



**Paper: “Effect of Regional Integration on Intra-Regional Informal Agricultural Trade in West Africa”**

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Hamid Reza Izadi  
Chabahar Maritime University, Iran

Reviewer 2: Nyaga Murimi  
Kenyatta University, Kenya

Reviewer 3: Uchenna Okefi  
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, USA

Reviewer 4: Kłosiński Kazimierz  
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

### ***ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2025***

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

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Reviewer Name: Uchenna J. Okefi	
University/Country: North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University/USA	
Date Manuscript Received: 08/12/2025	Date Review Report Submitted: 08/20/2025
Manuscript Title: Effect of Regional Integration on Intra-Regional Informal Agricultural Trade in West Africa	
ESJ Manuscript Number:	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: Yes.	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: Yes.	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: Yes.	

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.**

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>3</b>
The title is somewhat clear. The author stated that the research aims at the relationship between regional integration and intra-regional informal agricultural trade in West Africa. However, the title addressed it as the Effect of Regional Integration on Intra-Regional Informal Agricultural Trade in West Africa. I recommend modification of either the title or the abstract of the study.	
<b>2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.</b>	<b>1</b>
The abstract lacks precise scientific language. It fails to identify, <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The definition and importance of the problem.</li><li>- The objectives of the study</li><li>- The methodology and detailed findings of the study</li></ul>	

<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
The level of English and the style were fine. No errors or typos were detected. However, there appear to be various improper spacing issues that need to be adjusted.	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>5</b>
Yes, the methods are clear.	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>5</b>
The results are clear and error-free.	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>5</b>
Yes, the chapters are clear.	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>3</b>
The references are comprehensive and appropriate. However, I recommend incorporating newer/recent articles on similar studies in the citations/references.	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	<b>X</b>
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

#### **Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

The manuscript presents valuable insights into the impact of agricultural trade in West Africa. However, a few points can be addressed to strengthen the manuscript.

- It would be beneficial for the abstract to include the following: the title of the study, a definition of the problem, the importance of the problem, the objectives of the study, the methodology followed in the analysis, and a brief, detailed description of the results.
- Discuss potential limitations.
- Incorporate more recent citations

#### **Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**

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Reviewer Name: Hamid Reza Izadi	
University/Country: <b>Chabahar Maritime University, Iran</b>	
Date Manuscript Received: Aug 12, 2025	Date Review Report Submitted: Aug 14, 2025
Manuscript Title: <b>Effect of Regional Integration on Intra-Regional Informal Agricultural Trade in West Africa</b>	
ESJ Manuscript Number: <b>0842/25</b>	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper:    yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper:	

#### Evaluation Criteria:

**Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Rating Result</i> [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b> <i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.</b> <i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b> <i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b> <i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	<b>3</b>
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>3</b>

<i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

### Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

**Excessive Length and Density** The article is overly long and dense, particularly in the results and discussion sections. This may reduce readability and make it difficult for reviewers or policymakers to extract key insights efficiently.

**Structural Redundancy** There is noticeable repetition between the results and discussion sections. Some interpretations are reiterated without adding new analytical depth. A clearer separation between empirical findings and their implications is recommended.

**Limited Policy Analysis of AfCFTA** While the negative impact of AfCFTA is statistically demonstrated, the article lacks a deeper institutional or operational analysis of why informal traders are excluded. More attention should be paid to regulatory overlaps, awareness gaps, and implementation challenges.

**Outdated References in Theoretical Framework** Some foundational references (e.g., Tinbergen 1962, Clark 1973) are useful but should be complemented with more recent literature to reflect contemporary developments in trade theory and regional integration.

**Insufficient Discussion of Data Limitations** The article relies heavily on the ECO-ICBT database, but it does not adequately discuss the limitations or potential biases of this data source. A brief assessment of data reliability and coverage would strengthen the methodology section.

**Complex and Overly Formal Language** Certain sections use overly complex or academic phrasing, which may hinder comprehension for non-specialist readers. Simplifying sentence structures and avoiding jargon would improve accessibility.

**Weak Integration of Agricultural Policy Analysis** The analysis of national agricultural programs is underdeveloped. The article concludes that these programs have no significant impact on informal trade, but it does not explore why or how policy design might be excluding informal actors.

**Limited Visual Support** Although figures are mentioned, they are not included in the document provided. Including clear, well-labeled charts or graphs would enhance the presentation of descriptive statistics and model results.

**Lack of Regional Policy Recommendations** While the conclusion calls for better inclusion of informal actors, it does not offer concrete policy tools or mechanisms (e.g., simplified registration systems, mobile-based trade platforms) that could be implemented by ECOWAS or AfCFTA.

**Multicollinearity Risk Not Fully Addressed** The article mentions potential multicollinearity between CET and AfCFTA variables but does not provide detailed diagnostics (e.g., VIF scores). A more rigorous treatment of this issue would improve the robustness of the econometric analysis.

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**

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Reviewer Name: Dishon Nyaga	
University/Country: Kenya	
Date Manuscript Received: 13/08/2025	Date Review Report Submitted: 17/08/2025
Manuscript Title: <b>Effect of Regional Integration on Intra-Regional Informal Agricultural Trade in West Africa</b>	
ESJ Manuscript Number:	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: YES	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper:	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: YES	

#### Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.	5
<i>It is clear and is adequate</i>	
2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.	4
<i>The abstract is quite captivating. But needs an explanation on methodology used.</i>	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	5
<i>There a limited errors</i>	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	5
<i>Study methods are explained well.</i>	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	5
<i>The results are clear and do not contain errors.</i>	

<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>It's well composed</i>	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Ok</i>	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	<b>YES</b>
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

The paper is very captivating and educating. The writer has done an excellent work, but the abstract needs some improvement.

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**