

STATE OF GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON

Ministry of Trade

Governance Monitoring



SUMMARY

The collection of information via the Website and interviews with officials reveal that the Ministry of Commerce (Mincommerce) has strengths and points of improvement in terms of communication, execution of its missions and its contribution to the National Development Strategy (NDS30). Although its communication is intense, dense and regularly updated, very little information exists on the ministry's achievements and overall performance. Similarly, there is no interface with users to handle appeals or register messages. Moreover, as much as the Ministry communicates on the protocols and agreements signed with various partners, the ministry is silent on the follow-up of these agreements and their impact on the Cameroonian economy. The ministry devotes more time to news on inflation, especially on measures taken by the Government and its partners. We however deplore the fact that no evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures is available. Similarly, the Ministry's contribution to the NDS30 is mixed, barely representing an achievement rate of 57.14%.

RECALL OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

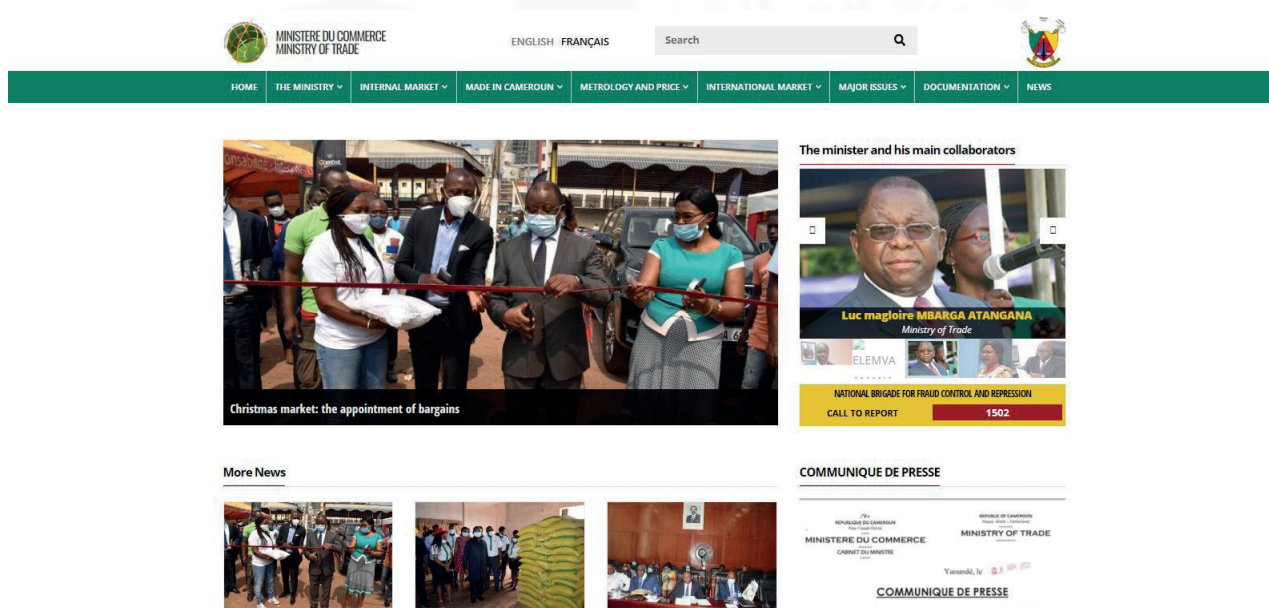
Law N° 2018/011 of 11 July 2018 laying down the Cameroon Code of Transparency and Good Governance in public finance management specifies in the following paragraphs of section 47: (1) The administration

shall take all necessary measures for the publication of information on public finances, within the time limits determined by regulation. (2) The information provided in paragraph 1 above is exhaustive. It covers the past, the present and the future and covers all budgetary and extra-budgetary activities. (3) A specific text, adopted before the beginning of the financial year, publishes the schedule for the spread of the information provided in the above paragraph.

The code of transparency and good governance makes the publication of all public finance data sacred. The publication of all information on public finance is a legal requirement and also constitutes a pedagogical action of the State towards the citizens. These data concerns the results produced with the means made available.

Website analysis: intense communication, but little digital interaction with users

Mincommerce uses its official Website <https://www.mincommerce.cm/> to communicate on its activities as well as other digital platforms such as: LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter... The homepage of the Website recalls its missions and highlights the substantive activities.



Ministry of Trade Home PAGE.JPG

The assessment of the functioning of the website allows us to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the posting of the Ministry's activities.

