colleagues in an effort to extract bribes from customers. The demand for bribes can mean that containers stay at the Port of Abidjan for months, incurring substantial demurrage charges, despite having the proper paperwork in order.

No local industry or non-profit groups offer services for vetting potential local investment partners.

Resources to Report Corruption

These contacts at agencies are responsible for combating corruption:

Inspector General of Finance

(Brigade de Lutte Contre la Corruption)

NAME: Lassina Sylla

TITLE: Inspector General

TELEPHONE: +225 2252 9797

FAX: +225 2252 9798

HOTLINE: +225 8000 0380

WEBSITE: <http://www.igf.finances.gouv.ci/blc/>

EMAIL: info@igf.finances.gouv.ci

High Authority for Good Governance

(Haute Autorité pour la Bonne Gouvernance)

NAME: N’Golo Coulibaly
TITLE: President
TELEPHONE: +225 22479 5000
FAX: +225 2247 8261
EMAIL: info@hagb.ci

Police anti-Racketeering Unit
(*Unite de Lutte Contre le Racket--ULCR*)

NAME: Alain Oura
TITLE: Unit Commander
TELEPHONE: +225 2244 9256
EMAIL: info@ulcr.ci

Political and Security Environment

President Alassane Ouattara was elected to a second term in 2015. In 2016, a new constitution was adopted through a referendum creating the position of Vice-President, and a Senate, which convened in April 2018. Côte d’Ivoire’s security situation has significantly improved since the 2010-2011 post electoral dispute that led to civil conflict. There continue to be small-scale security incidents, primarily along Côte d’Ivoire’s western borders. The government lacks proper command and control over much of the armed forces. In January, February, and May 2017 soldiers mutinied, demanding payment of bonuses. The government responded by largely acceding to their demands and pledging to improve living and working conditions for armed and security forces. Côte d’Ivoire suffered its first terrorist attack in March, 2016 on the beaches of Grand Bassam, for which Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility. Ivoirian security forces responded very quickly, however, demonstrating that the capacity of the country’s special operations units has improved over the past few years.

During electoral periods, demonstrations and protests by political parties occur often and occasionally lead to vandalism and clashes with security forces. Unions also engage in protests that sometimes become violent. Still, social unrest has not had an appreciable economic impact.

Political tension in Côte d’Ivoire is increasing as the next presidential election in 2020 approaches, leading some observers to express concern about the possibility of increasing social unrest or potential electoral violence.

Labor Policies and Practices

The official unemployment rate is 11 percent with higher unemployment in urban areas. The unemployment rate among those aged 14-35 is 8.6 percent. The percentage of the non-agricultural workforce in the informal economy is 47 percent. Foreign workers from neighboring countries make a significant part of the work force, especially in agriculture. The numbers fail to fully account for the large informal economy throughout the country, and do not accurately portray the general lack of well-paying employment opportunities. Despite the government’s efforts, child labor remained a widespread problem in rural and urban areas, particularly on cocoa and coffee plantations, artisanal gold mining areas, and urbanized regions.

There are significant shortages of skilled labor in higher education fields including information technology, engineering, finance, management, health, and science. The Ivoirian government is working with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to build and develop four technical and vocational training centers.

Labor laws favor the employment of Ivoirians in private enterprises, and states that any vacant position must be advertised for two months. If after two months no qualified Ivoirian is found, the employer is allowed to

recruit a foreigner provided that s/he plans to recruit an Ivoirian to fill the position in the next two years. The foreign employee must be given a labor contract.

There are no restrictions on employers adjusting employment to fluctuating market conditions. Employees terminated for reasons other than theft or flagrant neglect of duty have the right to termination benefits. Unemployment insurance and other social safety programs exist for employees laid off for economic reasons, but for the 85 percent of workers employed in the informal sector, this is not an option.

Labor laws are not waived to attract or retain investment.

Collective bargaining agreements are in effect in many major business enterprises and sectors of the civil service.

Labor disputes are submitted to the labor inspector for amicable settlement before engaging in any legal proceedings. If this attempt to settle the dispute fails, then the labor court can be engaged to resolve the dispute.

No strike has posed an investment risk during the last year.

There are no gaps in law or practice with international labor standards that may pose a reputational risk to investors.

In 2017, the government passed a law forbidding most forms of child labor for children 12 and under while restricting it for children aged 13 to 17. The law’s passage put Ivoirian law on par with ILO standards for child labor.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

There are currently no OPIC projects in Côte d’Ivoire, but OPIC continues to look for opportunities, particularly in energy and infrastructure.

In 2017 the Ivoirian government ratified its investment incentive agreement with OPIC.

The Ivoirian government finds Chinese projects attractive as the Chinese government often brings its own debt financing in the form of loans, thereby requiring little Ivoirian contribution. The French government provides debt forgiveness to the Ivoirians in a form known as Debt Reduction Development Contract, or C2D financing, which directs debt forgiveness to fund specific projects that usually involve French firms. The Ivoirian government finds this an appealing way to reduce its debt burden, though it must still find the financing.

