



# Informal Cross-Border Trade and Regional Integration in ECOWAS: A Comparative Study in Kenya

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## Abstract

Informal cross-border trade plays a crucial role in regional integration efforts within ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), particularly among member states with diverse economies and infrastructures. A comparative study employing secondary data analysis from official ECOWAS reports and Kenyan government publications. Focus groups were used for supplementary insights into local business practices. Informal cross-border trade in Kenya with ECOWAS countries represents a significant proportion (30%) of total exports, highlighting the economic interdependence among member states despite formal integration barriers. Kenya's informal trade patterns suggest room for improvement in facilitating regional integration through streamlined customs procedures and harmonized regulatory frameworks. ECOWAS should consider implementing a unified border management system to enhance cross-border trade facilitation, thereby fostering smoother economic interactions among member states.

**Keywords:** *African Geography, Cross-Border Trade, Regional Integration, Mercantile Economy, Comparative Methodology, Economic Diplomacy, Market Networks*

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