06 STRENGTHS:

- The website is functional with recent updates (June 2022).
- The website is secured.
- The website's structure is of good quality. Information is easily accessible;

- Bilingualism is effective. Information is available in the two (02) official languages: French and English;
- Dematerialisation of procedures: there is a section entirely dedicated to «dematerialised procedures». The Ministry provides users with services that can be accessed remotely, such as: registration to the Import/Export file, FAQ, companies' database, electronic procedure, e-payment and Technical Administration Information System (SIAT);
- The information available on the website is useful to users: **individuals and companies**.

04 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

• Lack of an appeal procedure

Although there is no appeal procedure, a law on consumer protection is available, as well as the number of the national brigade of controls and repression of frauds '1502' to denounce all frauds noted or witnessed by users.

• Absence of annual performance reports on the website

Despite the availability of a «documentation» section, Mincommerce does not publish its annual reports on its official website. The «documentation» section recalls «laws and regulations», «trade agreements», «forms and publications» No document presents the performance of the Ministry. There are programmes, projects and calls for interest for recruitment. However, the Ministry publishes its Annual Performance Report on the parliamentary Website <http://www.pplateformeparlementaire.cm/>. On the date of 1st August 2022, the annual performance reports for the years 2020 and 2021 are not available on the Website.

• No messaging on the website

Traders and transit agents do not have the opportunity to take an appointment online via the website. They cannot share their problems and anticipate the possible additional documents that the Ministry would ask during specific procedures relating to the seizing up of goods at the port or at the border; and the problem of unfair competition; sales prices fixing, etc.

• No newsletter

The Ministry does not have an e-mail service to which users can subscribe to receive information from them. And the Ministry does not produce a newsletter.

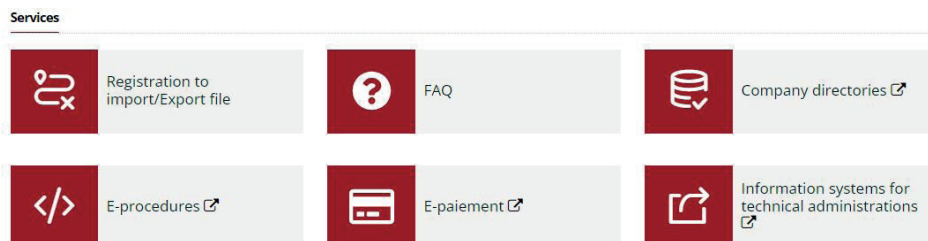
The missions are declined into activities on the Website

With regards to the Ministry's missions (see Appendix 1), the sections put online and the activities published are perfectly coherent.

The services are digitalized and the information is user-oriented

Mincommerce makes all its services accessible remotely: registration to the Import/Export file, FAQ, companies' database, electronic procedure, e-payment and Technical Administration Information System

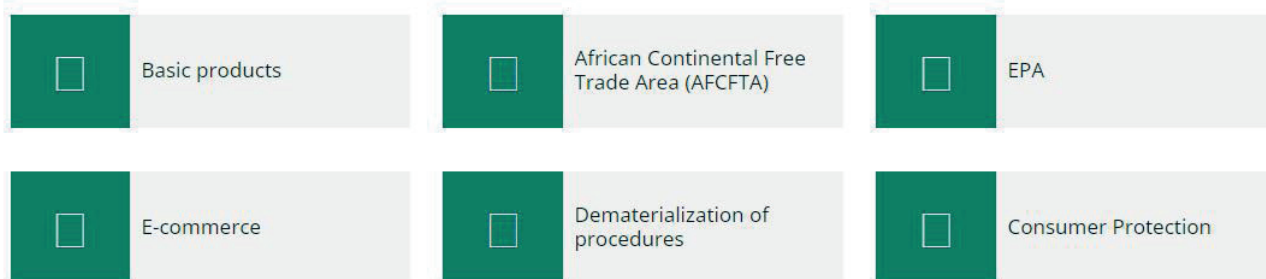
(SIAT).



Services - section of Mincommerce Website.JPG

In addition to the accessibility of services, Mincommerce highlights its priorities. According to the information made available, these are commodities, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Economic Partnership Agreements, electronic commerce, dematerialisation of procedures and consumer protection.

Our priorities



Our priorities - section of Mincommerce Website.JPG

On the website, we note that the Ministry highlights, through the contents of the various menus, information on his activities including: market surveillance, promotion of fairness in trade transactions, dumping, promotion of consumption of local products, price metrology. This information is in coherence with the missions of Mincommerce.

For example, the site provides information on the commitments of Cameroon including: the protocol that Cameroon signed with «Cameroon Golden Cocoa et Cocoa Valley» for the establishment of the minimum price of cocoa; the signing of an exchange agreement between Cameroon and Brazil; the supply of cement to Cameroon; the actions of Mincommerce against high cost of living.