Foreign Direct Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investment Statistics

Table 2: Key Macroeconomic Data, U.S. FDI in Host Country/Economy

Economic Data	Host Country Statistical Source*		USG or International Statistical Source		USG or International Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	

Côte d'Ivoire Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$M USD)	2017	\$40 billion	2016	\$36.4 billion	https://data.worldbank.org/country/cote-divoire
Foreign Investment	Direct	Host Country Statistical source*	USG or International Statistical Source	USG or International Statistical Source	Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
U.S. FDI in Côte d'Ivoire (\$M USD, stock positions)	2017	N/A	2016	\$185 million	BEA data available at http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/
Host Country's FDI in the United States (\$M USD, stock positions)	2017	N/A	2016	-\$1 million	BEA data available at http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/
Total Inbound Stock of FDI as % host GDP	2017	N/A	2016	\$4.7 billion (12.9%)	IMF

Table 3: Sources and Destination of FDI

Direct Investment from/in Counterpart Economy Data					
From Top Five Sources/To Top Five Destinations, 2016 (US Dollars, Millions)					
Inward Direct Investment			Outward Direct Investment		
Total Inward	4,761	100%	Total Outward	281	100%
France	1,320	28%	Mali	30	11%
South Africa	319	7%	Benin	28	10%
Belgium	295	6%	Niger	25	9%

Great Britain	292	6%	Burkina Faso	24	8%
Mauritius	289	6%	Senegal	20	7%

"0" reflects amounts rounded to +/- USD 500,000.

Contact for More Information on the Investment Climate Statement

Jeremy Chen
Economic and Commercial Officer
B.P. 730 Abidjan Cidex 03, Côte d'Ivoire
Tel: +225 2249 4416
Chenh2@state.gov

Trade & Project 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 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.

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 281 in 2008 to 631 branches in 2016.

Côte d'Ivoire's commercial banking sector is undergoing privatization, as the government is seeking to reinvigorate the sector. Publicly owned banks pose potential systemic risks to the financial system, as loan quality, solvency, and profitability have deteriorated in recent years due to mismanagement and lack of oversight. The government has at times had to step in to rescue poorly-managed banks.

The central bank BCEAO is common to the eight member states of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WEAMU).

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).

Funds associated with investments funded with convertible currency are freely convertible into any world currency.

Côte d'Ivoire is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which uses the Franc CFA, a convertible currency. The French Treasury continues to hold the international reserves of WAEMU member states and currently supports the fixed exchange rate of 655.956 CFA to the Euro.

US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Banks in Côte d'Ivoire	Correspondant Banks
SGBCI	Société Générale (SocGen)
BIAO	Crédit Commercial de France (CCF)

BICICI	BNP Paribas
Attijariwafa Bank	Crédit Agricole, NY
Citibank	Citibank
BHCI	None
United Bank of Africa (UBA)	UBA, NY
Ecobank	Citibank NY, and Bankers Trust
Bank of Africa	None
BACI	Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi, New York
Standard Chartered Bank	Standard, NY

The African Development Bank (<http://www.afdb.org/en/>) returned to Abidjan from its temporary headquarters in Tunis in September 2014, after having left Abidjan in 2004 in the midst of the country's civil strife.

The World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org>) and the International Monetary Fund (<http://www.imf.org>) also maintain offices in Abidjan. Banking supervision for the WAEMU countries is the responsibility of the BCEAO Banking Commission, headquartered in Abidjan (<http://www.bceao.int/>). The Governor of the regional central bank, the BCEAO, also serves as Chairman of the Banking Commission. The Commission includes representatives of each member state and France and eight independent members appointed by the member states.

Project Financing

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. The current lending rate ranges from 12 to 18 percent. Medium- to long-term infrastructure projects, even private-sector projects, are often financed by foreign aid 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. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC, <http://www.opic.gov>) and U.S. Trade and Development Agency (<http://www.ustda.gov>) depending on the structure and ownership of the project.

Multilateral Development Banks

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the African Development Bank and the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars in developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help businesses that create U.S. jobs learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects and how to connect to other parts of the International Trade Administration, including the U.S. Field; the overseas network of Commercial Service offices; and, in Washington, desk officers, sectoral experts and the Advocacy Center.

