

PRESS RELEASE: 1 October 2024

Trade promotion agencies from Brazil, France, Switzerland win global awards for small business success

(Geneva) – Trade promotion and investment organizations from Brazil, France and Switzerland win top prizes at the World Trade Promotion Organizations Awards, organized by the International Trade Centre (ITC), for their programmes supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to grow through trade. Runners-up are from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Namibia.

The winners are in three categories:

- **Best use of partnerships: Business France**
Runner up: Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency (PROCOMER)
- **Best use of information technology: Switzerland Global Enterprise**
Runner up: Export and Investment Center of the Dominican Republic
- **Best initiative to ensure that trade is inclusive and sustainable: ApexBrasil**
Runner up: Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board

The winners were selected – by their peers – for their contributions to the increase in small business exports and job creation in their economies.

Business France, for example, established partnerships leading to 15% growth in small business exports since the launch of its programme.

Switzerland Global Enterprise uses artificial intelligence to offer tailored news, leads and advice to small businesses, before tailor-matching them with business advisors, supporting them to do more business.

ApexBrasil champions emerging women-led businesses to build their export skills and grow through innovative mentorship and partnership models.

“Trade and investment promotion organizations are key to growing economies in a sustainable way – including by supporting small businesses to export – and today we’re recognizing the best among them, worldwide,” said ITC Executive Director [Pamela Coke-Hamilton](#). “Congratulations to the three winners, and to all the finalists, for equipping small businesses to actively participate in trade.”

For the 2024 competition, ITC received a record number of applications from trade promotion and investment organizations with women in leadership roles.

The global competition has taken place every two years since 2004. The jury is composed of the previous competition’s winners and is chaired by the ITC Executive Director.

At a glance: World Trade Promotion Organizations Awards.

Best use of partnerships

Winner: Business France

France's "think global, act local" restructuring has generated billions of new export dollars and thousands of new jobs.

The Team France Export initiative offers regional one stop-shops across France – one for each of its 13 regions. Targeting exporters, first-time exporters and non-exporters, it combines support from three key players: Business France, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and France's investment bank, the Banque Publique d'Investissement.

Between 2019 and 2022, France has recorded a 15% increase in exports for small and medium-sized firms, over 20,000 new exporters, €3.3 billion in additional export revenues and 30,000 new jobs. Business France: www.businessfrance.fr/

Runner up: Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency (PROCOMER)

To diversify from bananas, coffee and pineapples to a wide range of fish, produce and livestock exports, Costa's Rica's trade promotion organization is reaching out to regional and coastal areas to spur innovation, investment and institutional coordination.

This new programme has introduced Costa Rican orange sweet potatoes to Europe, helped get cannabis laws enacted for medical and industrial use, simplified aquaculture business procedures and set up an annual business networking meeting.

The programme comes in response to highly successful reforestation efforts, which has put a premium on agricultural land, as well as a commitment to reach out to areas across the country in its efforts to spur trade. PROCOMER: www.procomer.com

Finalist: Export Bahrain

In response to global supply chain disruptions, Export Bahrain bridges gaps by connecting its community of small businesses to global retailers.

Exports by small businesses are up 70% compared to pre-pandemic figures, thanks to the International Retail Initiative, launched during the pandemic, which has provided advice on standards and packaging and has negotiated discounts for retail displays and special shipping rates for global markets.

Business deals with Egypt, Georgia, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are worth nearly \$7 million dollars to date.

Export Bahrain: www.export.bh

See videos for: [Best use of Partnerships](#)

Best use of information technology

Winner: Switzerland Global Enterprise

AI with the human touch: Swiss firms benefit from state-of-the-art services with personalized online information and access to expert consultants to explore export markets in more than 40 countries.

New registrations were up 47% in 2023 and nearly 2,200 firms are registered. User logins are up 110% in the same period. The service is designed for a wide range of businesses, from startups to seasoned exporters.

Switzerland Global Enterprise: www.s-ge.com/en?ct=

Runner-up: ProDominicana

ProInteligencia, a cost-effective online export and investment information service, has contributed to a rapid rise in exports.

The Dominican Republic's market intelligence portal, ProInteligencia, makes it easier to trade, invest and receive financing for the country's micro, small and medium-sized companies. As part of an innovation project of the country's 2030 national development strategy, the initiative received a national public innovation award in 2023 from the President's administrative ministry.

Implemented within existing resources, the digital ecosystem saves 50% in costs and 200% in time to answer queries and issue intelligence reports. The platforms contributed to record exports between 2021 and 2023, with an average growth rate of 6.2%.

ProDominicana: www.prodominicana.gob.do/en

Finalist: Tanzania Trade Development Authority

With content from more than 50 trade-related government institutions, this portal offers information on more than 70 products and export-import procedures to over 300,000 users.

Export performance improved from \$6.3 billion in 2021 – when the portal was launched – to \$7.2 billion in 2023 thanks to this programme, according to government studies.

More than 93,000 small businesses – 322,000 users – accessed the portal. Procedures in some sectors such as coffee and honey are streamlined, and overall operational compliance costs dropped by almost 50%.

Launched in 2021, the portal continues to grow and expects to offer information on 200 products by 2026.

TanTrade: www.tantrade.go.tz/

See videos for: [Best use of information technology](#)

Best initiative to ensure that trade is inclusive and sustainable

Winner: ApexBrasil

A gender lens now influences business intelligence, capacity building, trade promotion, international expansion, investment attraction and country image promotion.

ApexBrasil launched a “Gender Parity Commitment” and now has women in 50% of its senior positions. Work with 65 partner institutions towards gender parity in leadership by 2030 includes key government ministries, major banks and numerous industry associations.

Women-led companies became the focus of reserved spots, discounts and other inclusive initiatives in partnership with over 20 national and international public and private organizations.

Between 2023 and 2024, the number of women-led companies served by ApexBrasil has risen 34%, thanks to this programme. In 2023, the initiative supported over 3,000 companies, with only 20% that were already exporting. Equally important, it reached out to the most vulnerable areas of the country.

ApexBrasil: <https://apexbrasil.com.br/>

Runner up: Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board

To fast-track promising micro and small businesses on their export journey, an export development programme supported by four banks is providing companies with mentoring, trade fairs, certifications and more.

Over 80 micro or small firms from various industries participated in a 36-month long programme. Nearly one-third of participating micro firms graduated to small business status. Through the programme, the firms attended trade fairs abroad, as well as benefited from mentoring, business linkages, product testing, certification, licensing, and training on business processes, management and sales.

Participating firms are selected based on their business models, entrepreneurial spirit and demonstrated commitment to growth and development.

Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board: <https://nipdb.com>

See videos for: [Best initiative to ensure that trade is inclusive and sustainable](#)

Notes to the Editor

About the International Trade Centre - The International Trade Centre is the joint agency of the [World Trade Organization](#) and the [United Nations](#). ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the frameworks of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

For more information, visit www.intracen.org.

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