With the aforementioned we confirm that Mincommerce communicates on its achievements. However, there is an absence of information on the monitoring of agreements with the European Union (EU). One of the missions of the Ministry of Commerce is to monitor economic agreements signed between the Government of Cameroon and the European Union (EU). The Ministry also provides visibility on its Website to the organisations under its supervision.

Supervision: Low visibility on overall performances

Organizations under supervision



Organisations under supervision - section of Mincommerce Website.JPG

The logos of the organisations under supervision can be seen on the Website. These logos are links leading to content presenting the organisations under supervision. We distinguish: the Mission for the regulation of the supply of consumer products (MIRAP), Hydrocarbons Prices Stabilization Fund, and the National Cocoa and Coffee Board.

These institutions under Mincommerce are all described on the official Website of the Ministry (history and missions) and each has a Website. However, no mention is made on their achievements. It is therefore impossible to evaluate them considering the information published by the Ministry.

The overview on inflation in Cameroon and actions undertaken by Mincommerce

OVERVIEW

Since December 2021, Cameroon has been facing a progressive increase in certain products. According to data published in a note released on 23 February 2022, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) states that the inflation rate in Cameroon over the last 5 years (between 2017 and 2022) has reached 9.2%. According to the INS, the highest increase is recorded in food products (+12.5%), followed closely by clothing and footwear, which leads to a considerable loss of the purchasing power. Food products, particularly rice, wheat and refined vegetable oil, are experiencing shortages, thus negatively impacting the food situation of households.

Among the causes of this inflation, the National Institute of Statistics considers that the Covid-19 crisis «has led to disruptions in production and distribution channels, sometimes resulting in shortages», and the war in Ukraine is an aggravating factor. The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), Gabriel Mbairrobe, approved that in his release of May 18 2022. For the period from June to August 2022, the food and nutrition situation is expected to remain satisfactory in 27 departments. However, 20 departments will remain under pressure with a relatively acceptable food situation. Indeed, all the regions of the southern zone will be in the harvest period, which means that food stocks will be available at the household level. This period corresponds to the welding phase in the northern regions. In addition, 11 departments will remain in a crisis phase if the security environment does not allow people to resume their agro-pastoral activities (<https://cameroon.un.org/>).

ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY MINCOMMERCE AND THEIR DISSEMINATION

- **The Minister of Commerce (Mincommerce) signed two decrees on 14 April.**

One makes 'the prior filing of price lists of certain consumer products' compulsory, while the other sets the list of prices of products and services for which 'prices and rates are subject to the prior approval procedure, before being put on sale on the national market'. Concretely, for the first decree, the Government and operators of eight mass consumption products will have to agree on the price list to be set for the consumer. These products are: pasta, sardines, margarine, alcohol and spirits, detergents and household soaps, packaging, electrical cables and wires, paint and tiles. The organisations under the supervision of Mincommerce will have to play a monitoring role for the achievement of this objective.

Source: Mincommerce Website.

- **A subsidy to prevent the increase in the price of super, diesel and kerosene;**

the exemption of taxes and customs duties on imports of certain products; the development of the fish sector; «the reduction of 50% of the amount to be paid by companies as income tax and the application of a favourable system of advance payment calculated on the margin of distributors, or the suspension of the withholding tax on sales, depending on the sector¹».

NB: It should be noted that none of the measures taken since April have yet been evaluated for effectiveness.

MEASURES TAKEN BY CAMEROON'S PARTNERS

Without being exhaustive, the World Bank approved on May 2, 2022 a credit of US\$100 million from the International Development Association (IDA) (including US\$50 million from the Crisis Response Facility) to help Cameroon strengthen food and nutrition security and increase resilience to climate shocks among households and producers targeted by the project. This assistance will benefit more than 260,000 food insecure and vulnerable people as well as 159,000 farmers, herders and fishermen affected by the crisis in the Far North, North, North West, South West, Adamawa and East regions. In addition, the project will help improve productivity and access to markets in the agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors.

A mixed contribution to the 2020-2030 strategy

MINCOMMERCE is involved in the «**Economic and Financial Governance**» component. It has two main objectives: **improving the procurement system and the optimal regulation of the economy.**

With regards to the improvement of the procurement system, Mincommerce shares responsibility with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Contracts. Of the 04 actions to be carried out:

- **02 actions are effective:** free competition and transparency guaranteed; procurement rates in line with regulations.
- **02 actions have not been carried out:** the schedule prices are not in line with real market prices. Furthermore, there is a low rate of contracts awarded in less than 5 months during the period under review (financial year 2020 and first half of 2021). Out of a total of 209 projects selected for e-procurement, only 76 were actually awarded via the Cameroon Online E-Procurement System (<http://www.marchespublics.cm/index.do>), i.e. an award rate of **36.36%**, well below the indicative percentage set between 2020 and 2022, which is **96%**. This action is therefore poorly carried out.