Web Resources

- CS Website: <http://export.gov/worldbank/>
- World Bank project procurement: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/procurement-projects-programs>
- World Bank corporate procurement: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/corporate-procurement>
- Commercial Liaison Office to the African Development Bank <http://www.export.gov/afdb>
- Trade Finance Guide: A Quick Reference for U.S. Exporters, published by the International Trade Administration's Industry and Analysis Team: <http://www.export.gov/tradefinanceguide/index.asp>
- Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>
- Country Limitation Schedule: http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html
- OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>
- U.S. Trade and Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov/>
- SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit/>
- USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/cc/default.htm>
- U.S. Agency for International Development: <http://www.usaid.gov>
- World Bank International Finance Corporation (<http://www.ifc.org>)

Business Travel

Business Customs

French is the official language of Côte d'Ivoire. Business correspondence, catalogues, and advertising materials prepared in French are essential to be readily understood by potential buyers. Business cards or "cartes de visite" are widely used. Members of the expatriate community and those who have received their schooling abroad frequently use academic titles and degrees. U.S. businesspeople ordinarily use their firm's name and have their title 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 for vacation, and high-level officials generally take a break. Additionally, some businesses and shops close for lunch from 12:30 p.m. until 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Banks are open until 4:00 PM on weekdays.

Travel Advisory

Specific Information on Côte d'Ivoire: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html> (when the page opens, click on the map to select the country)

Visa Requirements

As of February 15, 2009, 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 of the 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 visas are now available at the airport 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 the following website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/cote-divoire.html>

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States can read more about U.S. visa application procedures at the following links:

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

U.S. Embassy, Abidjan: http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/general_information6.html

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 approximately 289,108 telephone subscribers in Côte d'Ivoire, most located in metropolitan Abidjan. Côte d'Ivoire Telecom (<http://www.citelecom.ci/>), the former state-owned company, was bought by France Telecom in 1997 and saw its legal monopoly on fixed-line operations end in 2004. Côte d'Ivoire Telecom

services include mobile telephone through Orange (<http://www.orange.ci/>), and switched networks for large data communications applications. Other service providers include MTN (<http://www.mtn.ci/>) and MOOV (www.moov.com/en/).

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. 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 and readily understood by potential buyers. English is a second (or third) language for some people; however, do not assume that English is well understood. Translation services are available if required and can cost approximately \$300-500 per day.

Health

World Health Organization Booklet

Travelers are reminded that they must have 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. Appropriate malaria prophylaxis is also strongly recommended. For more information on health-related travel issues in Côte d'Ivoire, visit: www.travax.com Business visitors to Côte d'Ivoire 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 the large hotels are filtered, cleaned regularly, and are normally safe to swim in.

Water and ice at the major hotels (Hotel Ivoire, Hotel Pullman, Hotel Tiama, Novotel, and Golf Hotel, etc.) are considered safe for consumption since these hotels have their own water purification systems. Water and ice served in other establishments should be avoided. Freezing water into ice cubes is not sufficient to kill amoeba and giardia parasites. Bottled water (Awa and Olgane are the most popular locally bottled brands) 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 adequately stored.

There is a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in Côte d'Ivoire. HIV prevalence among people in the 15-49 age range is estimated to be approximately 4-5 percent. Secondary infections, such as tuberculosis, are on the rise. Tuberculosis skin tests are suggested after long stays in Côte d'Ivoire. There are many "polycliniques" in Abidjan, including the Farah clinic in Marcory, which is located across the bridge from the

Embassy and is frequently used by official Americans in country. The largest private hospital is Polyclinique Internationale de Sainte Anne *Marie* (PISAM). PISAM is located between the downtown district (Plateau) and the Hotel Ivoire in Cocody. It has a 24-hour emergency room, a five-bed intensive care unit, a CT scanner, and six sterile operating rooms. PISAM has a large staff of medical specialists, most of whom have had some medical training in Western Europe or North America. Most medical professionals at these 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, supplies sometime vary, and counterfeits are pervasive. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to bring a good supply of any needed medications.

Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays

Date	English Name
January 1	New Year's Day
Variable Christian	Easter Monday
May 1	Labor Day (Ivoirian)
Variable Christian	Ascension
Variable Christian	White Monday
August 7	Independence Day
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

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 a.m. to 5 or 6 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 some of the Ivoirian holidays listed above. 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/>

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

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 portable computers and laptops and cellular telephones for their own use. Cellular telephones work under the GSM 900 standard. Users of GSM cellular telephones only need a connection to the existing local network, which can be done inexpensively with prepaid cellular cards. U.S. cellular telephones without international roaming agreements will not work in Côte d'Ivoire. It is advisable to check with your cell phone service provider and either Orange (<http://www.orange.ci>), MTN (<http://www.mtn.ci/>) or MOOV (<http://www.moov.com/>), regarding roaming possibilities and charges. All other goods, including tobacco and alcoholic beverages, whether imported for personal use or sale, including goods intended for residents of Côte d'Ivoire, are subject to duty.

Travelers deciding 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. Simultaneously, a claim for temporary exemption should be presented. 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.

Travel Related Web Resources

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

http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1094.html

<http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

U.S. Embassy in Abidjan website: <http://ci.usembassy.gov/>