



Informal Cross-Border Trade and Regional Integration in ECOWAS: A Policy Analysis for Burkina Faso 2011

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Abstract

{ "background": "The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aims to enhance regional integration through policies that promote cross-border trade and economic cooperation among its member states. However, informal cross-border trade remains a significant component of the region's economy, often operating outside formal regulatory frameworks.", "purposeandobjectives": "This policy analysis examines the impact of informal cross-border trade on Burkina Faso's regional integration efforts within ECOWAS, with a focus on identifying strategies to facilitate more formalized economic interactions and reduce dependency on illicit trading networks.", "methodology": "The study employs qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from government agencies, private sector businesses, and civil society organizations. Data analysis focuses on thematic categorization of interview responses and secondary data sources related to cross-border trade regulations in Burkina Faso and ECOWAS member states.", "findings": "Informal cross-border trade in Burkina Faso involves a substantial proportion (around 30%) of total exports, with goods predominantly moving through informal channels due to regulatory gaps and enforcement challenges. This has led to inefficiencies and vulnerabilities in the formal trade system.", "conclusion": "The analysis reveals that while informal trade is economically important for cross-border commerce, it undermines Burkina Faso's ability to fully leverage ECOWAS integration initiatives by creating barriers to fair competition and compliance with regional

standards.", "recommendations": "To enhance regional integration, Burkina Faso should prioritise the development of robust regulatory frameworks that address the weaknesses in existing laws governing informal trade. This includes strengthening law enforcement mechanisms and promoting dialogue between government agencies and private sector stakeholders to foster a more inclusive and compliant trading environment.", "keywords": "Informal Cross-Border Trade, Regional Integration, ECOWAS, Burkina Faso, Policy Analysis", "contribution_statement": "This study offers novel insights into the dynamics of informal cross-border trade in Burkina Faso by providing empirical evidence on its scale and impact, which can inform policymakers about the need for targeted

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, Regionalism, Development Economics, Informal Economy, Mercantilism, Comparative Advantage, Policy Framework*

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