As regards optimal regulation of the economy, of the three actions for which the Mincommerce is responsible, two have been carried out: **consumer protection and quality of services ensured; the operational capacity of the competition authority and regulators has been strengthened.** Only one action has not been carried out: **autonomous functioning of the regulatory authorities.**

In view of the above considerations, it can be said that the participation of Mincommerce in the achievement of the objectives of the NDS30 is mixed. Out of 07 actions in total to be carried out, 04 actions have been carried out, i.e. a percentage of 57.14% against 42.85% of non-achievement.

¹ <https://blogging.africa/fr/economie>

For the first deadline 2020 – 2021, Mincommerce did not report its participation in the NDS30 and no report or publication was made on this subject.

Missions
The development, implementation and evaluation of strategies for the promotion of Cameroonian products;
The development of price regulations and the monitoring of their application, in liaison with the relevant administrations;
The regulation of the supply of consumer products, in relation with the relevant administrations;
The search for new markets for Cameroonian products;
The promotion and defence of a quality label for products intended for the local market and for export;
The promotion and control of healthy competition;
The negotiation and monitoring of the implementation of trade agreements in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations;
The promotion of the competitiveness of Cameroonian products on foreign markets;
The application of administrative sanctions in the event of fraud or non-compliance with the standards set, without prejudice to the powers devolved to the other ministerial departments concerned;
The organisation and supervision of trade fairs;
Monitoring international trade of raw materials and derived products, in liaison with the relevant ministerial departments and organisations;
Monitoring the application of import standards, in liaison with the relevant administrations
Monitoring of inflation in liaison with the relevant administrations;
Monitoring the conservation and distribution channels of consumer products;
Monitoring the development and application of standards for measuring instruments and quality control in liaison with the relevant administrations;
Monitoring relations with international organisations working in the field of international trade in liaison with the relevant administrations;
Le suivi des relations avec les organisations internationales œuvrant dans le domaine du commerce international en liaison avec les administrations concernées ;
Monitoring the development or approval of standards for the presentation, conservation and distribution of consumer products and compliance with these standards by economic operators in liaison with the relevant administrations;
Monitoring trade negotiations with the European Union in conjunction with the Ministry of External Relations.

Missions	
Activities / Information published on the Website	Coherence The different missions are clearly represented through the 'Menus' of the Website and their 'contents'

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his document is produced by the « [Studies and Research](#) » department of **OBIV Solutions** on the basis of information promulgated by MINCOMMERCE through several channels (official digital communication tools: Website, certified page) and interviews with some officials from March 10 to July 30, 2022. This choice of information collection is based on Law No. 2018/011 of 11 July 2018 on the Code of Transparency and Good Governance in Public Finance Management in Cameroon, which obliges administrations to publish their activity reports and report on their performance. We deplore the absence of documents reporting on performance and changes brought about by the Ministry. The logic of means prevails over results-oriented management. The Ministry is more inclined to publish the activities carried out without indicating the major changes induced by these activities.

TABLE 2: PUBLIC POLICIES OF THE GOVERNANCE SECTOR AND ADMINISTRATIONS INVOLVED²

Public policies (governance components)	Administrations concerned
Component 1: decentralisation and local development	MINFI, MINFOPRA, MINDEVEL, MINEPAT
Component 2: Strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human rights	MINCOM, MINJUSTICE; Supreme Court, SPM, CNDHL, ELECAM, MINDEF, DGSN, DGRÉ, Constitutional Council, MINAT, MINDDEVEL, CTD
Component 3: Improvement of the state public service	MINFOPRA, CONSUPE, MINEPAT, MINFI, MINPOSTEL, SPM
Component 4: Economic and financial governance	MINEPAT, MINMAP, MINFI, MINCOMMERCE, MINPMEESA, MINDCAF, MINH DU, CTD, CONSUPE, MINREX
Component 5: Land-use planning	MINEPAT, MINTP, MINH DU, MINDCAF
Component 6: Bilingualism, multiculturalism and citizenship	MINEDUB, MINESEC, MINESUP, MINFOPRA, CNPMB, MINAC, MINJEC

² Source (Extract from the National Governance strategy, 2020-2030)

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